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SHEWING THE

Ancient Schools

AND

Principal Territorial Divisions

BEFORE THE

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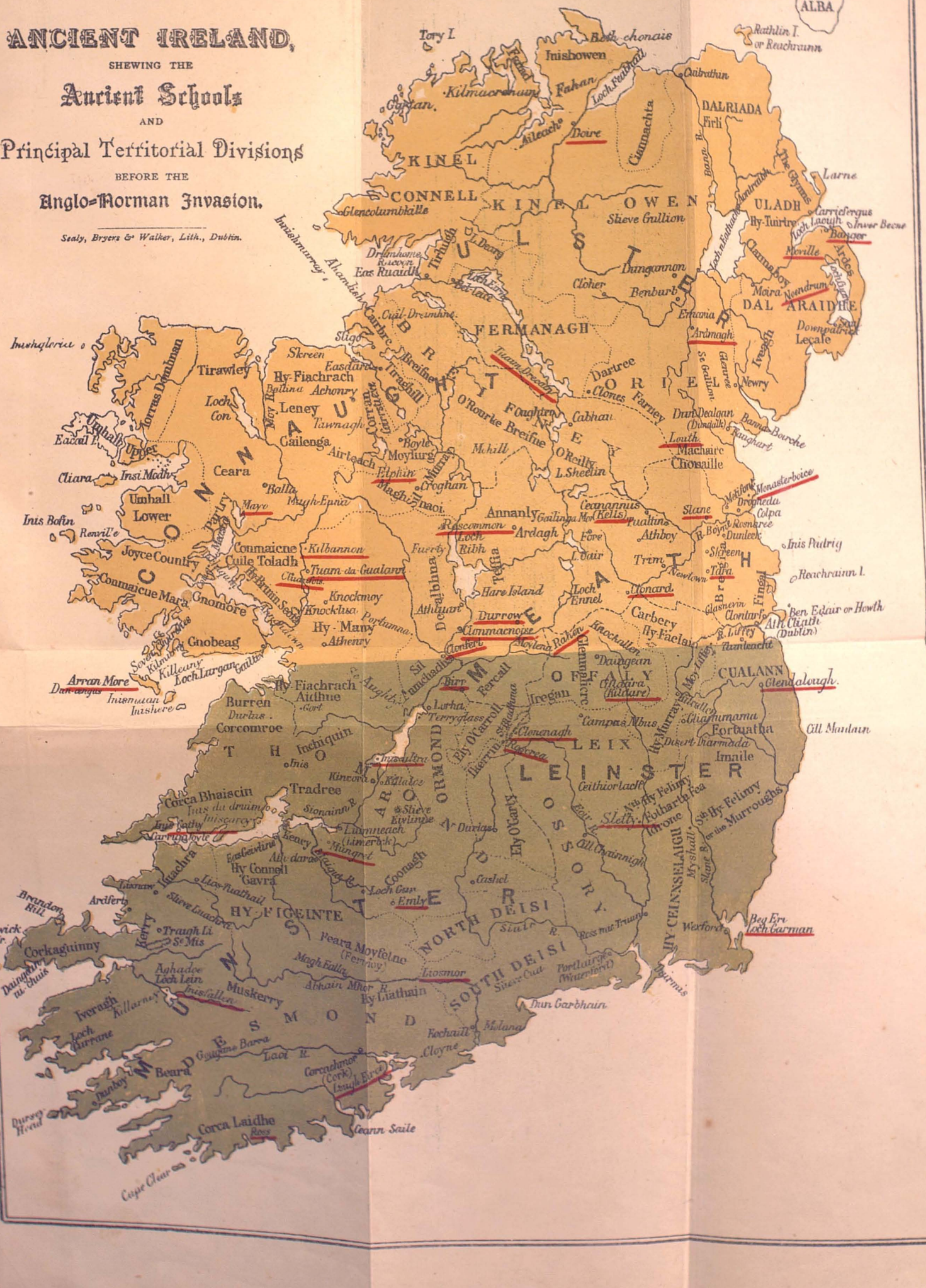

INSULA

SANCTORUM ET DOCTORUM

OR,

IRELAND'S ANCIENT SCHOOLS AND SCHOLARS

BY THE

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BISHOP OF CLONFERT; COMMISSIONER FOR THE PUBLICATION OF THE BREHON LAWS; EX-PREFECT OF THE DUNBOYNE ESTABLISHMENT, MAYNOOTH COLLEGE.

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PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

Some smaller inaccuracies in the previous Editions have been corrected in this Edition; but no other changes have been made.

Mount St. Bernard,
October, 1902.

✠ JOHN HEALY, D.D.,
Bishop of Clonfert.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

The First Edition of this work has been very favourably received both by the critics and by the public. It was exhausted nearly twelve months ago; but other engrossing occupations left the author little time to revise the text and prepare a new edition. In this Second Edition many errors of the press have been corrected; several explanatory notes have been added, and some few inaccuracies have been rectified. Maps of the Aran Islands and Clonmacnoise have been inserted, and the *Index* has been greatly enlarged. It is hoped also, that the lower price of the present edition will bring it within the range of a wider circle of readers, and still further carry out the author's purpose of vindicating and enlarging the just renown of Ireland's ancient Saints and Scholars.

Mount St. Bernard,
Easter, 1893.

✠ JOHN HEALY, D.D.

PREFACE.

In the following pages it has been the author's purpose to give a full and accurate, but at the same time, as he hopes, a popular account of the Schools and Scholars of Ancient Ireland. It is a subject about which much is talked, but little is known, and even that little is only to be found in volumes that are not easily accessible to the general reader. In the present work the history of the Schools and Scholars of Celtic Erin is traced from the time of St. Patrick down to the Anglo-Norman Invasion of Ireland. The first three centuries of this period is certainly the brightest page of what is, on the whole, the rather saddening, but not inglorious record, of our country's history. It was not by any means a period altogether free from violence and crime, but it was certainly a time of comparative peace and security, during which the religious communities scattered over the island presented a more beautiful spectacle before men and angels, than anything seen in Christendom either before or since It is an epoch, too, whose history can be studied with pleasure and profit, and in which Irishmen of all creeds and classes feel a legitimate pride.

It has been questioned, indeed, if the Monastic Schools of this period were really so celebrated and so frequented by holy men, as justly to win for Ireland her ancient title of the Insula Sanctorum et Doctorum—the Island of Saints and Scholars. The author ventures to hope that the following pages will furnish, even to the most sceptical, conclusive evidence on this point. It has been his purpose to show not merely the extent, the variety, and the character of the studies, both sacred and profane, pursued in our Celtic Schools, but also

the eminent sanctity of those learned men, whose names are found in all our domestic Martyrologies.

Perhaps the most striking feature in their character, speaking generally, was their extraordinary love of solitude and mortification. They loved learning much, it is true; but they loved God and nature more. They knew nothing of what is now called civilization, and were altogether ignorant of urban life; but still they had a very keen perception of the grandeur and beauty of God's universe. The voice of the storm and the strength of the sea, the majesty of lofty mountains and the glory of summer woods, spoke to their hearts even more eloquently than the voice of the preacher, or the writing on their parchments.

The author has sought throughout to put all the information, which he could collect in reference to his subject, in a popular and attractive form. At the same time he has spared no pains to consult all the available authorities both ancient and modern; and he has always gone to the original sources, whenever it was possible to do so. He does not pretend to have avoided all mistakes in matters of fact, nor to be quite free from errors in matters of opinion. But he can say that he has honestly done his best to make the study of this portion of our Celtic history interesting and profitable to the general reader. And there is no doubt that the study of the holy and self-denying lives of our ancient Saints and Scholars will exercise a purifying and elevating influence on the minds of all, but more especially of the young; will teach them to raise their thoughts to higher things, and set less store on the paltry surroundings of their daily life.

With the single exception of Iona, which may be considered as an Irish island, this volume deals only with our Monastic Schools at home. Irishmen founded during this period many schools and monasteries abroad; but

it would require another volume to give a full account of those monasteries and their holy founders.

There are many friends to whom we owe thanks for assistance; but we have reason to believe that they would prefer not to have their names mentioned in this preface.

In conclusion, we have only to add, that these pages have not been written in a controversial spirit; because in our opinion little or nothing is ever to be gained by writing history in a spirit of controversy, which tends rather to obscure than to make known the truth. It is better from every point of view to let the facts speak for themselves; and hence not only in quoting authorities, but also in narrating events, we have, as far as possible, reproduced the language of the original authorities.

A few of the papers here published have appeared in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, but they are now presented in a more popular form.

✠ JOHN HEALY, D.D

PALMERSTON HOUSE, PORTUMNA,
May, 1890.

ꝫo m-baḋ buan beaꞃla ꞅaoi aꝫuꞅ Naoiṁ.

"May the tongue of Sage and Saint be lasting."

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TABLE OF CONTENTS.

PAGE

CHAPTER I.

STATE OF LEARNING IN IRELAND BEFORE ST. PATRICK.

I.—The Druids 1
Learning of the Druids ... 1
Religious Worship ... 2
Sacrifice of Human Victims 3
Worship of the Elements... 3
Enchantments 4
Acquaintance with Letters 4
Sun-Worship 5

II.—The Bards... 7
The Files 7
The Ollamh-Poet 7
Historic Poet 8
Neidhe 9
Ollioll Olum 10
Ossian 10

III.—The Brehons 11
Office of Brehon thrown open to all possessing necessary qualifications 11
Morann 12
Their Course of Instruction 12

IV —The Ogham Alphabet ... 13
Inscribed Stones 13
Invention of the Ogham ... 14
Letters of the Ogham Alphabet... 15

CHAPTER II.

IRISH SCHOLARS BEFORE ST. PATRICK.

I.—Cormac Mac Art 16
Battle of Magh Mucruimhe 17
Fenian Militia 18
Finn Mac Cumhail ... 19
Feis of Tara 19
The Teach Miodchuarta ... 21
Writings ascribed to Cormac 23
Saltair of Tara 23

PAGE

Schools at Tara 23
Book of Aicill 25
Death of Cormac 26
Torna Eigas 28

II.—Sedulius 29
Evidence of Irish Birth ... 29
Religious Training ... 32
Writings of Sedulius ... 35
Carmen Paschale 36
Elegiac Poems 37

III.—Caelestius and Pelagius 39
Caelestius not an Irishman 39
Pelagius of British Birth, but of Scottish Origin ... 40
No evidence to show that Caelestius was either a Briton or Scot—His Character 41

CHAPTER III.

LEARNING IN IRELAND IN THE TIME OF ST. PATRICK.

I.—St. Patrick's Education... 43
Life at Marmoutier ... 44
St. Germanus of Auxerre... 46
Patrick accompanied Germanus on his journey to Britain, A.D. 429 ... 48
St. Patrick in the Island of Lerins 49
St. Patrick commissioned by St. Celestine to Preach the Gospel in Ireland ... 50

II.—St. Patrick's Literary Labour in Ireland ... 50
Arrival in Ireland... ... 50
He lights the Paschal Fire 51
Miraculous Destruction of the two Chief Druids of Erin 51
Patrick burns the idolatrous books at Tara and overturns the idols in Leitrim 52

PAGE

III.—St. Patrick Reforms the Brehon Laws 52
The *Senchus Mor* 52
Commission of Nine ... 53
Benignus 54
Church Organization ... 35
Friendly Alliance with the Bards 57
Church Music 58
St. Patrick accompanied by Bishops and Priests in his Mission to Ireland ... 59
Synod of Patrick, Auxilius and Iserninus 60
Holy See Supreme Judge of Controversies 60
Duties of Ecclesiastical Judges and Kings ... 61
Oral Instruction communicated by St. Patrick to his Disciples during Missionary Journeys 62
Books used by St. Patrick 63
Elements, or "Alphabets" of Christian Doctrine ... 63
Equipment of the young Priest beginning his Missionary Work 64
Patrick's Household ... 65
Patrick's Artificers ... 66

CHAPTER IV.

THE WRITINGS OF SAINT PATRICK AND OF HIS DISCIPLES.

I.—St. Patrick's Confession... 67
Evidence in favour of its authenticity 68
The Saint's motive in writing it 69
Patrick's parents in Britain 71
Patrick met opposition in preaching the Gospel in Ireland 72

II.—The Epistle to Coroticus 73

III.—The Lorica, or the Deer's Cry 75

IV.—Sechnall's Hymn of St. Patrick 77
Secundinus 77
Sechnall, son of Patrick's sister, Darerca 79
Sechnall's father 79

PAGE

V.—The Hymn *Sancti Venite*... 80
St. Sechnall the first Christian Poet in Erin ... 81

VI.—St. Fiacc of Sletty ... 81
Fiacc receives *grade* or orders 83
He founds two Churches... 83
Fiacc's *Metrical Life of St. Patrick* 85

VII.—The Sayings of Saint Patrick 87

VIII.—The *Tripartite Life of St. Patrick* 88
Its date and authorship ... 89

CHAPTER V.

IRISH MONASTIC SCHOOLS IN GENERAL.

I.—General View of an Irish Monastery 91
Monasticism always existed and always will exist in the Church 92
St. Martin of Tours, the Father of Monasticism in Gaul 93

II.—The Buildings 94
Cells of the Monks... ... 95
Monastic Hospitality ... 96

III.—Discipline 97
The Abbot 98
The Monastic Family ... 99
The Rule 99
Food... 101
Ordinary Dress 102

IV.—The Daily Labour of the Monastery 102
Religious Exercises ... 103
Study 103
Writing 104
Manual Labour 104
Church Furniture.. ... 105

V.—The Three Orders of Irish Saints 106

CHAPTER VI.

SCHOOLS OF THE FIFTH CENTURY.

I.—The Schools of Armagh... 110
Emania 111
Daire 111
Patrick founds Armagh ... 112

PAGE
Ecclesiastical Buildings at Armagh 113
St. Benignus 114
Death of Benignus ... 116
The *Book of Rights* attributed to Benignus ... 116
The School of Armagh, primarily a great Theological Seminary 117
The *Moralia* of St. Gregory the Great 117
Gildas the Wise 118
His *Destruction of Britain* 119
English Students at Armagh 119
Churches and Schools of Armagh burned and plundered between A.D. 670 and 1179 120
Imar O'Hagan 121
The *Book of Armagh* ... 122
The Mac Moyres 124

II.—The School of Kildare... 125
St. Brigid 125
St. Mathona 126
St. Ita 127
St. Brigid born at Faughart... 128
Events of her marvellous history 129
Brigid's religious vows ... 130
Brigid founds Kildare ... 130
Brigid the "Mary of Ireland" 131
Monastery of Men at Kildare 132
St. Conlaeth 132
St. Ninnidhius 132
Great Church of Kildare... 133
Six Lives of St. Brigid ... 133
St. Brogan Cloen 134
Cogitosus 135
Round Tower of Kildare... 138
Perpetual fire of Kildare... 138
Art of Illumination in the Monastic Schools of Kildare 139
The *Book of Leinster* ... 140

CHAPTER VII.

MINOR MONASTIC SCHOOLS OF THE FIFTH CENTURY.

I.—The School of Noendrum 141
St. Mochae 141
St. Colman of Dromore ... 143
Mochae of Noendrum enchanted for 150 years by the song of a Blackbird 144

PAGE
II.—The School of Louth ... 145
St. Mochta 145
School founded 147
The Druid Hoam 147
Book of Cuana 149

III.—The School of Emly ... 149
St. Ailbe 149
Pre-Patrician Bishops in Ireland 150
Life of St. Ailbe of Emly... 151
Ailbe preached the Gospel in Connaught 152
Life of St. Declan... ... 153
Sts. Ciaran, Ailbe, Declan, and Ibar yield subjection and supremacy to Patrick 153
Difficulties against the authenticity of the Lives of St. Ciaran, St. Declan, and St. Ailbe 155

IV.—St. Ibar 155
Beg-Eri 156
School of Beg-Eri 157
Beg-Eri no longer an Island 158

V.—Early Schools in the West of Ireland ... 159
College at Cluainfois ... 160
School of St. Asicus of Elphin 161

CHAPTER VIII.

SCHOOLS OF THE SIXTH CENTURY.

THE MONASTIC SCHOOL OF ST. ENDA OF ARAN.

I.—Life of St. Enda of Aran 163
Monastic Character of the Early Irish Church ... 163
Family of St. Enda ... 164
His Sister, St. Fanchea .. 165
He goes to Candida Casa 167
Goes to Aran 169

II.—The Isles of Aran ... 169
Aran Mor 170

III.—Pagan Remains in the Isles of Aran 172
Dun Ængusa 173
Dun Conchobhair 175
These Islands in ancient times the stronghold of a Warrior Race 176

PAGE

IV.—Christian Aran of St. Enda 177
The Curragh Stone ... 177
Enda founded his First Monastery at Killeany... 177
Scholars of St. Enda ... 178
Columba and Ciaran at Aran 179
The Life of Enda and his Monks, simple and austere 180

V.—Ancient Churches in Aran 181
Churches in Townland of Killeany 181
Telagh-Enda 182
The "Seven Churches" ... 182
The Tomb of St. Brecan ... 183
The *Septem Romani* ... 184
Ruins at Kilmurvey ... 185
Tempull na-Cheathair-Aluinn 186

CHAPTER IX.

THE SCHOOL OF ST. FINNIAN OF CLONARD.

I.—Preliminary Sketch of Christian Schools ... 188
The First Christian Schools 188
Schools of the Pagans ... 189
Episcopal Schools 190
School founded by John Cassian near Marseilles 190
Monastery of Lerins ... 192

II.—St. Finnian of Clonard 193
Finnian's birth 194
Goes to Britain 195
Dubricius 196
St. David 196
Cathmael 197
Finnian returns to Erin ... 198

III.—The School of Clonard 199
Scholars of Clonard ... 201
Instruction altogether oral 202
Knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures 203
"Tutor of the Saints of Ireland" 203
Remains at Clonard ... 205
St. Aileran the Wise ... 206

CHAPTER X.

THE SCHOOL OF CLONFERT.

I.—St. Brendan of Clonfert 209
Fostered by St. Ita ... 210
Brendan's progress in learning under St. Erc ... 211
Seminary at Cluainfois ... 212
Brendan's Rule 213
St. Brendan's Oratory on the summit of Brandon Hill 214
Brendan's Voyages ... 215
He goes to Britain ... 217
The Cursing of Tara ... 218
He founds the Monastery of Inchiquin 219
Founds Clonfert 220
Death of Brendan 221

II.—St. Moinenn 222
St. Fintan 224
The Abbot Seanach Garbh 225
St. Fursey 226
Birth of Fursey 227

III.—St. Cummian the Tall, Bishop of Clonfert ... 228
Birth of Cummian... ... 229
Pupil of St. Finbar ... 230
Cummian and King Domhnall 232
Paschal Controversy ... 233
The Irish Usage 234
Main charge brought against the Irish ... 235
A National Synod at Magh Lene 236
Cummian's *Paschal Epistle* 237
He appeals to the authority of the Church 238
Quotes the Synodical Decrees of St. Patrick ... 239
The *Liber de Mensura Poenitentiarum* 240

IV.—Subsequent History of Clonfert 242
Turgesius and the Danes... 242
Old Cathedral of Clonfert 243

CHAPTER XI.

THE SCHOOL OF MOVILLE.

I.—St Finnian of Moville ... 245
His Boyhood and Education 246
Candida Casa 246
Finnian at Candida Casa... 247
He goes to Rome 248
Returns to Ireland and founds a School at Moville 249
Columcille's Copy of St. Finnian's Psaltery ... 251

PAGE
The *Cathach* 252
St. Finnian's *Rule*... ... 253
His Death 254
The *Hymn of St. Colman* ... 255

II.—Marianus Scotus... ... 256

CHAPTER XII.

THE SCHOOL OF CLONMACNOISE.

I.—St. Ciaran of Clonmacnoise 258
Clonmacnoise 258
St. Ciaran at the School of Clonard 259
He goes to Aran 260
Visits St. Senan at Scattery 261
Founds Churches at Isell Ciaran and Hare Island, and the Monastery at Clonmacnoise 261
Origin of the Diocese of Clonmacnoise 262
Death of St. Ciaran ... 263
Festival of St. Ciaran ... 264
The Eclais Beg 265

II.—The Ruined Churches at Clonmacnoise 266
Round Tower 267
O'Rourke's Tower... ... 268
De Lacy's Castle 269
Inscribed Tombstones ... 269

III.—The Scholars of Clonmacnoise 270
Grants to the School of Clonmacnoise 271
Colgan, or Colgu the Wise 272
Alcuin 272
The Ferleginds 273
The *Prayer of St. Colgu* ... 273
Scuap Chrabhaigh 274
Plundered by the Danes ... 274
Felim Mac Criffan... ... 275

IV.—Annalists of Clonmacnoise 276
Tighernach... 276
Chronicon Scotorum ... 278
Gilla-Christ O'Maeileon ... 279
Annals of Clonmacnoise ... 279

V.—The "Leabhar-na-h-Uidhre"... 280
Conn-na-m-Bocht . . 280

PAGE
VI.—Dicuil, the Geographer 281
The *De Mensura Orbis Terrarum*... 281
His Learning 284
Irish Pilgrimage to Jerusalem 285
The "Barns of Joseph" ... 286
Dicuil's reference to Iceland 287
Love of the Ancient Irish Monks for island solitudes 288
Iceland and the Faroe Isles occupied by Irish Monks prior to discovery of these islands by the Danes ... 289
Dicuil's testimony that Sedulius was an Irishman 290

CHAPTER XIII.

THE COLUMBIAN SCHOOLS IN IRELAND.

I.—St. Columba's Education... 291
St. Columba, a typical Celt 291
Early History 292
Goes to the School of St. Finnian at Moville ... 294
Columba at the School of Clonard 295
Columba at Glasnevin ... 296
He returns to his native territory 297

II.—Columba founds Derry ... 298
Columcille's original Church 298
Personal description of Columba 299

III.—The Schools of Durrow and Kells 301
Columba founded the Monastery of Durrow... 301
Interesting incidents ... 302
Cormac Ua Liathain ... 303
The *Book of Durrow* ... 304
Ancient remains at Durrow 305
Assassination of De Lacy 306

IV.—The Foundation of Kells 306
King Diarmait 306
St. Columba's House ... 308
Round Tower of Kells ... 309
Book of Kells 309
This MS. caused the Battle of Cuil-Dreimhne ... 310
Columba's departure from Derry 312
Port-a-Churraich 314

PAGE

CHAPTER XIV.

THE COLUMBIAN SCHOOL IN ALBA.

I.—Iona 315
Columba settles in Iona ... 316
Reilig Odhran 317
Columba's Monasteries ... 318
Scribes in Iona 319
Rule in Iona 319

II.—Columba Protects the Bards 320
Threatened destruction of the Bards... 320
Convention of Drumceat ... 321
Columba's defence of the Bards 322
The Bardic Schools ... 323

III.—Death of Columba ... 324

IV.—Writings of Columba ... 326
The Altus Prosator... ... 327
In te Christe 328
Noli Pater 328
Irish Poems attributed to Columcille 329
Columba's Prophecies ... 329

V.—Lives of Columcille ... 330

VI.—Other Scholars of Iona 331
Baithen 331
Death of Baithen 333
Laisren 333
Seghine 333
Suibhne 334
Cuimine the Fair 334

VII.—Adamnan, Ninth Abbot of Hy 335
Greek Tongue taught in the School of Hy 1170 years ago 336
Adamnan's Birth... ... 336
His Parentage 337
King Finnachta 337
Adamnan goes to Iona ... 338
Vita Columbae 339
Adamnan introduces the new Paschal observance into Ireland 341
Dispute between Adamnan and Finnachta 342
Canon of Adamnan ... 342
Death of Adamnan—relics transferred to Ireland ... 343
Adamnan's writings ... 344
De Locis Sanctis 344

PAGE

Expulsion of the Columbian Monks by the Pictish King Nectan ... 345
The "Gentiles" make their first descent on the Hebrides 346
Martyrdom of St. Blaithmac 347
The *Rule of Columba* ... 347

CHAPTER XV.

THE LATER COLUMBIAN SCHOOLS IN IRELAND.

I.—Kells Head of the Columbian Houses 348
Kells pillaged by the Danes 348
The Cathach 348

II.—Marianus Scotus 349
Commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul 351

III.—The Later School of Derry 352
The Ua Brolchain 352
St. Maelisa O'Brolchain ... 353
Flaithbhertach O'Brolchain 354
The Abbot of Derry resolves to renovate his monastery and collects funds for the purpose 355
Synod of the Clergy of Ireland convened at Bri Mac Taidgh in Laeghaire ... 356
See of Derry established ... 357

IV.—Gelasius 358
His name of *Mac Liag* ... 358
Gelasius becomes Abbot of Derry 359
He reforms the morals of clergy and people ... 359
Synod of Kells 360
Synod of Mellifont ... 361
Synod of Brigh Mac-Taidgh 361
Synod of Clane 362
Gelasius consecrates St. Laurence O Toole ... 362
Death of Gelasius 363

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SCHOOL OF BANGOR.

I.—St. Comgall of Bangor ... 364
Birth and parentage ... 365
Comgall enters the Monastery of Fintan 366

PAGE

He visits Clonmacnoise, and receives the priesthood 367
Description of Bangor ... 367
St. Columba visits Comgall at Bangor 368
The fame of Comgall attracts crowds to Bangor 369
Death of Comgall 370

II.—St. Columbanus 370
His early life 371
Goes to Cluaninis and places himself under the care of Sinell 372
He enters Bangor 372
Preaches the Gospel in Gaul 373
He buries himself in the depths of the forest ... 373
Increase of Disciples ... 374
Founds a monastery at Luxeuil 375
Columbanus and his Irish Monks banished from Luxeuil 376
They establish themselves at Bregentz 376
He founds the Monastic Church of Bobbio ... 378
Death of Columbanus ... 378
His writings 379
The *Bobbio Missal* 380
The *Antiphonarium Benchorense* 381

III.—Dungal 381
Theologian, astronomer and poet 381
Dungal was an Irishman... 382
Probably educated in the School of Bangor ... 382
Dungal goes to France ... 382
His Letter to Charlemagne on the two solar eclipses said to have taken place in A.D. 810 383
He opens a school at Pavia 385
The last struggle of Western Iconoclasm 385
The *Libri Carolini*... ... 386
Synod of Frankfort ... 386
The Council of Nice ... 387
The Paris Conference ... 388
Claudius of Turin ... 389
Dungali Responsa contra perversas Claudii Taurinensis Episcopi Sententias ... 390
Character of Dungal's writings 391
His death 392

PAGE

IV.—St. Malachy 393
Sketch of his life 393
He rebuilds the monastery at Bangor 394
Becomes Bishop of Connor 394
Founds the *Monasterium Ibracense* 395
Malachy transferred to the Primatial See 395
Difficulties in Armagh ... 395
Malachy honoured at Rome by Pope Innocent III. ... 396
Death at Clairvaux ... 397

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SCHOOL OF CLONENAGH.

I.—St. Fintan 398
Churches founded round the base of the Slieve Bloom mountains ... 398
Clonenagh 398
Fintan's *Rule* 401
St. Comgall a pupil of the School of Clonenagh ... 402
Miracles of St. Fintan ... 403
Fintan, "Father of the Irish Monks" 404

II.—St. Ængus 404
A *Ceile De* 405
He leads a solitary life ... 405
Dysert-Enos 406
Penitential Exercises ... 407
Ængus arrives at Tallagh 407
Martyrology of Tallagh ... 408
The Felire 409
Fothadh-na-Canoine ... 410
Invocation of the Saints ... 411
The *Saltair-na-Rann* ... 412
Opinions of Dr. Stokes with regard to the writings of Ængus 412
Death of Ængus 413

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SCHOOL OF GLENDALOUGH.

I.—St. Kevin 414
Sketch of his Life 414
Kevin is placed under the care of St. Petroc ... 415
He goes to Glendalough ... 416
Description of Glendalough 417

PAGE

St. Kevin's Bed 418
Tempull-na-Skellig ... 419
Glendalough, a Seminary of Sairts and Scholars... 420
Kevin meets Columba, Comgall and Canice at the hill of Uisnech ... 421
Death of Kevin 421
Writings attributed to Kevin 422

II.—Ruins at Glendalough... 422
The Cathedral 423
St. Kevin's Kitchen ... 423
Our Lady's Church ... 424
Trinity Church 424
Kevin's Yew Tree... ... 425

III.—St. Moling 425
St. Moling 426
Teach Moling 426
Moling becomes Bishop of Ferns 427
Remission of the Cow-Tax 428
Writings attributed to St. Moling 429
Glendalough ravaged by the Danes 429
"Gilla-na-naomh Laighen" 430

CHAPTER XVIII.—*(continued).*

THE SCHOOL OF GLENDALOUGH.

St. Laurence O'Toole ... 432
His Parentage 433
He goes to Glendalough ... 434
Lorcan as a Student ... 435
He is placed at the head of St. Kevin's Great Establishment 436
Consecrated Archbishop of Dublin 437
Synod of the Irish Prelates at Clane 437
He reforms the Clergy ... 437
His Spirit of Mortification and Prayer 438
Dermott McMurrough and Maurice Fitzgerald attack Dublin 440
He stimulates the slothful king, Rory O'Connor, to action 441
Laurence O'Toole attends a General Council in Rome, and secures many privileges for the Church in Ireland 443

PAGE

He travels to England in the interests of Rory O'Connor the discrowned king 444
Detained a prisoner in the monastery of Abingdon 444
His death 445
Canonization 446

CHAPTER XIX.

SCHOOLS OF THE SEVENTH CENTURY.

I.—The School of Lismore, St. Carthach 447
He visits the School of Bangor 448
He founds a monastery at Rahan 449
"Effugatio" of Carthach from Rahan 450
He founds Lismore ... 453
Retires from community life to prepare for death 454
Miracles 454
Rule of Carthach 455

II.—St. Cathaldus of Tarentum 457
The Life of St. Cathaldus ... 457
His Birth-place 458
A Student at Lismore ... 460
He becomes a bishop ... 461
See of Rachau 462
Pilgrimage to Jerusalem ... 462
Taranto 463
Cathaldus endeavours to reform the licentious inhabitants of Taranto ... 463
His death at Taranto ... 464
Invention of the Saint's Relics 464

III.—Other Scholars of Lismore 465
St. Cuanna 465
St. Colman O'Leathain ... 467
Aldfrid, King of Northumbria 468

IV.—Subsequent History of Lismore 466
Lismore ravaged by the Danes 469
Scenery at Lismore ... 471
Inscribed stones 472
The Crozier of Lismore ... 472
The *Book of Lismore* ... 473

PAGE

CHAPTER XX.

THE SCHOOLS OF DESMOND.

I.—The School of Cork ... 475
St. Finbarr 476
Gougane Barra 478
Cork in A.D. 1600 480
Death of St. Finbarr ... 482
His character 483
Assassination of Mahoun... 484
Giolla Aedha O'Muidhin... 486

II.—St. Colman Mac Ua Cluasaigh 487
Pestilence in Ireland ... 487
St. Colman's Hymn ... 488

III.—The School of Ross ... 490
St. Fachtna... 490
Geographical Poem of Mac Cosse 494

IV.—The School of Innisfallen 495
St. Finan the Leper ... 496
St. Finan Cam 497

V.—The Annals of Innisfallen ... ...
Maelsuthain O'Cearbhail... 500
Curious anecdote of Maelsuthain 502
Annals of Innisfallen ... 503
Description of Innisfallen 505

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SCHOOLS OF THOMOND.

I.—The School of Mungrrt... 506
St. Nessan 507
St. Munchin 508
Mungret plundered by the Danes 510
"The Learning of the Women of Mungret" ... 511

II.—The School of Iniscaltra 531
Island of Iniscaltra ... 513
St. Columba of Terryglass 513
Death of St. Columba ... 515
St. Caimin 517
Round Tower of Iniscaltra 519
St. Caimin's Church ... 519
Sculptured stones 530
Iniscaltra ravaged by the Danes 521

III.—Other Monastic Schools of Thomond 522
St. Brendan of Birr ... 522
St. Cronan of Roscrea ... 523
Book of Dimma 524

PAGE

CHAPTER XXII.

LATER SCHOOLS OF THE WEST.

I.—St. Colman's School of Mayo 527
The Easter Controversy ... 527
Inisboffin 531
Death of Colman 533

II.—St. Gerald of Mayo ... 534
Life of St. Gerald 534
Adamnan promulgates the celebrated "Lex Innocentiae" 537
Date of St Gerald's Death 537

III.—Subsequent History of the School of Mayo ... 538
Cele O'Duffy 539

IV.—The School of Tuam ... 540
St. Jarlath 541
"Meadow of Retreat" ... 542
St. Brendan visits St. Jarlath's School at Cluainfois 543
St. Jarlath founds Tuam.. 544

CHAPTER XXII.—(*continued*).

CELTIC ART IN THE WESTERN MONASTERIES DURING THE REIGN OF TURLOUGH O'CONNOR.

I.—The O'Duffys 547

II.—Celtic Art at Clonmacnoise 550
The Ollamh-builder ... 551
Gobban Saer 551
Religh-na-Cailleach ... 552
Crosses and Architectural Ornaments in Sculpture at Tuam and Cong ... 554
Turlough rebuilds the Cathedral of Tuam ... 557
The Abbey of Cong ... 558
The Cross of Cong... ... 560
The Chalice of Ardagh ... 562
The Shrine of St. Manchan 564

CHAPTER XXIII.

IRISH SCHOLARS ABROAD.

I.—St. Virgilius, Archbishop of Salzburg 566
Country of St. Virgilius ... 566
Accusations against Virgilius 569

PAGE
Doctrine of the Antipodes 570
Virgilius, the Apostle of Carinthia... 572
Discovery of the Tomb of Virgilius 573

II.—Sedulius, Commentator on Scripture 574
Writings of Sedulius ... 574

III.—John Scotus Erigena ... 576
Born in Ireland 576
Patronised by Charles the Bald 579
His *Liber de Praedestinatione* 581
Alleged Errors about the Real Presence 583
His Translation of the Pseudo-Dionysius ... 584
His Treatise *De Divisione Naturae* 586
This Book condemned A.D. 1225 587
His Death 588

IV.—Foreign Scholars in Ireland 589
College of Slane 590
Dagobert, a Pupil of Slane 590
Egbert in Ireland 591
Studies in Connaught ... 592
St. Chad in Connaught ... 593
St. Willibrord in Ireland ... 594
Agilbert, Bishop of Paris, in Ireland 595

CHAPTER XXIV.

GAEDHLIC SCHOOLS AND SCHOLARS OF ANCIENT ERIN.

I.—Organization of the Gaedhlic Professional Schools 597
The Learned Professions in Erin 598
Degrees in Poetry, in Law, in History 600

PAGE
II.—School of Tuaim Drecain 602
Three Schools at Tuaim Drecain 602
Cennfaeladh, Professor in all the Faculties... ... 604

III.—Cormac Mac Cullinan ... 605
Disert-Diarmada 605
Cormac, King of Cashel ... 607
Not Bishop of Cashel ... 609
Cashel then a Royal Dun 610
Battle of Ballaghmoon ... 611

IV.—Writings of Cormac Mac Cullinan 612
Psalter of Caiseal 613
Cormac's *Glossary* 612

CHAPTER XXIV.—(*continued*).

I.—Gaedhlic Scholars of the Sixth and Seventh Centuries 614
Amergin Mac Awley ... 615
Dallan Forgaill 616

II.—Gaedhlic Scholars of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries 617
Maelmura of Fathan ... 617
Flann Mac Lonan 618
Eochaid O'Flinn 619

III.—Gaedhlic Scholars of the Eleventh Century 620
Mac Liag 620
His writings 623
Cuan O'Lochain 624
The Monastery of Buite 625

IV.—Discipline of the Lay Colleges 628
Relations between pupils and Teachers laid down in the *Senchus Mor* ... 629
Corporal punishment sometimes inflicted 630

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CHAPTER I.

STATE OF LEARNING IN IRELAND BEFORE ST. PATRICK.

"The wrath of Crom spoke in the storm,
The blighted harvests felt his eye;
The cooling shower, the sunshine warm,
Answered the Druid's plaintive cry."

—*T. D. McGee.*

It is not our purpose to discuss at length the state of learning and civilization in Ireland before the coming of St. Patrick. It is a question about which much difference of opinion exists even amongst learned men. A few remarks, however, on this subject will enable the reader to understand more clearly the literature and history of the Christian Schools of Ancient Ireland.

It is admitted by all that whatever learning existed in Erin during the pagan period of her history, was the exclusive possession of certain privileged classes amongst the Celtic tribes. They may be included in the three great orders, so familiar to the students of our ancient history—the Druids, Bards, and Brehons. We shall offer a few brief observations about each of these highly privileged classes.[1]

I.—The Druids.

In Ireland, as in all the Celtic nations, the Druids were priests and seers, and frequently poets and judges also, especially in the earliest periods of our history. We know from Cæsar that their learning, at least in Gaul, consisted for the most part in rather fanciful theories about the heavenly bodies, the laws of nature, and the attributes of their pagan deities. These doctrines, like their religious tenets, were not committed to writing, but were handed down by oral tradition; for they wished above all things to keep their knowledge to themselves, and to impress the common people with a mysterious awe for their own power and wisdom. It has been said[2] by some writers that druidism

[1] "It would be futile," says O'Curry, "to attempt to give any close and detailed account of the state of education in this country before the Christian era."—*Lectures*, vol. ii., page 49.

[2] See Dr. O'Rorke's excellent *History of Sligo*, vol. ii., page 7.

was a philosophy rather than a religion; but this statement cannot be admitted against the express testimony of Cæsar,[1] who must have often seen the Druids both in Gaul and Britain. He asserts[2] most distinctly that they attended to religious worship, offered sacrifice both in public and in private, and also expounded omens and oracles. Cæsar's statement in this single sentence offers a text for our observations. We must bear in mind what he says of the Druids of Gaul, as well as of the British Druids; because it is quite evident that the Druids of the three great Celtic nations about this period had practically the same religion. He says that they had exclusive charge of public worship, sometimes even offered human sacrifice; and we shall show, notwithstanding O'Curry,[3] that they did the same in Ireland also. A similar long course of instruction, generally extending to twenty years, was required for their disciples in Ireland as in Gaul. As judges, too, the Druids enforced their decisions by a kind of social excommunication, which few people dared to despise. It is curious how the Celtic races, even to this day, have recourse to similar excommunications, both in things social and political. The Druids of Gaul were subject to an Arch-Druid, who was, like the Jewish High Priest, elected for life. But above all, the Druids of Gaul taught the immortality of the soul, as also its transmigration, and appeared most anxious to inculcate these doctrines on all their disciples. This is the one saving doctrine of druidism, which thus prepared the way for Christianity.

There were Druids amongst all the Celtic tribes of France, Britain, and Ireland. The British Druids in the time of Cæsar were very famous both as priests and scholars; so that it was customary for the young Druids of Gaul to be sent over to Britain to finish their education in the colleges of the British Druids. Their chief establishment was in the Island of Anglesey, anciently called Mona; so at least it is called by Tacitus, although Cæsar seems to give that name to the Isle of Man. During the period immediately preceding the arrival of St. Patrick in Ireland, it seems highly probable that Mona was occupied by a colony of the Irish Celts. It is certain, at least, that very frequent and friendly intercourse took place between Ireland and Anglesey, from

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[1] Cæsar, *De Bello Gallico*, Liber iv., c. 13 and 14.

[2] Illi rebus divinis intersunt, sacrificia publica et privata procurant, religiones interpretantur.

[3] Vol. ii., page 222.

which it may be safely inferred that if the druidism of Anglesey was not of Irish origin, Irish as well as Gaulish Druids were certainly educated in that island.

The Druids worshipped not in temples made with hands. As in Palestine, and many Eastern countries, these pagan priests conducted their religious services in 'groves' and 'high places' under the shade of the spreading oaks, from which some writers derive their name—*derw* being the Celtic, not the Greek name for oak. Hence this tree was sacred in their eyes; their dwellings were surrounded with oak groves, whose dark foliage threw a sombre and solemn shade over the rude altars of unhewn stone on which they offered their sacrifices. The yew, blackthorn, and quicken were also regarded as sacred trees, at least by the Irish Druids, who made their divining rods in some cases from the yew, but oftener from oaken boughs. The mystic ogham characters were also cut by the Druids on staves made from the yew, at least so we are informed in some of our oldest Irish tales.[1]

Our knowledge of Irish druidism is derived chiefly from incidental references in the old romantic tales, and also in the *Lives of the Saints*, and especially in the *Lives of St. Patrick*, who came into direct antagonism with their entire system. It is certain that in other countries the Druids sometimes offered human victims in sacrifice; and there is some evidence that the same custom, although, perhaps, more rarely, prevailed in Ireland. There is a passage in the *Book of Leinster*,[2] which expressly states that the Irish used to sacrifice their children to Crom Cruach, or more correctly, Cenn Cruaich, the great gold-covered idol of Magh Slecht, on the borders of Cavan and Leitrim. Hence it was called the Plain of Slaughter, and the sight of the foul idol so excited the righteous zeal of St. Patrick that he smote it deep into the earth with a blow of his crozier. We also know from the Saint's "Confession" that the Irish to whom he preached the Gospel, had previously worshipped idols and unclean things,[3] which goes to prove that idol-worship was a part of the druidical ritual in Ireland.

There is no doubt also that the worship of the elements was a part of the druidical religion. Their most terrible oaths were sworn on the Sun and the Wind; and it was confidently believed that the perjurer could never escape the vengeance of these mighty elements. The account given in

[1] See O'Curry's *Lectures*, vol. ii., p. 203. [2] Folio 213*b*.
[3] "Idola et immunda."

the *Tripartite* of St. Patrick's interview with the daughters of King Laeghaire by Cliabach Well, on the slopes of Cruachan, shows that the worship of fairy gods, or elves, was a part of the druidical religion; and the same is expressly stated in the very ancient metrical Life of the Apostle, by St. Fiacc of Sletty.[1]

It is evident also not only from Cæsar's statement, but also from several passages in our earliest extant writings, that one of the principal functions of the Druids was to act as haurispices, that is, to foretell the future, to unveil the hidden, to pronounce incantations, and ascertain by omens lucky and unlucky days. Hence we always find some of them living with the king in his royal rath; they are not only his priests, but still more his guides and counsellors on all occasions of danger or emergency. King Laeghaire had at Tara Druids and enchanters, who used to foretell the future by their druidism and heathenism;[2] and they announced the coming of the *tailcend*, or shaven-crown, that is St. Patrick, long before his arrival. They were powerful in charms and spells. They could bring snow on the plain, but could not, like Patrick, take it away; they could cover the land with sudden darkness, but could not, like him, dispel it. They were powerful for evil, but not for good; they could with the charm called the 'Fluttering Wisp,' strike their unhappy victim with lunacy, or afflict him by the elements; they would even promise to make the earth swallow him up, as they said it would swallow St. Patrick when he was preaching on the banks of the Moy in Tyrawley. Their incantations, too, were in some instances not only wicked, but filthy and unclean;[3] and as such were of course strictly prohibited by St. Patrick.

The Druids of Gaul, although unwilling to commit their doctrines to writing, were acquainted with the use of the Greek letters. The British Druids of Anglesey were even more learned; and we must infer that the Irish Druids possessed a similar culture. They had 'books,'[4] when St. Patrick met them at Tara; and two of them were entrusted with the education of the king's daughters at Cruachan. They were also skilled in medicine, and possessed a knowledge of healing herbs; they discoursed to their disciples on the nature of things,[5] and had some know-

[1] "On Ireland's folk lay darkness, the tribes worshipped fairies (*side*)." Line 21.

[2] *Tripartite*, Stokes, p. 33 [3] See O'Curry, vol. ii., p. 209.

[4] *Tripartite*, Stokes, p. 57. [5] Cæsar, *De Bello Gallico*.

ledge of astronomy. Thus vested with mysterious and supernatural powers, and possessed of an esoteric learning, that was exclusively their own, the Druids were held in great reverence and fear. "Tara was the chief seat of the idolatry and druidism of Erin,"[1] but we also find them at Cruachan in Connaught, and at Killala beyond the Moy[2]—both royal seats of the kings of that province. They accompanied the kings in their journeys and were present sometimes on the field of battle.[3] They were generally dressed in white, but wore an inner tunic to which reference is sometimes made. It is probable that one or more of them abode in the Raths of all the great nobles, who claimed to be *righs*, or kinglets, in their own territories. They were sworn enemies of Christianity, and frequently attempted to take St. Patrick's life by violence or poison. In the remote districts of the country some of them remained for several centuries after the island generally became Christian; and to this day we can find traces of ancient druidism in the superstitions of the people.

Their New Year's Day was about the 10th of March, and was deemed holy as the great day on which they cut the mistletoe from the sacred oak. The first of May was kept as a festival in honour of the Sun-God; and probably gave origin to that custom of lighting fires in honour of the god, which was afterwards transferred to the eve of the 24th of June, in order to do honour to St. John.

St. Patrick in his *Confession* clearly refers to this sun-worship as an idolatrous practice prevalent amongst our pagan forefathers. "That sun," he says, "which at His bidding we see rising daily for our sake will never reign, and its splendour will not last for ever; but those who adore it will perish miserably for all eternity." The great November festival called Samuin, seems to have been held especially in honour of the *side*, or fairy-gods, who dwelt in the bosom of the beautiful green hills of Erin, and were supposed to hold high revel throughout all the land on November Eve. But the Druids had influence even with these gods of the hills; and we are told that when Edain, the lovely queen of royal Tara, was stolen away from her husband, and hidden in the Land of Youth under Bri Leith, near Ardagh, in Longford, she was restored to her home and her husband by the mighty magic of Dallan the Druid.

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[1] *Tripartite*, p. 40. [2] At Tulach-na-Druadh.
[3] See the account of the battle of Cuil-dreimhne.

We find reference made to the Druids as present with every colony that came to Erin, which shows at least that the old bards and chroniclers regarded them as an essential element of the nation. They were endowed with lands for their maintenance, and enjoyed special privileges and immunities, like the Bards and Brehons. But, as they were the priests of a false and idolatrous religion, it was sought as far as possible to remove every trace of their existence from the minds of the people; and hence after the revision of the Brehon Laws in the time of St. Patrick, we find all reference to the Druids, their rights, and their privileges, entirely expunged from that ancient code. Accordingly we know nothing about the Irish Druids, except what may be gathered from such accidental references as those to which we have already referred.

II.—The Bards.

Under this term we include both poets and chroniclers that is, the *Fileadh* and the *Fer-congne*.[1] Sometimes history and poetry are represented as distinct branches of learning in ancient Erin; it is certain, however, that in pre-Christian times, and long after the introduction of Christianity, the chronicler made poetry the medium of preserving and communicating to posterity both the genealogical and historical records of his tribe or clan. It is true, indeed, that the Introduction to the *Senchus Mor* makes a careful distinction between the chronicler and the poet. "Until Patrick came, only three classes of persons were permitted to speak in public in Erin: a Chronicler to relate events and to tell stories; a Poet to eulogise and to satirize; a Brehon to pass sentence from precedents and commentaries." It is added that since Patrick's arrival, each of these professions is subject to his censorship; and it is noteworthy that no reference at all is made to the Druids after Patrick came to Erin, and this Brehon Code came to be purified. The commentator on the *Senchus* also notes that for a long time the judicature had belonged to the poets alone, that is, from the time of Amergin, the first poet-judge, down to the time of the Contention at Emhain Macha between the two Sages, Ferceirtne and Neidhe. The language which the poets spoke on that occasion was so obscure, that the chieftains could not understand what had passed between the rival Sages. It was therefore ordained by Conchobhar (Connor) and his chieftains, that thenceforward the

[1] See Introduction to *Senchus Mor*, p. 18.

poets should be deprived of that exclusive privilege which they had hitherto enjoyed, and made too exclusive; and that the men of Erin in general should be entitled to have their proper share in the judicature. This dim tradition clearly represents a protest against the technical language of an exclusive and privileged class, who, for their own purposes, sought to keep secret their traditionary lore. Thus it came to pass that thenceforward the profession of the judge and poet became quite distinct, and the judge assumed the post of official chronicler and keeper of the records of his tribe.

The function of the Bard, or poet, afterwards was 'to eulogize and to satirize;' and in this more restricted sense of the word the term poet or Bard is frequently employed in Christian times. We know, however, that as a matter of fact all our historical documents down to the tenth century are written in poetry, that is, in a certain metre and rhythm, which would help to preserve these compositions even without the aid of writing for the benefit of posterity; that is to say, the Chronicler was also a poet.

The *File*, or poet in the more restricted sense of the word, soon became a pest and a nuisance. He was willing enough to eulogize when he expected liberal rewards; but if he were disappointed in his hopes, or if from any other cause he wished to inflict the lash of his satire on any person, he never spared the poisoned shafts of his flashing wit. Hence Cormac Mac Cullinan, who knew the tribe well, derives *File*, the old Irish word for poet, from *fi*, poison, and *li*, brightness; because in eulogy the poet is bright, but in satire he is venomous. The poets were extortionate, too, in exacting rewards for their eulogistic verses, so that the order came to be more feared than loved, and at length incurred the danger of extinction, as we shall see further on. Hence, too, it is expressly ordained in the *Senchus Mor* that the poet who demands an excessive reward, or claims an amount to which he is not entitled, or composes unlawful satire, is to be deprived of half his 'honour price' for the first and second offence, and of his full honour price, or social status, for the third. Among the four dignitaries of a territory who might be degraded, besides the false-judging king, the stumbling bishop, and the unworthy chief, was the fraudulent poet, who demanded an exorbitant reward for his compositions.

No man was qualified to become Chief-poet, or Doctor in Poetry—'Ollamh-poet'—who was not able to compose an extempore stanza on any subject proposed to him. And the way in which it is done is this: "When the poet sees the

person or thing before him he makes a verse at once with the ends of his fingers, or in his mind without studying, and he composes and repeats at the same time."[1] This, however, was after the reception of the New Testament in the time of St. Patrick. "Before Patrick's time the poet placed his (divining) staff upon the person's body, or upon his head, and found out his name, and the name of his father and mother, and discovered every unknown thing that was proposed to him in a minute or two or three." But St. Patrick abolished these profane rites amongst the poets when they believed, for they could not be performed without offering to idol gods, and thenceforward he made the profession pure.[2]

The chief duty of the Historic Poet, or Chronicler, was to register the genealogies of the men of Erin, and to recite lays of battle, and rhymed stories or tales of Courtships, Voyages, Cattle-spoils, Sieges, Slaughters, and other moving incidents by field and flood. The Ollamh-poet, or Doctor of Poetry, was required by law to spend at least twelve years in careful preparation for his final degree, and to have prepared for public recitation seven times fifty tales or stories of the character already indicated. He was also required to be perfectly familiar with the pedigrees of the principal families, their topographical distribution, the synchronisms of remarkable events both at home and abroad, and the etymologies of names in Erin. He was besides required to know the artistic rules of poetry, and to have a knowledge of the seven kinds of verse and their various metres. It is evident that these manifold accomplishments required long and careful study; and the necessity of this training explains, what many persons think incredible, the wonderful accuracy of our ancient historical and genealogical records, which the evidence of facts now proves to be on the whole undoubtedly authentic and trustworthy documents.

In the *Book of Ballymote* there is a long list of great historians and poets, who flourished in ancient Ireland; many of them, however, are now known only by name. All our ancient records point to the fact that the Tuatha de Danaan, who colonized this country before the Milesians, were a people of considerable civilization. Their royal family seems to have possessed great culture. Daghda, the king, and his wife the Great Queen—Mor Rigan—are both represented as distinguished poets, who flourished more than 1,000 years before

[1] *Senchus Mor*—Introduction. The ends of his fingers were probably employed to count the syllables and feet.

[2] See Introduction to the *Senchus Mor*.

Christ. Diancecht, the royal physician, was also a distinguished judge and poet; his daughter, the princess Etan, was a poetess; and her son was no less remarkable for poetic talent. About the same period flourished the poet Ogma, the traditional inventor of the Ogham alphabet.

The Milesians cultivated poetry with equal zeal. We have already referred to the poet-judge, Amergin, and we are told that a poet called Cir, and a harper named Ona, were amongst the first Milesian colonists. After the conquest of the country by the brothers Heber and Heremon, it was resolved to cast lots for the possession of these distinguished bards. The poet fell to Heremon and the harper to Heber, whence it came to pass that the Northerns were, in after times, distinguished for poetry; but the gift of music remained with their Southern brothers.

There is still extant[1] a curious genealogical poem attributed to Conor of the Red-Brows (about B.C. 6) which O'Curry seems to have regarded as genuine. But the most remarkable remnant of pre-Christian literature, if, indeed, it can be regarded as such, is the Dialogue of the two Sages, which is attributed to the reign of Conor Mac Nessa, king of Ulster, about the period of the birth of Christ. These two sages were Ferceirtne, the royal poet of Emania, and Neidhe, son of Adhna, the predecessor of Ferceirtne in the Chair of Poetry. The young Neidhe, after completing his education at home, went to Scotland, where he still further pursued his studies. Upon learning the death of his father he returned home, and happening to find the chief poet's chair just then empty by the temporary absence of the Professor Ferceirtne, who had succeeded his father, he put on the poet's Gown which he found lying on the chair, and sat down himself in state in the vacant seat. Thereupon Ferceirtne returned, and finding his place occupied, asked in poetic phrase who was the distinguished stranger upon whom rested the splendour of the poet's Gown. Neidhe answered him in language as poetic as his own, and thereupon began the famous Dialogue, in which the rival poets displayed all their various accomplishments in literature, history, and druidism. The victory was finally gained by the youthful Neidhe, who proved himself fully worthy of his father's Chair; but with modest condescension he yielded the place to the elder Ferceirtne, and consented to become his pupil and destined successor. The language of the Dialogue shows its great antiquity; but the frequent allusions, although only by way of prophecy to Christian usages, throw grave doubt on its authenticity.

[1] In the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

Learning is said to have greatly flourished in Erin during the reign of Conor Mac Nessa. He was certainly a bountiful benefactor to the poets; and, when their numbers and avarice raised loud complaints against them in other parts of the country, he invited the whole tribe to his own kingdom of Ulster, where he entertained them hospitably for seven years.

Ollioll Olum, that is Ollioll the Sage, was, as his name implies, a learned poet, who flourished from A.D. 186 to 234. He is said to have written several poems of great merit, three of which, according to O'Curry, are still preserved in the *Book of Leinster*. It is said also that Finn Mac Cumhaill was a poet as well as a warrior; and several poems are attributed to him in our ancient books

He was at least the father of Erin's greatest poet—from him and "Graine of the golden hair the primal poet sprung." Finn flourished during the later heroic period, which corresponds to the third century of the Christian era. Ossian, or more properly Oisin, his son, is the Homer of Gaedhlic song, whose name and fame have floated down to us on the stream of time from those far distant and misty ages. Many poems still extant are attributed, and perhaps justly, to the grand old warrior Bard of Erin. The publications of the Ossianic Society have done much to make the history of the heroic period familiar to modern readers. More than one of our Irish poets,[1] too, have, with the quick ear of genius, caught up the faint echo of Ossian's song, and once more attuned the harp of Erin to the thrilling melodies of her heroic youth. Once more the Fenian heroes begin to tread the hills of fame, and the spirit of Ossian's vanished muse, like the quickening breath of spring, is felt over all the land.

Ossian! two thousand years of mist and change
Surround thy name—
Thy Fenian heroes now no longer range
The hills of fame.
The very name of Finn and Goll sound strange—
Yet thine the same,
By miscalled lake and desecrated grange,
Remains, and shall remain.

The Druid's altar and the Druid's creed
We scarce can trace;
There is not left one undisputed deed
Of all your race,
Save your majestic song, which hath their speed
And strength and grace,
In that sole song they live and love and bleed,
It bears them on through space. —*T. D. M'Gee.*

[1] Notably Ferguson and De Vere, with Mangan and T. D. M'Gee.

III.—The Brehons.

They formed the third of the learned and specially privileged Orders in ancient Erin. During the pre-Christian period the customary laws, by which the Celtic tribes were governed, were formulated in brief sententious rhymes. These rhythmical maxims of law were at first transmitted orally, but afterwards in writing from each generation of Poets to their successors. For up to the first century of the Christian era the Files or Poets had not only the custody of the laws, but also the exclusive right of expounding them to the people, and pronouncing judgments both civil and criminal. Even when the King himself undertook to adjudicate, the File was his official assessor, and the royal judge was guided by his advice in the administration of justice. The Poets were exceedingly jealous of this great privilege, and in order to exclude outsiders from any share in the administration of the law they preserved the archaic legal formula with the greatest secrecy and tenacity.

But as we have already seen, this jealous spirit overreached itself, and in the reign of Conor Mac Nessa the men of Erin resolved to deprive the Poets of this exclusive privilege, and throw open the office of Brehon to all who duly qualified themselves by acquiring the learning necessary to enable them to discharge its duties.

It was after the office was thus thrown open to men of talent and industry that some of those ancient judges flourished in Erin, whose names and decisions are spoken of with the greatest reverence in the *Senchus Mor*. "It was," we are there told, "Sen, son of Aighe, who passed the first judgment respecting Distress at a territorial meeting held by the three noble tribes who divided this island." This points to legislation on the subject of Distress formulated at a tribe-assembly by a great jurist, and then solemnly ratified by popular consent. The gloss on this text adds that Sen was of the men of Connaught, and that the meeting was held at Uisnech in Westmeath. Another distinguished judge was Sencha, son of Ailell, on whose face three permanent blotches appeared whenever he pronounced a false judgment. Connla Cainbrethach (of the Fair Judgments) was the chief legal doctor of Connaught; he excelled the men of Erin in wisdom, for he was "filled with the grace of the Holy Ghost."[1] He it was who said that it was God, and not the Druids, who made the heavens, and the earth, the sun and the moon and

[1] Introduction to the *Senchus Mor*.

the sea. This seems to imply that Connla was wise and courageous enough to reject the philosophy, and probably also the worship of the Druids. The Light had already arisen in the east, and the first faint dawnings of Christianity were beginning to illumine the horizon of Erin. Morann, another great judge, who flourished during the first century of our era, wore a chain around his neck, and if ever he pronounced a false judgment the chain tightened around his neck; but it began to expand again, when he came to speak what was just and true. These and other great judges of the same period appear to be undoubted historical characters, whose wisdom and learning, hallowed by the reverence of ages, appeared to their successors to be in some way divinely inspired. They were, it is true, at the time without the light of Revelation to guide them, but as the gloss says, the grace of the Holy Ghost would not be wanting to help men, who were striving according to their conscience to be just and good.

Cormac Mac Art, of whose writings we shall presently speak, did much to encourage the systematic study of law amongst the Brehons. He appears to have been the first who reduced to writing the traditional legal maxims of the Brehon's court, and thus may be regarded as the author of the earliest Code of Laws in pagan Ireland. This great work was afterwards purified and perfected in the time of St. Patrick, when the *Senchus Mor*, as it is now known, was first compiled.

These three Orders of Druids, Bards, and Brehons were, as we have seen, close corporations, invested with many privileges, and communicating a professional knowledge for the most part by oral instruction to their disciples. This course of instruction was very long and elaborate, sometimes extending to a period of twenty years. It included, as in more modern times, various steps or degrees of learning, the highest of which always was that of Ollamh or Doctor, whether in law, poetry, or divinity. The ordinary course was twelve years, and each year's work seems to have been as carefully fixed as in a modern college or university. A great portion of the work, after the purely elementary studies, consisted in getting off by rote either the bardic tales, or legal maxims with their leading cases, or historical poems and genealogies. This included a very perfect knowledge of topography, chronology, and family history. Versification of a very artificial and complicated character was also a portion of the programme. Besides the students had undoubtedly, at least in pre-Christian times, some kind of 'secret' language known only to the initiated. It would seem as if each pro-

fession or school had its own peculiar Oghamic alphabet, the key of which was known only to themselves; but in this matter we have no certain knowledge, and are left almost entirely to pure conjecture. Hereafter we shall see that the legal relations between the professor and his pupils were definitely ascertained, and are laid down in that portion of the Brehon Code which deals with the Law of Social Connections.

IV.—The Ogham Alphabet.

We shall see presently, when treating of the literary history of Cormac Mac Art, that the use of letters, and most probably of Roman letters, was quite common in Erin before the coming of St. Patrick. Besides the Roman alphabet there was, however, an earlier and ruder alphabet, which seems to have been used in Erin even in the pre-historic times. This is called the Ogham alphabet which has had a very strange and curious history. It is a singular fact that all knowledge of the Ogham alphabet, as well as of the existence of any inscriptions written in its peculiar characters, had for a considerable period completely disappeared from the minds of Irish scholars. Yet the Ogham score was all the time contained in the *Book of Ballymote*,[1] and the key to its interpretation also. Inscribed stones too were thrown about unnoticed in various parts of the country down to the year 1820, when Mr. John Windele discovered the first inscription in the co. Cork.

Since that time no less than 200 inscribed stones have been discovered in various parts of the country, but especially in the South and West; and Irish scholars have directed their attention to decipher and explain these mysterious and time-worn lines. Twenty-two stones inscribed with similar characters have been found in Wales and Devonshire, that is in the South and West of England, and ten in Scotland. Almost all these inscriptions have been examined by the late Mr. Brash of Cork, a most painstaking and accurate investigator, who has published the result of his labours in a very interesting work on the subject.[2] His conclusions may be briefly summed up as follows[3]:—

The inscriptions have been invariably found on pillar stones and flags, and are nearly all of a sepulchral character. The lettering is in a style peculiar to the Gaedhlic race, and represents a very ancient dialect of the Gaedhlic language. The inscribed stones are found only in those districts, where

[1] And also in the *Book of Leinster*. [2] "Ogham Inscribed Monuments."
[3] Page 373.

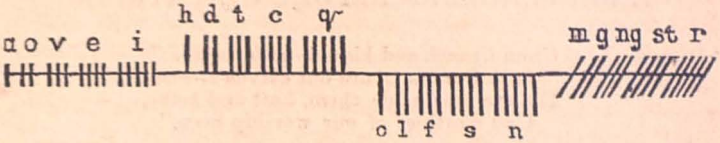
the Gaedhils are known to have established themselves; and the mode of forming the characters and formulating the inscriptions is the same in Ireland, in Wales, and in Scotland. He asserts, moreover, that no Ogham monument hitherto discovered bears any trace of any Christian formula, or any symbol of Christian hope;[1] that any such symbols when found upon an Ogham stones, are manifestly of later date than the original inscription; and that the allusions in our ancient MSS. to the Ogham mode of writing have reference only to pre-Christian times. He thinks too that the Ogham mode of writing was not invented in Ireland, but carried to this country by a colony that landed on our south-western shores, and moved gradually from West to East, and thence across the Channel to Wales. He adds that in all probability this colony came originally from the East, then settled for some time in Egypt, and migrated thence to Spain—conclusions that are all in conformity with the common traditional account of the advent of the Milesian race to this country, as contained in our own ancient Books.

The invention of the Ogham is attributed in bardic history to Ogma, son of Elathan, a prince of the Tuatha de Danaans, that people whom all our national traditions represent as a more cultured race than any of the other colonies that took possession of this island in primitive times. The most singular fact connected with the Ogham inscriptions is their geographical distribution. They are in Ireland almost all confined to the South and West, and to those parts of Wales and England that could be most easily reached from the South of Ireland. The few inscriptions found elsewhere in Ireland are only found in those places, to which we have reason to know that families from the South-West migrated in early times. This certainly would seem to indicate that an immigrant colony landed somewhere in Kerry; and gradually diffusing themselves through the country carried this archaic form of writing along with them; but either they never succeeded in occupying the whole country, or before the occupation of the remoter parts they gradually gave up the Ogham, and adopted a form of writing more suitable for general use, but not so well adapted for brief permanent inscriptions in stone. Mr. Brash has declared that no Oghams of a Christian character have yet been discovered, nor is there any coeval reference to any Christian symbols on the Ogham pillar-stones, a fact which, if true, clearly proves that all the Oghams date from Pagan times. In most cases they are sepulchral inscriptions of the briefest character, merely giving

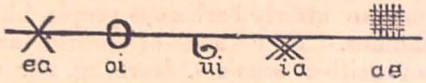
[1] The Scottish Ogham stones, or at least some of them, certainly bear Christian symbols. See Anderson's *Lectures*, 2nd Series, Lecture V.

the name of the deceased and the name of his father with, in a few instances, one or two short laudatory epithets.

The letters of the Ogham alphabet are divided into four groups of five letters each, twenty in all. Taking the angular edge of the upright pillar to be represented by a straight line the following is the score :—



Besides these we find a few dipthongal symbols, but apparently of later date : —



The line on which the letters are written is nearly always the rectangular line on the left hand side of the upright flag, facing the spectator. The inscription begins below at the left hand corner, and is read upwards, but sometimes it is continued downwards on the right hand angular line of the pillar on the same face. The vowels are generally not much larger than points on the very angle of the stone, or very short lines cutting the angular line ; the consonants are much longer scores drawn to the left or to the right of the angular line as the word requires; the last five scores are longer lines across the angular line and oblique to it.[1]

From various references in our ancient MSS. it appears that the Oghams were written not merely on stones, but also on rods and tablets of wood, which could be easily tied up in bundles and carried from place to place. A letter written to a friend might thus consist of a bundle of rods, duly marked and numbered. The bark of trees, being easily notched, was probably used for the same purpose, and thus even before the introduction of parchment and Roman letters, there would be no want of writing materials. There is no evidence that before the introduction of Roman letters there was any other kind of alphabet in use except the Ogham. But as the Druids of Gaul, in the time of Cæsar, were acquainted with the use of the Greek letters, why should not the 'more learned' Druids of Britain and Ireland be familiar with the Greek or Roman alphabet? It will be seen in the next chapter that there is every reason to conclude that at least after the Roman occupation of Britain, they were quite familiar with Roman letters and Roman writing.

[1] Dr. Graves has proved that this score or key of the Ogham is correct by *a priori* reasoning, showing what *ought* to be the value of the symbols from the frequency of the recurrence of the letters which they represent in old Irish.

CHAPTER II.

IRISH SCHOLARS BEFORE ST. PATRICK.

"Crom Cruach and his sub-gods twelve,"
Said Cormac, "are but carven treene;
The axe that made them, haft and helve,
Had worthier of our worship been."

—*Ferguson.*

We are frequently told that before the time of St. Patrick the Irish were an utterly barbarous people like the North American Indians. They had of course an unwritten language, but neither scholars, learning, nor even letters. Vague statements of certain Roman writers are cited in proof of these assertions—we shall appeal to the evidence of facts. The Roman writers of that period knew far less of ancient Ireland than even we do at present. It was beyond the sphere of their knowledge, as well as of their empire. But as a matter of fact the statements of Roman historians, so far as they go, tend to prove that a considerable amount of civilization existed in Erin during the time of the Roman occupation of Britain; and in proof of this statement it is quite enough to examine the history of Cormac Mac Art.

I.—Cormac Mac Art.

The reign of Cormac Mac Art furnishes, perhaps, the most interesting chapter in the history of pre-Christian Ireland. He may be regarded with justice as the greatest king that ever reigned in ancient Erin. He was, as our poets tell us, a sage, a judge, and a scholar, as well as a great prince and a skilful warrior. His reign furnished, indeed, many rich themes for the romantic poets and story-tellers of subsequent ages, in which they greatly indulged their per-fervid Celtic imagination. But the leading facts of his reign are all within the limits of authentic history, and are provable by most satisfactory evidence.

Cormac was the son of Art the Solitary, or the Melancholy, as he is sometimes called, and was grandson of the celebrated Conn the Hundred-Fighter. Hence he is sometimes called Cormac O'Cuinn, as well as Cormac Mac Art. His father was slain about the year A.D. 195, in the great battle of

Magh Mucruimhe where, as at the battle of Aughrim in the same county, a kingdom was lost and won. Magh Mucruimhe was the ancient name of the great limestone plain extending from Athenry towards Oranmore; and the spot where King Art was killed has been called Tulach Art even down to our own times. It was between Oranmore and Kilcornan, and close to the townland of Moyvaela.[1] The victor in this great battle was Lughaidh, surnamed Mac Con, who had been for many years a refugee in Britain, and now returned with the king of that country and a host of foreigners to wrest the kingdom from Art, who was his maternal uncle. The flower of the chivalry of Munster perished also on that fatal field; for the seven sons of Ollioll Olum who had come to assist King Art, their mother's brother, were slain to a man on the field or in the rout that followed.

Fortunately for young Cormac, the king's son, he was just then at fosterage in Connaught, probably with Nia Mor, who was his cousin, and one of the sub-kings of the province at that time. So Mac Con, the usurper, found no obstacle to prevent him assuming the sovereignty of Tara; and we are told that he reigned some 30 years, from A.D. 196 to 226.

Meantime young Cormac was carefully trained in all martial exercises, as well as in all the learning befitting a king, until he came to man's estate. Then he came to Tara in disguise, and according to one account, was employed in herding the sheep of a poor widow, who lived close to Tara, when some of the sheep were seized for trespassing on the queen's private green or lawn. When this case of trespass was brought before the king in his court on the western slope of the Hill of Tara, he adjudged that the sheep should be forfeited for the trespass. "No," said Cormac, who was present, "the sheep have only eaten of the fleece of the land, and in justice only their own fleece should be forfeited for that trespass." The bystanders murmured their approval, and even Mac Con himself cried out—"It is the judgment of a king"—for kings were supposed to possess a kind of inspiration in giving their decisions. Then immediately recognising Cormac, whom he knew to be in the country, he tried to seize him on the spot. But Cormac leaped the mound of the *Claenfert*, and not only succeeded in effecting his escape, but also in raising such a body of his own and his father's friends, that he was able to drive the usurper from Tara. Mac Con fled to his own relatives in the South of Ireland, where he was shortly afterwards killed, at a place called Gort-an-Oir, near Cahir, in the Co. Tipperary.

[1] So vivid is the local tradition that a poor woman came and showed me the very spot on which the King was slain beside the well at which he stopped his horse to snatch a drink.

So Cormac, disciplined in adversity, came to the throne in the year A.D. 227, according to the Four Masters.[1] During the earlier years of his reign he was engaged in continual wars with the provincial kings, who had yet to learn that Cormac was their master in fact as well as of right. We are told that he fought no less than fifty battles against these turbulent kings to vindicate his own position as High King of Erin. The accurate Tighernach furnishes us with brief notices of those various battles against the refractory sub-kings. In one year he fought three battles against the Ultonians. In another he fought four times against the Momonians. The Leinster King, Dunlaing, taking advantage of Cormac's absence from Tara, attacked the royal rath itself, and wantonly slaughtered thirty noble maidens with their attendants—thirty for each—who lived in a separate building on the north-western slope of Tara. Cormac promptly avenged this awful massacre by invading Leinster, and putting to death twelve sub-kings of that province; and besides he increased and enforced the payment of the ancient Borumean or cow-tribute imposed by his predecessors on the same province. The Ultonians, however, were his most inveterate foes; and twice, it seems, they succeeded in "deposing" him, that is, in driving him for some months from Tara. At length, however, the king gained a complete victory over his northern rivals, with the aid of Tadhg, a grandson of Ollioll Olum, and his Munster auxiliaries. Cormac rewarded the Munster hero by giving him, as he had promised, as much of the territory of Meath as Tadhg could drive round in his chariot from the close of the battle till sunset. The veteran hero, spent with loss of blood and battle-toil, still contrived to drive his chariot round a district extending from Duleek to the Liffey, which was afterwards called Cianachta—the land of Cian's descendants. Tadhg's father was Cian, son of Ollioll Olum, hence the name.

Cormac, now undisputed master of his kingdom, took measures to preserve the public peace and secure the prosperity of his dominions. He was the first, and we may say also, the last king of Erin, who maintained a standing army to check the arrogance of his turbulent sub-kings. This Fenian militia was, it is said, modelled after the Roman legions, which Cormac might have seen, or heard of at that time in Britain. They were quartered on the people in

[1] It was A.D. 218 according to Tighernach.

winter; but in summer they lived on the produce of the chase, and gave all their leisure to martial exercises. By this means they became most accomplished in all feats of arms, so that the fame of these Fenian heroes has come down to our own time in the living traditions of the people. The celebrated Finn Mac Cumhail was their general—a poet too, it was said, he was, and a scholar, as well as a renowned warrior. Ossian, the hero-poet, was his son; and the brave and gentle Oscar, who fell in the fatal field of Gabhra, was his grandson.

We are also told that Cormac kept a fleet on the sea for three years, and doubtless swept away the pirate ships of Britain and the islands, that used to make descents from time to time on the eastern coasts of Ireland.

But it is with the literary history of King Cormac's reign we are most concerned, and to this we invite the special attention of the reader. His first work was to re-establish the ancient Feis of Tara.

Tara even then had been the residence of the High Kings of Erin from immemorial ages. Slainge, the first king of the Firbolgs, was its reputed founder; and all the kings of that colony, as well as of the Tuatha De Danaan and Milesian race, had usually dwelt on the same royal hill. Ollamh Fodhla, one of the most renowned kings in the bardic history, "reigned forty years and died in his own house at Tara." It is said that this king was the first who convened the great Feis of Tara to legislate in solemn assembly for all the tribes of Erin. O'Flaherty adds that the same ancient monarch founded a "Mur Ollamhan," or college of learned doctors at Tara; but Petrie could find no authority for this statement except the term "Mur Ollamhan," which might, however, simply mean the *mur*, or fortified house of Ollamh Fodhla himself.

During the shadowy period that follows down to the Christian era, we hear little of Tara even in bardic history. An undoubtedly historical king, Tuathal Teachtmar, about the year 85 of the Christian era, took a portion of each of the four provinces to make a mensal demesne for the High King of Tara. He convened the states of the kingdom, too, on the royal hill in solemn assembly, and induced the assembled kings and chiefs to swear by all the elements that they would always yield obedience to the princes of his own race.

The Feis of Tara, then, was in existence before the time of Cormac; but it was seldom convened, and had almost

fallen into disuse. Cormac it was, who made arrangements for the regular meetings of that great parliament of the nation, and provided adequate accommodation for the assembled notables. Here we are on firm historic ground and can enter into more minute details with security.

The object of this Feis of Tara was mainly three-fold.[1] First, to enact and promulgate what was afterwards called the *cain*-law, which was obligatory in all the territories and tribes of the kingdom, as distinguished from the *urradhus*, or local law. Secondly, to test and sanction the Annals of Erin. For this purpose each of the local Seanachies or historians brought in a record of the notable events that took place in his own territory. These were publicly read for the assembly, and when duly authenticated were entered on the great record of the King of Tara, called afterwards the "Saltair of Tara." Thirdly, to register in the same great national record the genealogies of the ruling families, to assess the taxes, and settle all cases of disputed succession among the tribes of the kingdom. Too often this was done by the strong hand; but it was Cormac's idea to fix the succession, as far as possible, according to definite principles amongst the ruling families. The absence of a strong central government to enforce this most wise provision was one main cause of the subsequent distracted state of the kingdom.

This great national assembly, convened for these purposes, met once every three years. The session continued for a week, beginning the third day before, and ending the third day after November day. When so many turbulent chieftains, oftentimes at feud amongst themselves, met together, it was necessary to keep the peace of Tara by very stringent regulations, enforced under the most rigorous penalties. It is to Cormac's prudent forethought we owe these regulations, which were afterwards inviolably observed as the law of Tara. Every provincial king and every sub-king had his own fixed place allotted to him near the High King by the marshals of Tara; and every chief was bound to take his seat under the place where his shield was hung upon the wall. Brawling was strictly forbidden, and to wound another was a capital crime.

In order to provide suitable accommodation for this great assembly, Cormac erected the *Teach Miodhchuarta*, which

[1] See O'Curry's *Lectures*, vol. ii., page 14, and Keating, *Reign of Tuathal Teachtmar*.

was capable of accommodating 1,000 persons, and was at once a parliament house, banquet hall, and hotel. We have two accounts of this great building, as well as of the other monuments at Tara, written about nine hundred years ago—one in poetry, the other in prose. The statements made by these ancient writers have been verified in every essential point by the measurements of the officers of the Ordnance Survey, who were enabled from these documents to fix the position and identity of all those ancient monuments at Tara.

"The *Teach Miodhchuarta*," says the old prose writer in the *Dinnseanchus*, "is to the north-west of the eastern mound. The ruins of this house—it was even then in ruins—are situate thus: the lower part to the north, and the higher part to the south; and walls are raised about it to the east and to the west. The northern side of it is enclosed and small; the lie of it is north and south. It is in the form of a long house, with twelve doors upon it, or fourteen, seven to the west and seven to the east. This was the great house of a thousand soldiers."[1] We ourselves have lunched on the grass-green floor of this once famous hall; and we can of our own knowledge testify to the accuracy of this ancient writer. The openings for the doors can still be traced in the enclosing mound; and curiously enough, one is so nearly obliterated that it is difficult still to say whether there were six or seven openings on each side. The building was seven hundred and sixty feet long, and originally nearly ninety feet wide, according to Petrie's measurements. There was a double row of benches on each side, running the entire length of the hall. In the centre there was a number of fires in a line between the benches, and over the fires was fixed a row of spits depending from the roof, at which a very large number of joints might be roasted. There is in the *Book of Leinster* a ground-plan of the building, and the rude figure of a cook in the centre turning the spit with his mouth open, and a ladle in his hand to baste the joint. The king of Erin took his place at the head of the hall on the south surrounded by the provincial kings. The nobles and officers were arranged on either side according to their dignity down to the lowest, or northern end of the hall, which was crowded with butlers, scullions, and retainers. They slept at night on the couches, but not unfrequently under them.

The appearance of Cormac at the head of this great hall

[1] See Petrie's *Antiquities of Tara Hill*, p. 129.

573.

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is thus described in an extract copied into the *Book of Ballymote* from the older and now lost *Book of Navan*[1] :—

"Beautiful was the appearance of Cormac in that assembly. Flowing and slightly curling was his golden hair. A red buckler with stars and animals of gold, and fastenings of silver upon him. A crimson cloak in wide descending folds around him, fastened at his neck with precious stones. A neck torque of gold around his neck. A white shirt with a full collar, and intertwined with red gold thread, upon him. A girdle of gold inlaid with precious stones was around him. Two wonderful shoes of gold, with golden loops, upon his feet. Two spears with golden sockets in his hands, with many rivets of red bronze. And he was himself besides symmetrical and beautiful of form, without blemish or reproach."

This might be deemed a purely imaginary description, if the collection of antiquities in the Royal Irish Academy did not prove beyond doubt that golden ornaments similar to those referred to in this passage were of frequent use in Ireland. In the year 1810 two neck torques of purest gold, the same as those described above, were found on the Hill of Tara itself, and are now to be seen in the Academy's collection.

"Alas," says an old writer, "Tara to-day is desolate; it is a green grassy land; but it was once a noble hill to view, the mansion of warlike heroes, in the days of Cormac O'Cuinn—when Cormac was in his glory."

Everything at Tara, even its present desolation, is full of interest, and reminds us of the days "when Cormac was in his glory." His house is there within the circle of the great *Rath na Riogh.* The mound where he kept his hostages may still be seen beside his Rath. The stream issuing from the well *Neamhnach,* on which he built the first mill in Ireland for his handmaiden, Ciarnaid, to spare her the labour of grinding with the quern, still flows down the eastern slope of Tara Hill, and still, says Petrie, turns a mill. Even the well on the western slope, beside which Cormac's *cuchtair,* or kitchen, was built, has been discovered. The north-western *claenfert,* or declivity, where he corrected the false judgment of King Mac Con about the trespass of the widow's sheep may still be traced. The Rath of his step-mother, Maeve, can be seen not far from Tara; and to the west of the *Teach Miodhchuarta* may be noticed *Rath Graine,* the sunny palace of his daughter, the faithless spouse of Finn Mac Cumhail.

O'Flaherty tells us on the authority of an old poem found

[1] *i.e. The Book of the Ua Chongxbhail.* kept probably in ancient times at Kildare.

in the *Book of Shane Mor O'Dugan*, who flourished about A.D. 1390, that Cormac founded three schools at Tara—one for teaching the art of war, the second for the study of history, and the third was a school of jurisprudence. It was, doubtless, the first regular college founded in ancient Erin, and like the school of Charlemagne, was within the royal palace. The fact is extremely probable, especially as Cormac himself was an accomplished scholar in all these sciences. This brings us to the literary works attributed to Cormac Mac Art by all our ancient Irish scholars.

The first of these is a treatise still extant in manuscript entitled *Teagusc na Riogh*, or *Institutio Principum*. It is ascribed to King Cormac in the *Book of Leinster* written before the Anglo-Norman Invasion of Ireland. It takes the form of a dialogue between Cormac and his son and successor, Cairbre Lifeachair; "and," says the quaint old Mac Geoghegan, "this book contains as goodly precepts and moral documents as Cato or Aristotle did ever write." The language is of the most archaic type; some extracts have been translated and published in the *Dublin Penny Journal*.

A still more celebrated work, now unfortunately lost, the *Saltair of Tara*, has been universally attributed to Cormac by Irish scholars. Perhaps we should rather say it was compiled under his direction. "It contained," says an ancient writer in the *Book of Ballymote*, "the synchronisms and genealogies, as well as the succession of the [Irish] kings and monarchs, their battles, their contests, and their antiquities from the world's beginning down to the time it was written. And this is the *Saltair of Tara, which is the origin and fountain of the histories of Erin* from that period down to the present time." "This," adds the writer in the *Book of Ballymote*, "is taken from the *Book of Ua Chongbhail*"—that is the *Book of Navan*—a still more ancient but now lost work. Not only do the writer in the ancient *Book of Navan*, and the copyist in the *Book of Ballymote*, expressly attribute this work to Cormac, but a still more ancient authority, the poet Cuan O'Lochain, who died in A.D. 1024, has this stanza in his poem on Tara:—

> "He [Cormac] compiled the *Saltair of Tara*,
> In that *Saltair* is contained
> The best summary of history;
> It is the *Saltair* which assigns
> Seven chief kings to Erin of harbours," &c., &c.

And it is, indeed, self-evident to the careful student of our annals that there must have been some one ancient

"origin and fountain" from which the subsequent historians of Erin have derived their information—which existing monuments prove to be quite accurate—concerning the reign of Cormac and his more immediate predecessors in Ireland. The man who restored the Feis of Tara, and who, as we shall presently see, was also a celebrated judge and lawyer, was exactly such a person of forethought and culture as would gather together the poets and historians of his kingdom to execute under his own immediate direction this great work for the benefit of posterity. Keating tells us that it was called the *Saltair of Tara* because the chief Ollave of Tara had it in his official custody; and as Cormac Mac Cullinan's Chronicle was called the *Saltair of Cashel*, and the Biblical Poem of Aengus the Culdee was called the *Saltair na Rann*, so this great compilation was named the *Saltair of Tara*. This, as O'Curry remarks, disposes of Petrie's objection that its name would rather indicate the Christian origin of the book. The answer is simple—Cormac never called the book by this name, as surely the compilers of the great works known as the *Book of Ballymote* or the *Book of Leinster* never called those famous compilations by their present names.

Cormac was also a distinguished jurist—of that we have conclusive evidence in the *Book of Aicill*, which has been published in the third volume of the Brehon Law publications. The book itself is most explicit as to its authorship, and everything in the text goes to confirm the statements in the introduction, part of which is worth reproducing here.

"The place of this book is Aicill close to Temhair [Tara], and its time is the time of Coirpri Lifechair, son of Cormac, and its author is Cormac, and the cause of its having been composed was the blinding of the eye of Cormac by Ængus Gabhuaidech, after the abduction of the daughter of Sorar, son of Art Corb, by Cellach, son of Cormac."

The author then tells us how the spear of Aengus grazed the eye of Cormac and blinded him.

"Then Cormac was sent out to be cured at Aicill [the Hill of Skreen] . . . and the sovereignty of Erin was given to Coirpri Lifechair, son of Cormac, for it was prohibited that anyone with a blemish should be king at Tara, and in every difficult case of judgment that came to him he [Coirpri] used to go to ask his father about it, and his father used to say to him, 'my son that thou mayest know' [the law], and 'the exemptions;' and these words are at the beginning of all his explanations. And it was there, at Aicill, that this book was thus composed, and wherever the words 'exemptions,' and 'my son that thou mayest know,' occur was Cormac's part of the book, and Cennfaeladh's part is the rest."

This proves beyond doubt that the greatest portion of this *Book of Aicill* was written by Cormac at Skreen, near Tara, when disqualified for holding the sovereignty on account of his wound. It was a treatise written for the benefit of his son unexpectedly called to fill the monarch's place at Tara. The text, too, bears out this account. Cormac apparently furnished the groundwork of the present volume by writing for his son's use a series of maxims or principles on the criminal law of Erin, which were afterwards developed by Cormac himself, and by subsequent commentators. That the archaic legal maxims so enunciated in the *Book of Aicill* were once written by Cormac himself there can be no reasonable doubt; although it is now quite impossible to ascertain how far the development of the text was the work of Cormac or of subsequent legal authorities, who doubtless added to and modified the commentary, whilst they left Cormac's text itself unchanged.

This *Book of Aicill*, the authenticity of which cannot, we think, be reasonably questioned, proves to a certainty that in the third century of the Christian era there was a considerable amount of literary culture in Celtic Ireland. These works are still extant in the most archaic form of the Irish language; they have been universally attributed to Cormac Mac Art for the last ten centuries by all our Irish scholars; the intrinsic evidence of their authorship and antiquity is equally striking—why then should we reject this mass of evidence, and accept the crude theories of certain modern pretenders in the antiquities of Ireland, who without even knowing the language undertake to tell us that there was no knowledge of the use of writing in Ireland before St. Patrick?

And is not such an assertion *a priori* highly improbable? The Romans had conquered Britain in the time of Agricola—the first century of the Christian era. The Britons themselves had very generally become Christians during the second and third centuries, and had, to some extent at least, been imbued with Roman civilization. Frequent intercourse, sometimes friendly and sometimes hostile, existed between the Irish and Welsh tribes especially. A British king was killed at the battle of Magh Mucruimhe in Galway, where Cormac's own father was slain. The allies of Mac Con on that occasion were British. He himself had spent the years of his exile in Wales. Captives from Ireland were carried to Britain, and captives from Britain were carried to Ireland. Is it likely then that when the use of letters was quite common in Britain for three centuries no knowledge of their use

would have come to Ireland until the advent of St. Patrick in the fifth century of the Christian era?

There is an ancient and well founded tradition that Cormac Mac Art died a Christian, or as the Four Masters say, "turned from the religion of the Druids to the worship of the true God." It is in itself highly probable. Some knowledge of Christianity must have penetrated into Ireland even so early as the reign of Cormac Mac Art. It is quite a popular error to suppose that there were no Christians in Ireland before the time of St. Patrick. Palladius had been sent from Rome before Patrick "to the Scots," that is the Irish, "who believed in Christ." Besides that intimate connection between Ireland and Britain, of which we have spoken, must have carried some knowledge of Christianity, as well as of letters, from one country to the other. King Lucius, the first Christian King of the British, flourished quite half a century before the time of King Cormac. Tertullian speaks of the Isles of the Britains as subject to Christ about the time that Cormac's father, Art, was slain at Magh Mucruimhe. There was a regularly organised hierarchy in England during the third century; and three of its bishops were present at the Council of Arles in A.D. 314.

Nothing is more likely, then, than that the message of the Gospel was brought from England to the ears of King Cormac; and that a prince, so learned and so wise, gave up the old religion of the Druids, and embraced the new religion of peace and love.

But it was a dangerous thing to do even for a king. The Druids were very popular and very influential, and moreover possessed, it was said, dreadful magical powers. They showed it afterwards in the time of St. Patrick; and now they showed it when they heard Cormac had given up the old religion of Erin, and become a convert to the new worship from the East. The king's death was caused by the bone of a salmon sticking in his throat, and it was universally believed that this painful death was brought about by the magical power of Maelgenn, the chief of the Druids.

"They loosed their curse against the king,
They cursed him in his flesh and bones;
And daily in their mystic ring
They turned the maledictive stones.

"Till where at meat the monarch sate,
Amid the revel and the wine,
He choked upon the food he ate
At Slettv, southward of the Boyne."[1]

[1] *Lays of the Western Gael.*

So perished A D. 267, the wisest and best of the ancient kings of Erin. Cormac, when dying, told his people not to bury him in the pagan cemetery of Brugh on the Boyne, but at Rossnaree, where he first believed, and with his face to the rising sun. But when the king was dead, his captains declared they would bury their king with his royal sires in Brugh :—

"Dead Cormac on his bier they laid ;
He reigned a king for forty years,
And shame it were, his captains said,
He lay not with his royal peers.

"What though a dying man should rave
Of changes o'er the eastern sea ;
In Brugh of Boyne shall be his grave
And not in noteless Rossnaree."

So they prepared to cross the fords of Boyne and bury the king at Brugh. But royal Boyne was loyal to its dead king; "the deep full-hearted river rose" to bar the way; and when the bearers attempted to cross the ford, the swelling flood swept them from their feet, caught up the bier, and "proudly bore away the king" on its own heaving bosom. Next morning the corpse was found on the bank of the river at Rossnaree, and was duly interred within the hearing of its murmuring waters. There great Cormac was left to his rest with his face to the rising sun, awaiting the dawning of that Glory which was soon to lighten over the hills and valleys of his native land.

Cormac Mac Art was not only himself a lover of letters, but seems to have transmitted his own talents to his family. There is a very ancient poem in the *Book of Leinster*, which has been published by O'Curry, and has been attributed to Ailbhe, daughter of Cormac Mac Art. The language is of the most archaic character, and the sentiments expressed are not inconsistent with the origin ascribed to the poem in the *Book of Leinster*. Still critics will be naturally sceptical as to the authenticity of the poem. Meave (Meadhbh), stepmother of Cormac, who has given her name to Rath Meave at Tara, is credited with being the author of a poem in praise of Cuchorb, in which his martial prowess and numerous battles are duly celebrated. This lady seems to have been decidedly 'blue' in her tastes, for she built a choice house within her Rath, where the chief master of every art used to assemble. She was amorous too, and "would not permit any king to reign in Tara who did not first take herself as wife." Perhaps there is some truth in the ancient and romantic story recorded in the same *Book of Leinster*, that when Cuchorb was killed, she was sorrowful in heart, and after

they set up the grave stone of the fallen hero, she chanted his death song in presence of the assembled warriors, who stood around his grave.

Another pre-Patrician, if not pre-Christian poet, to whom some extant poems have been attributed, was Torna Eigas, the bard of Niall of the Nine Hostages. Niall died in A.D. 405, twenty-seven years before St. Patrick came to preach in Erin; so that even if Torna Eigas, as Colgan thinks, became a Christian, his training and inspiration must belong to the pre-Christian times. If the works attributed to him are even substantially genuine, they must have been interpolated by later copyists with Christian references and Christian sentiments. O'Reilly mentions four poems as passing under his name. The first is addressed to King Niall his patron, and foster son. The second was designed to effect a reconciliation between Niall and the foster child of the poet, King Corc of Munster, who, as we shall see hereafter, certainly lived to become a Christian. In the third the poet describes the pleasant life which he spent with these two kings, his foster children, who lavished upon him alternately during his visits their friendship and their favours. But the fourth is by far the most interesting, for it describes the famous burying place of the Pagan kings of Erin, Relig na Riogh, at Rath Cruachan in Connaught. It consists of twenty-eight stanzas, and enumerates the great kings and warriors who sleep on the hill of Royal Cruachan, ending with the valiant Dathi, whose grave is marked by a red pillar stone, which stands there to-day, even as it stood before St. Patrick crossed the Shannon to preach the Gospel to Laeghaire's daughters on that famous hill. This poem has been published by Petrie in his Essay on the *Antiquities of Tara Hill.*

The history of the valiant King Dathi is full of charm for our Celtic poets, and several of them have sought, not unsuccessfully, to reproduce the spirit of the original poem by Torna Eigas. Better than all others poor Clarence Mangan tells in quite Homeric style:—

"How Dathi sailed away—away—
Over the deep resounding sea;
Sailed with his hosts in armour gray,
Over the deep resounding sea,
Many a night and many a day;
And many an islet conquered he,
Till one bright morn, at the base
Of the Alps in rich Ausonian regions,
His men stood marshalled face to face
With the mighty Roman legions. . . .

But :— Thunder crashes,
Lightning flashes,
And in an instant Dathi lies
On the earth a mass of blackened ashes.
Then mournfully and dolefully
The Irish warriors sailed away
Over the deep resounding sea."

Reference is made in our ancient extant manuscripts to several 'Books' now lost, which are said to have been written before the arrival of St. Patrick in Ireland. It is unnecessary, however, to refer to those in detail; because any statements about their character and origin can be little better than mere conjecture. O'Curry names several of them, and tells all that can possibly be known about them. The "Cuilmen" appears to have been one of the oldest and most celebrated, because it contained the great epic of ancient Erin known as the "Tain Bo Chuailnge." Another famous ancient 'Book,' now lost, was the "Cin Droma Snechta," or the Vellum Stave Book of Drom Snechta, as O'Curry translates it. It is quoted in the *Book of Ballymote*, and in the *Book of Lecan.*

Another lost work, to which we have already referred, was the *Book of Ua Chongbhail.* It was extant in the time of Keating, who quotes it as one of his authorities, but it has since been unfortunately lost, and nothing is now known of its contents.

II.—Sedulius.

It is said, however, that there were not only pagan writers and scholars, like Cormac Mac Art, in Ireland before the time of St. Patrick, but that several celebrated Christian writers, who flourished before the advent of our national Apostle, were of Irish birth or parentage. And this is the opinion, not merely of superficial writers, but of grave and learned men like Colgan, Usher, and Lanigan; and what is more, it has been admitted by foreigners as well as by our native authorities. These authorities have claimed for Ireland the great glory of having given birth to the celebrated Sedulius, the Christian Virgil, as he has been most appropriately called. The more doubtful honour of producing Caelestius, the associate of the heresiarch Pelagius, has been also claimed for Ireland; and according to others Pelagius himself was at least of Irish extraction. We propose to examine at some length the history of these writers, and especially to examine the evidence in favour of their alleged Irish origin. In the first place we shall give a full account.

so far as it is now possible to ascertain his history, of the celebrated poet Sedulius.

In the best MSS. the name given is always "Caelius Sedulius," and although the praenomen savours of Latin origin, and the nomen itself was not quite unknown in Rome,[1] still the name Sedulius gives decided indications of his Irish birth. At least two other distinguished Irishmen bore the same name. The first is that Sedulius of Irish origin, the Bishop of Britain, as he describes himself,[2] who subscribed the Acts of the Council of Rome held under Gregory II., in A.D. 721. The other, known as Sedulius the Younger, flourished in the first quarter of the ninth century, wrote a Commentary on St. Paul's Epistles, and, as we shall see, has been frequently confounded with his more celebrated namesake, the poet. The old form of the name in Irish was Siadhal, or Siadhel, now pronounced Shiel. But in these older forms of the language the letters were not mortified in pronunciation; and thus Sedulius is naturally the latinized form of the Irish name. From the dawn of our history it was a name celebrated in Irish literature, especially in the department of medicine. Colgan refers to eight distinguished Irishmen who bore the family name of Siadhal, amongst others to Siadhal, son of Luath, Bishop of Dubhlinn, whose death on the 12th of February, 785, is recorded in the Martyrology of Donegal. The Danes, indeed, had not arrived in Dublin so early as A.D. 785, nor is there any satisfactory evidence of a diocese of Dublin at that time. He may, however, have been an abbot in the place, with episcopal orders.

The oldest writer[3] who distinctly asserts that the poet Sedulius was an Irishman is John of Tritenheim, or Trithemius, as he is more generally called.[4] This Trithemius, Benedictine abbot of Spanheim, flourished towards the end of the fifteenth century, and was certainly a very learned man. In some of the statements, however, made in this paragraph, he is not supported by any ancient authority that we know of. It is, moreover, evident from the list of

[1] Apud Ciceronem Pro Domo Suâ, c. 3, and elsewhere.

[2] Sedulius Episcopus Britanniæ (Strathclyde?) de genere Scotorum, huic constituto vobis promulgato subscripsi. Apud Labbeum. Vol. iv.

[3] Dicuil, the Geographer, however, calls him 'noster Sedulius,' and he wrote in A.D. 825. See page 289.

[4] His statement is worth quoting. "Sedulius presbyter natione Scotus, Hildeborti Scotorum Archiepiscopi ab ineunte aetate discipulus, vir in divinis scripturis exercitatus, et in saecularibus litteris eruditissimus, carmine excellens et prosa, amore discendi Scotiam relinquens, venit in Franciam, deinde Italiam perlustravit, et Asiam, postremo Achaiae finibus excedens in urbe Roma mirabili doctrina clarus eluxit."

the writings of Sedulius which he gives, that he confounds the poet with the commentator on St. Paul and St. Matthew, who, as all admit, was an Irishman, but flourished nearly four centuries later than the poet. Colgan, Usher, Ware, and a host of other writers at home and abroad, have followed Trithemius, and made the poet an Irishman.

It is, however, certain that, although there is some evidence that he was of Irish birth, there is absolutely no evidence that he was a native of any other country. It was, indeed, said that the poet was a Spaniard, and Bishop of the Oretani, but Faustinus Arevalus, himself a Spaniard, and author of a very able dissertation on Sedulius, prefixed to his splendid edition of the *Christian Poets of the Fourth Century*, published at Rome in A.D. 1794, declares that love of truth compels him to admit that the story of his preaching at Toledo, and of his Spanish episcopacy, is fabulous.[1]

Let us now try to ascertain what is known with certainty of this great Christian poet, whether Irishman or not.

In the "Palatine" Codex of the Vatican Library, No. 242, there is a paragraph which states that "Sedulius was a Gentile, but learned philosophy in Italy, was afterwards converted to the Lord, and baptized by the priest Macedonius, then came to Arcadia, or according to other MSS., Achaia, where he composed this book," that is his *Carmen Paschale*.

In the Vatican Codex, No. 333, probably of the eleventh century, it is added that "St. Jerome, in his Catalogue of Ecclesiastical Writers, says that Sedulius was at first a layman, learned philosophy in Italy, and afterwards, by the advice of Macedonius, taught heroic and other kinds of metre in Achaia; he wrote his books in the time of Valentinian and Theodosius," etc. Substantially the same statement is found in nearly all the twelve MSS. in the Vatican.

The scribe attributes to St. Jerome, who died in A.D. 420, that continuation of Jerome's great Catalogue of Ecclesiastical Writers, which was really the work of Gennadius of Marseilles, who flourished in A.D. 495—the very time, as we shall see, that the writings of Sedulius were published. We find no statement of this kind about Sedulius in Gennadius' Catalogue, as actually published, but Sirmond declares that he himself saw in some copies of Gennadius, that Sedulius died during the reign of Valentinian and Theodosius the Younger, to the latter of whom, as he alleges, he had dedicated his work.

[1] See Migne's *Patrologia Lat.*, vol. 19, page 440.

We may then take it as certain that Sedulius flourished during their joint reigns, that is, at some period from A.D. 423 to 450, when Theodosius died; and in all probability Sedulius himself had died some years previously—that is, between A.D. 445 and 449. He is described as at first a layman and a Gentile, which is not at all unnatural, especially if he were a native of Ireland. There were indeed some Christians in Ireland before the time of St. Patrick, for Palladius was sent in A.D. 431, the year before the mission of St. Patrick "to the Scots who believed in Christ;"[1] but these Christians were not numerous. At the beginning of the fifth century, however, considerable intercourse, sometimes friendly, and sometimes hostile, existed between the Scots of Ireland and the natives of Roman Britain as well as of Roman Gaul. It would be very easy, therefore, for a young Irishman to join a band of his roving countrymen, and after learning Latin in the provincial schools of France or England, he would naturally in his search after philosophy, migrate to Italy, and there find the double treasure of faith and wisdom.

Sedulius is said to have penetrated from Italy to Achaia, where he became the pupil and intimate friend of the priest Macedonius. This much is manifest from his own writings, for in the dedication of his *Carmen Paschale*,[2] he touchingly alludes to the progress in Christian wisdom which he had made under the guidance "of his most holy father." He adds that previously he had devoted to secular studies the energies of that restless mind—vim impatientis ingenii—which Providence had given him; and had made his literary training subservient, not to the profit of his soul and the glory of his Maker, but to the fruitless tasks of this fleeting life. Arevalus justly observes that if Sedulius had been baptized by Macedonius, he would not have omitted all reference to it in this dedication, whence we may fairly conclude that although he received most of his religious training from the venerable Macedonius, he must have been already a Christian when he came to Greece.

The same dedication leads us to infer that at this time he was a member of some kind of religious institute, which was under the guidance of Macedonius, and in which he himself taught rhetoric and poetry by the advice of his spiritual father.

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[1] Ad Scotos in Christo credentes. Prosper (p. 43).

[2] Sancto et Beatissimo patri Macedonio presbytero Sedulius in Christo salutem.

He gives, too, a very pleasing picture of the members of that religious association—of the Venerable Ursinus—a prelate full of priestly dignity—who had been once a soldier of Cæsar, and was then a soldier of Christ; of Laurence, the incomparable priest, who gave up his patrimony to the Church and the poor; of Gallicanus, likewise a priest, well read in secular books, yet meekest of the meek, teaching the rule of Catholic discipline by word, but still more by example; of Ursicinus, also a priest, and a man "of hoary patience and youthful old age;" of Felix, the truly happy; and of many others equally worthy of the dedication of his book. He makes special reference to the virgin Syncletice, who seems to have been a deaconess of the Church, noble by blood, but still more illustrious by her virtues, chastened by fasts, nourished by prayer, and spotless in purity.[1] Moreover, he adds, she drank so deeply of Scriptural lore, that had not her sex forbidden it, she was in every way qualified to become the teacher of others. Her sister, too, the young Perpetua, though her junior in years, was her rival in virtue, the chaste spouse of an honourable marriage. Such was the society of which Sedulius was a member during his sojourn at Achaia—holy, learned, and loving.

It seems very probable that it was during these happy years that Sedulius composed his great poem in some sweet valley under the shadow of the steep Arcadian Mountains, whose bold spurs are washed by the glancing waters of the Corinthian Gulf. Although the work was formally dedicated to Macedonius, and copies were doubtless multiplied for the benefit of his familiar associates, it does not appear that it was published for the literary world in general during the lifetime of the author. That publication seems to have taken place some years later, as we shall presently see, and under the direction of one who was eminently well qualified for the task.

How or where Sedulius ended his life, we have no means of ascertaining. Some say he returned to Rome, where he died about A.D. 449; others make him a bishop, but the see which he ruled cannot be ascertained; while many think he ended his life in Greece, amongst those dear associates of whom he speaks so tenderly in the dedication.

But although the poet himself seems to have been during his lifetime somewhat indifferent to worldly fame,

[1] Jejuniis castigata, orationibus refecta, puritate mundissima.

his friends did not forget him.[1] There is a considerable variety of readings, but in substance all the MSS. agree that Sedulius left his poems scattered amongst his papers, and that the scattered portions of the *Carmen Paschale* especially were collected, arranged, and elegantly published by the ex-consul, Turcius Ruffus Asterius. We find two consuls of this name in the Fasti of the fifth century, one in A.D. 449, whose colleague was Protogenes, and the other in A.D. 494, whose colleague was Praesidius. Very many writers think that the publisher of Sedulius was that Asterius, whose consulate is fixed for A.D. 449. But as his praenomen was Flavius, it is much more probable that the consul of A.D. 494, who was also the editor of the splendid Medicean Codex of Virgil, must get the credit of collecting and preserving the poems of the great Christian poet who was perhaps Virgil's closest imitator.

Asterius prefixed to his edition an epigram,[2] which, according to some authorities, is addressed to Macedonius, the spiritual father of Sedulius; but as Macedonius was at this time, in all probability, some forty or fifty years dead, it is much more natural to suppose that the dedication of Asterius is addressed to the Pontiff Gelasius (A.D. 492-496), especially as the Pope, about that very time, had passed a signal eulogy on Sedulius, to which we shall immediately refer. In the year A.D. 494, or as others think in A.D. 495, that Pontiff held a council of seventy bishops, most learned men, in which he published his famous decree, "De recipiendis et abjiciendis Libris," which may be regarded as the first formal publication of an Index Expurgatorius. In this decree the Pontiff, after reciting the canonical books of the Old and New Testament, gives a list of the Fathers of the Church whose writings he particularly recommends to the perusal of the faithful. In this document emanating from the supreme

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[1] In most of the MSS. copies of his works we find the following paragraph:—"Hoc opus Sedulius in certas chartulas dispersum reliquit, quod recollectum, adunatum, atque ad omnem elegantiam divulgatum est a Turcio Ruffo Asterio, viro claro, exconsule ordinario, atque patricio."

[2] "Sume, sacer meritis, veracis dicta poetae,
Quae sine figmenti condita sunt vitio.
Quo caret alma fides, quo sancti gratia Christi
Per quam justus ait talia Sedulius."

Some critics suggest the reading:—

"Summe sacer meritis, veri accipe dicta poetae,"

which would leave no doubt that the epigram was addressed to Gelasius.

teaching authority in the Church, we find the following honourable mention of Sedulius:—

"ITEM VENERANDI VIRI SEDULII PASCHALE OPUS, QUOD HEROICIS DESCRIPSIT VERSIBUS, INSIGNI LAUDE PRAEFERIMUS."

After this formal and emphatic approbation of the writings of Sedulius by the Pope, his works speedily became popular in all the monastic schools. Cassiodorus (A.D. 470-562), the senator, statesman, and monk, closely studied the Christian poet in his far-famed retreat on the Calabrian shore, and proclaims him by excellence the "Poet of Truth."[1] Fortunatus, the laureate of the royal and saintly Radegonde, himself the author of the *Vexilla Regis* and the *Pange lingua*, ranks the "sweet Sedulius" with Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine.[2] The cruel Chilperic, an unworthy grandson of the great Clovis, instead of trying to govern his people like a king, spent his time in vain attempts to imitate the stately muse of Sedulius, and of course failed miserably in the attempt. Gregory of Tours tells us that his verses had no feet to stand on, and were composed in defiance of all the laws of metre.

The Irish monks of Bobbio carefully copied the poems of their great countryman, and the oldest existing MS. of the poet, which is still to be seen in the Library of the Royal Academy of Turin, is inscribed with the words—Liber Sancti Columbani de Bobbio.

Isidore of Seville, the greatest scholar of his age, compares Sedulius with his own great countryman, Juvencus, and recommends the study of their works in preference to those of the Gentile poets.[3]

Ildelfonsus describes him as the 'excellent' Sedulius, the poet of the Gospel, an eloquent orator, and truly Catholic writer; and another author declares that Sedulius left nothing unlearnt necessary to make him a perfect theologian, as well as a brilliant poet.[4] And in a somewhat similar strain Sedulius has been eulogised by all subsequent critics, from Bede to the present time.

Our remarks on the writings of Sedulius must necessarily

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[1] Liber xxvii. De Inst. Div. Lit. [2] L. 8. Carmen 9.

[3] "Ambo pares lingua, florentes versibus ambo,
Fonte evangelico pocula larga ferunt,
Desine gentilibus ergo inseruisse poetis,
Dum bona tanta potes quid tibi Calliroem?"

[4] Guiliehmus Eysengrein in Catalogo anno 412.

be very brief, and for convenience sake we shall follow the order of the excellent edition by Arevalus as given in Migne's Patrology.[1]

His great work was the *Carmen Paschale*, as he himself calls it, which is preceded by that dedicatory epistle to which we have already referred. It is accompanied with a prose version which he furnished at the special request of Macedonius, and which he calls the *Opus Paschale*. The prose only serves to make the poetry more intelligible for half-educated scholars, like the similar prose translations in the Delphin editions of the Latin poets. The style, too, of the explanation is wordy and laboured, quite unlike the limpid elegance of the poetry. The *Carmen Paschale* in the MSS. is divided into five books. The first treats of the creation and fall of man as well as of the principal miracles recorded in the Old Testament; the second gives a beautiful account of the incarnation and birth of our Lord and the wonders of the Holy Childhood; the third and fourth deal with the miracles and noteworthy events of our Saviour's public mission; whilst the fifth details the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. It is thus a poetic history of the wonders of the divine revelation as contained in the Old and New Testament. Each of the books contains from three to four hundred lines of heroic metre, in which the style and language of Virgil are as closely imitated as the nature of the subject will permit. The language is chaste, elegant, and harmonious; the verse is sweet and flowing, with scarcely a single rugged line, although sometimes one meets with a harsh or limping foot. The prosody, however, is on the whole wonderfully accurate, and the sentences are constructed with true Virgilian simplicity. The author had to deal with very many delicate topics, and he was of course greatly restricted in his choice of language by the necessities of the metre; yet in no single instance that we are aware of, has any fault been found with the poet on the score of any want of theological accuracy. The tone is generally elevated, imparting dignity by choice language even to commonplace topics, as Virgil does in the Georgics; but we cannot say that he often reaches the sublime. His muse takes few bold and daring flights, but, on the other hand, she never descends to what is mean or trivial. We would take the liberty of strongly recommending the careful perusal of this beautiful poem to priests who are anxious to read the great events of sacred history, clothed in elegant language and adorned with becoming imagery.

[1] Vol. xix.

We have next the "Elegia," containing 110 lines in elegiac metre, which form a collection of moral maxims and examples borrowed from the personages and facts of sacred history.[1] Every second line is made to begin and end with the same clause, but used in different senses. The reader will probably agree with us in thinking that this style of composition is more likely to develop ingenuity than inspiration.

After the "Elegia" is the truly beautiful hymn beginning with the words, "A solis ortus cardine," some portions of which are familiar to most of our readers. It is an abecedarian poem, the first stanza commencing with the first letter of the alphabet, A, the second with B, and so on through the letters. It contains 92 lines, or 23 stanzas, and details the leading facts of the life of Christ in language that is very terse and striking. The first seven stanzas are read by the Church in the Lauds of her greatest festival on Christmas Day; and the next four at first Vespers of the Epiphany, but in the first line for the latter feast the words—

Hostis Herodes impie
Christum,

are changed into—

Crudelis Herodes Deum
Regem.

It is noteworthy, too, that the Introit of the Mass of the Blessed Virgin—"Salve Sancta Parens enixa puerpera Regem," as well as several other expressions in the Divine Office, are borrowed from the *Carmen Paschale* of Sedulius.[2] At the end of his poems the author adds a short epigrammatic prayer, in which he asks that the doctrines of the life of Christ, which he has written, may remain engraven in his heart, and so by doing the divine will he may secure a share in the joys of heaven.[3]

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[1] The construction is too artificial to please the critics of our time, or to leave freedom of thought and language to the poet.

Primus ad ima ruit magna de luce superbus;
Sic homo cum tumuit *primus ad ima ruit.*

[2] See Lib. ii., l., 63 and 69. The whole passage, describing the Saviour's miraculous birth, is very beautiful.

[3] Haec tua perpetuae qui scripsi dogmata vitae
Corde, rogo, facias, Christe, manere meo;
Ut tibi quae placeant, tete faciente, requirens
Gaudia caelorum, te duce, Christe, metam.

We have two double acrostic poems, eloquent with the praises of the great Sedulius, one attributed to a certain Liberius, of whom nothing further is known, and the other to Belisarius, if that be the true reading, who in some MSS. is described as a scholastic—that is, master or professor of a school of rhetoric. According to other critics this Belisarius, who so highly eulogises our Sedulius, was no other than the great general, the saviour of the Roman Empire, who was driven by the ungrateful master whom he had served to beg his bread.

What is most remarkable in these two poems, is that in both the acrostic represents our author as SEDULIUS ANTISTES. The latter term is usually applied, at least by Christian writers, only to bishops, and certainly goes to show that the poet was elevated to the episcopal dignity. Alcuin also attributes the hymn, "*A solis ortus cardine*" to the "Blessed Bishop Sedulius," and Sigebert of Gembloux (died A.D. 1112), seems to have been of the same opinion. Yet, in several MSS. he is spoken of simply as a priest, and even of those authors who describe him as a bishop none has determined his see.

It is very doubtful, too, whether our poet has any claim to be venerated as a saint. Our latest Irish hagiologist,[1] following Colgan, gives a very full account of the venerable Sedulius, under date of the 12th of February. But the name does not occur in any Martyrology at home or abroad, for the "Siatal bishop" on the 12th February, of the Martyrology of Tallaght, is evidently the same as Siadhal, son of Luath, Bishop of Dublin, who, according to the Donegal Martyrology, died in A.D. 785. That the poet was, however, a holy and venerable man, is abundantly evident from his writings as well as from the high estimation in which he was held both by contemporary and subsequent writers. Asterius, his editor, calls him the "Just;" Alcuin calls him the "Blessed;" another ancient writer describes him as "Sanctus;" and our own Colgan justly designates him "the Venerable Sedulius." That his fame as a Christian poet has been wide and enduring is sufficiently evident from the fact that no less than forty-one different editions of his works have been published at various times and places for the last four hundred years; and we cannot help endorsing the indignant exclamation of a German critic—"It is a shame that the Christian poets should be so much neglected, that the youth of our

[1] O'Hanlon, *Lives of the Irish Saints*, vol. ii., p. 487.

schools should know nothing even of the name of a writer like Sedulius, who with equal piety and learning transferred from profane to sacred subjects the style and sweetness of the Mantuan bard."[1]

III.—Caelestius and Pelagius.

Ireland has also been credited with the doubtful honour of having given birth to Caelestius, the friend and associate of the celebrated heresiarch Pelagius. We believe that notwithstanding the authority of many eminent Irish scholars, we can show that Caelestius was not an Irishman, and that the idea of his being a 'Scot' arose from misunderstanding a passage in the writings of St. Jerome, which passage was the only authority ever alleged in favour of his Irish origin. This celebrated passage is contained in the *Preface to the Saint's Commentaries on Jeremias.* Here it is—"He (Grunnius), though silent now himself, barks by the mouth of the Alban dog, a corpulent and unwieldy brute, better able to kick than to bite, who derives his origin from the Scottish nation in the neighbourhood of Britain."[2] Now so far as we know, this solitary sentence is the only original authority for the Irish birth of Caelestius; yet as a matter of fact it does not appear to refer to Caelestius at all, but to Pelagius himself. Grunnius, to whom the context clearly shows that St. Jerome refers, was a nickname often given by the saint to Rufinus of Aquileia. Rufinus was then (*mutus*) silent, most probably in death, but still barks through his disciple Pelagius -- not Caelestius — who in the vigorous controversial language of the saint is described as an Alban or Scottish dog, filled with the porridge of his native country in the neighbourhood of Britain. As a matter of fact, however, Jerome does not say that the person of whom he is speaking was a Scot (whether of Erin or Alba), but that he was of Scottish origin, which is a very different thing. His words are—"Habet progeniem Scotticæ gentis." He is of Scottish extraction, which might be very well said of Pelagius, even though he were a Briton by birth.

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[1] Privata lectione evolvatur Sedulius antiquorum imitator, qui et verba Publii Maronis et contexendi suavitatem a seculari ad sacrum argumentum, tum scite tum pie accomodavit; indignum sane est christianos poetas adeo negligi ut ne nomen quidem juventuti scholasticae sit cognitum. Walch, *His. Crit.*, cap. 10, n. 7.

[2] Ipse mutus latrat per Albinum (in some MSS. Alpinum) canem grandem et corpulentum, et qui calcibus magis saevire possit quam dentibus; habet enim progeniem Scotticae gentis de Brittanorum vicinia.—*Praef. in Lib.* iii., *Jeremiæ.*

The great difficulty in the way of this explanation is that Pelagius is always described as a Briton, not as an Irishman or Scotchman. As a fact, however, at that time Scotland was included under the name of Britain; but whether it was or not, St. Jerome does not say that Pelagius was a Scot, but that he was of Scottish race, which is altogether different, and which is perfectly compatible with his British birth. The authorities indeed in favour of his being in some sense a Briton, are quite conclusive. St. Augustine, his greatest opponent, frequently speaks of Pelagius as a Briton.[1] St. Prosper of Aquitaine, who continued to assail him after the death of Augustine, describes him as a 'British snake;'[2] and in another passage he speaks of him as nurtured amongst the 'sea-girt Britons.' Elsewhere he describes Britain as the native land (*patria*) of the Pelagian heresy, which can be true only in so far as it produced Pelagius himself. Marius Mercator says,[3] like St. Jerome, that the first author of the heresy was the Syrian Rufinus, but being too cunning to expose himself to danger, he propagated his doctrines through the agency of the 'British monk' Pelagius. Everything, therefore, points to the fact that Pelagius was of British birth, but of Scottish origin. St. Jerome's expression—*per Albinum canem*—seems to point to a Scot of Alba rather than of Erin; but in any case the Scots of both countries, especially at this early period (A.D. 420), were of the same race. If Britain be taken to include Scotland, as it certainly did at that period, then 'de vicinia Brittanorum' must refer to Ireland; but it should be borne in mind that St. Jerome speaks not of Britain, but of the Britons—quite another thing.

But whether of Irish or Scotch descent, Pelagius was an able man. He appeared in Rome about the year A.D. 400. St. Augustine says he lived there for a long time and taught a school in that city. About the year A.D. 405 St. Chrysostom complained of the defection from his own supporters of the monk Pelagius, which would seem to imply that at that time he was known and esteemed at Constantinople, where he probably went to learn the Greek language, with which we know for certain that he was familiar. Before his departure from Rome, at the approach of Alaric in A.D. 410, he had published commentaries on the Pauline Epistles in which for the first time in expounding Rom. chap. v. verse 12, he gave expression to his heretical views. He had already acquired great

[1] *Epist.* 185, No. 1. [2] *Carmina.* [3] *Commonitorium.*

influence in the imperial city, for Augustine says that he was learned and acute, and that his letters were read by many persons for the sake of their eloquence and pungency.[1] We have a very favourable specimen of his composition still extant in his Epistle to the noble lady Demetrias, who was quite as remarkable for her virtues as for her wealth and learning. Augustine found it necessary to caution her against the snares of Pelagius, and whoever reads this letter will readily admit that the caution was by no means unnecessary, for in graceful and elegant language he conveys excellent rules for the guidance of devout souls, just barely flavoured with the poison of his dangerous and subtle heresy, so flattering to the instincts of noble and generous natures.

On the other hand there is nothing known in connection with the history of Caelestius that could lead us to suppose that he was either a Briton or a Scot. He was, it is said, of noble birth—most likely a Gaul or Italian—but being from infancy a eunuch he spent his youth in a monastery which at that time (before A.D. 400) he certainly could not find in Ireland. From this monastery he wrote three letters to his relations, which as Gennadius tells us were of great utility for the guidance of all persons really anxious to serve God.[2] He afterwards became an advocate (auditorialis scholasticus) and was doubtless practising in the Roman Courts when, about the year A.D. 400, he first met Pelagius in the imperial city. The latter was very anxious to secure such an ally for his own purposes, for Caelestius was a man of great eloquence and courage, as well as of much keeness in disputation—*acerrimi ingenii*—just the very thing the ruder British Provincial wanted in his associate. Thus it came to pass that Pelagius succeeded in alluring to his own views the young and brilliant advocate, through whom he hoped to disseminate his own doctrines throughout the chief cities of the empire. But to suppose that such a man as Caelestius, born of noble Christian parents, whose youth was spent in a monastery, and who was able to write a spiritual treatise in Latin before he left it, and afterwards became an advocate in Rome—to suppose that he was born in Ireland some fifty years before the advent of St. Patrick is altogether out of the question. As a matter of fact there is not a shadow of ancient authority for any such assumption.

[1] Propter acrimoniam et facundiam.
[2] "Omni Deum desideranti necessarias"

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CHAPTER III

LEARNING IN IRELAND IN THE TIME OF ST. PATRICK.

"'Tis morn on the hills of Innisfail."

—*M'Gee.*

We now come to discuss the state of learning in Ireland during the sixty years commonly assigned to St. Patrick's preaching, that is from A.D. 432 to 492. We have seen that when the Saint landed on our shores, he did not, as is sometimes ignorantly asserted, find the Irish tribes utterly savage and barbarous. He found an organized pagan priesthood, which had a learning and philosophy of its own, similar to that of Gaul and Britain, when those countries were conquered by the Romans. He found the customary laws of the tribes reduced to a definite legal system, and administered by a body of Brehons, or judges, who had been specially trained for that office; and he also found that the annals of the nation were carefully preserved, and that the territories, rights, and privileges of the sub-kings were definitely ascertained and faithfully recorded in a great national register. The leading men of the tribes were certainly acquainted not only with the primitive Ogham Alphabet, but also with the letters, if not with the language, used in Britain and in Gaul by the Romans.

If St. Patrick himself could learn the Irish language during his captivity in Antrim, there was nothing to prevent Irish captives learning something of the Roman customs and Roman letters in Britain, and bringing that knowledge back with them to Ireland. Our ports were more frequented[1] by foreign merchants than the ports of Britain; our chieftains frequently harried their coasts and carried off both Gaulish and British Christians as captives; Irish princes were sometimes refugees in Britain, and British princes were sometimes allies and sometimes refugees in Ireland. It was, therefore, quite impossible that some knowledge of the language, and of the arts of the British provincials should not, during a period of three centuries, cross the British seas into Ireland.

[1] Tacitus, *Agricola*, c. 24.

All our annals testify to the fact of this intercourse. Ireland was not surrounded by a wall of brass, or by a trackless sea, cutting off all communication with other lands. The wonder is not that something of Roman letters and civilization should penetrate to Erin—but the great wonder would be if the thing were otherwise.

The great defect in the Irish social system, as we have already observed, was the want of a strong central government. It is true that the Gaedhlic tribes in Erin recognised the supremacy of the High King of Tara; but that recognition was merely nominal. There was no really effective central government, strong enough to cause its authority to be enforced and respected throughout all the land. Able princes, like Cormac Mac Art, arose from time to time, who sought to correct this great evil. In proportion as they were successful in reducing the sub-kings to obedience, they were also able to extend the blessings of a yet imperfect civilization, which, however, could never come to perfection without an organized and settled government.

I.—St. Patrick's Education.

But now a great change came over all the land. St. Patrick not only introduced the Christian religion into Ireland, but profoundly modified the laws, customs, and literature of the nation. To his influence in these respects we wish to call attention at present; but first of all, it is necessary to understand the sources of his own intellectual training, and the literary as well as the religious influences that moulded his own mind. We do not propose to enter at all into any of the manifold controversies that surround the facts and dates of the life of our great Apostle, but merely to reflect on those acts which his biographers generally admit.

It is agreed upon all hands that the Saint derived his literary aquirements, such as they were, from Gaul.[1] Reference is made to three distinct sources whence he derived his education—to St. Martin, to St. Germanus, and to Saints of some islands in the Mediterranean. His biographers are not agreed either as to the order in which our Saint visited those masters of a spiritual life, or the number of years he spent under each, but all unite in pointing to these three sources whence St. Patrick derived his learning and his holiness.

[1] It is clear from his own confession that *Britain* (Brittaniae) was his native country (*patria*); but Britain then included Scotland.

It must be borne in mind that Patrick was made a captive at the age of sixteen, and that he spent six years in captivity on the slopes of Slieve Mish, in the county Antrim. His education in his youth seems to have been much neglected, for he tells us himself that although born of noble parents according to the flesh—his father, Calphurnius, was a decurio, that is, the head of a local municipium, most probably on the banks of the Clyde, in North Britain—still he had little or no knowledge of God, and could scarcely discern between good and evil. The years of his captivity served to open his mind to a higher spiritual life, but could afford him no opportunity of adding to his purely literary knowledge.[1] So when he succeeded under divine guidance in making his escape at the age of twenty-two, he was indeed a holy but certainly not a learned young man.

Escaping to France according to the generally received opinion, he first seems to have made his way to Tours, towards the closing years of the fourth century, for the date cannot be accurately fixed. At that time St. Martin, the soldier Saint, was Bishop of Tours, and led a life of extraordinary holiness and mortification at the monastery of Marmoutier, on the banks of the Loire, in the neighbourhood of that city. Many writers say that Patrick's mother, Conchessa, was a niece of St. Martin, and this fact would easily explain why St. Patrick fled for refuge and guidance to his venerable relative, whose fame at that time was spread over all France. The story of the relationship is strange enough, seeing that St. Martin was a native of Sabaria, in Pannonia, where he was born about A.D. 316. But though strange, it is not incredible, and goes far to explain the great veneration in which St. Martin of Tours has always been held in Ireland. The authors of the *Third* and *Fifth Lives of St. Patrick*, as printed by Colgan, tell us that the young Patrick spent four years under the guidance of St. Martin, who gave him, according to Probus, the tonsure and religious habit in his monastery of Marmoutier. It is not easy to fix the exact period. According to the common opinion, Martin died in A.D. 397, so that Patrick must have made his escape to Gaul in A.D. 393. Others, however, fix the date of St. Martin's death in A.D. 400 or 402, so that we shall not be far wrong if we suppose these years which Patrick spent under the guidance of St. Martin to have been the closing years of the fourth century.

[1] He became familiar with the Irish language, but it was, as he himself implies, at the expense of the vernacular, which in his case was the provincial Latin, a corrupt dialect.

They were certainly fruitful years for the young Apostle. In some respects the career of the soldier Saint was not unlike that of Patrick himself hitherto. His parents were gentiles, but Martin, in his youth, fled to the Church to become a catechumen and prepare himself for a life of holiness in the desert. Being, however, the son of a veteran—his father was a tribune in the imperial armies—they forced him at the age of fifteen to join the cavalry, and serve some twenty campaigns under Constantius and Julian the Apostate, before he recovered his freedom. He could, therefore, understand the dangers and difficulties that beset the path of his young relative, who was carried off a captive at the same age at which he himself had been forced to become a soldier. No one, too, was better qualified to guide the steps of Patrick up the steep ascent of virtue, and prepare him for his future apostolate than the aged soldier Saint.

The life of Martin and his monks at Marmoutier was the marvel of all the West. We have the picture drawn by one who witnessed it—by the eloquent, nobly-born, high-souled Sulpicius Severus, whose life of St. Martin is one of the most charming biographies ever penned.

He was indeed, the greatest example of saintly mortification hitherto seen in the West. When the people of Tours clamoured for Martin to become their Bishop, several prelates objected to his elevation, because his person was contemptible, his looks lowly, his clothes filthy, and his hair unkempt. The young soldier, it seems, had long before put off the mien and garb of a warrior, and put on that true nobility of soul, which so rarely accompanies gaudy apparel and lofty deportment. But in A.D. 371 they made him bishop all the same in spite of his mean appearance; yet Martin in no way changed his manner of life in consequence. He built himself a little cell close by his church, and there he spent his days, when he was not preaching to the people or traversing his diocese on foot.

But too many crowded round his cell in the great city, and then he betook himself to Marmoutier. It was at that time a lonely valley, less than two miles from Tours, on the right or north bank of the Loire, shut in on one side by a line of steep cliffs, and enclosed on the other by a sweep of the river, which at either extremity of the valley rushed close under the rocks and thus completely isolated the valley on both sides. Here Martin built himself a wooden cell, and was soon surrounded by a crowd of monks anxious to place themselves under his guidance. They lived for the most

part in the damp caverns between the cliffs that overhung the stream. At one period he had eighty monks under his control in this desert valley. They had no property of their own, says S. Severus, but lived in common, neither buying nor selling anything. The younger members spent most of their time in writing and sacred study; the older gave themselves up to prayer. They seldom left their cells except to go to the Church, or to take their solitary meal in the evening, it would seem—*post horam jejunii*—and they never tasted wine except in sickness. They were clad in hair cloth—anything else they regarded as a criminal indulgence. Yet many of them were amongst the noblest in the land, and several of them afterwards became bishops of various cities.

Such was the society at Marmoutier of which our St. Patrick became a member. There is no doubt, that as one of the juniors, he gave himself up to prayer, penance, and sacred study in order to prepare himself for that high mission of which God as yet had only given him a dim vision. Many writers say that Martin must have been dead before Patrick's arrival in Gaul, and that our saint did not come to Tours until several years later, probably about the year A.D. 409 or 410. It matters little for our argument whether Martin was himself alive or not—his spirit reigned in Marmoutier, his rule and his disciples were there:—

> "Dead was the lion; but his lair was warm;
> In it I laid me and a conquering glow
> Rushed up into my heart. Discourse I heard
> Of Martin still—his valour in the Lord,
> His rugged warrior zeal, his passionate love
> For Hilary, his vigils and his fasts,
> And all his pitiless warfare on the Powers
> Of Darkness."[1]

When Patrick had learned the discipline and divine wisdom of Marmoutier he seems to have spent some years with his friends in Britain,[2] and then in order to perfect himself in sacred studies, he put himself under the guidance of the great St. Germanus of Auxerre, who at that time enlightened all the Gauls.

Germanus was of noble birth, and completed his studies in Rome, where he adopted the profession of the law and practised for some time in the Courts with great applause. He was eagerly sought after by the first society in the

[1] *Legends of St. Patrick*, by Aubrey de Vere.

[2] This is manifest from the *Confession*—Et iterum post paucos annos eram in Britannis cum parentibus meis.

capital, and having married a rich and noble lady he settled at Auxerre, where he was made governor of the province. He was passionately devoted to the chase, and used to hang the spoils of his hunting expeditions on a stately pear tree that grew in the centre of the city, where they were eagerly scanned by an admiring crowd. The Bishop, St. Amator, not relishing this vain display, had the tree cut down in the absence of Germanus, who, hearing of this outrage on the chief magistrate of the city, sought out the prelate, breathing vengeance. But the Bishop seems to have disarmed his resentment, and shortly after, sensible of his own approaching end, and finding Germanus in the church, he ordered the doors to be closed, and the people crowding round the magistrate took off his fine clothes, while Amator tonsured him on the spot, cutting clean away all his flowing hair. The event proved that it was done by a divine inspiration.

After the death of Amator, Germanus became Bishop of Auxerre, and led a life of extraordinary virtue and austerity, as we know from his biography written by an almost contemporary author, Constantius.

From the moment he was tonsured, his wife became to him as a sister; he sold his property which was considerable, and gave the proceeds to the poor and to the Church. His food was the coarsest and scantiest; he never ate wheaten bread, nor used any wine, or oil, or even vinegar, or vegetables. Barley bread and water, or a little milk, was his only refection. Twice a year, at Christmas and Easter, he took a little wine with water. He tasted ashes before his food; and threshed and ground with his own hands the barley of which his bread was made. A tunic and hood over a hair shirt were his only clothing in winter and summer; his bed was made of planks strewn with ashes, which soon became as hard as the board itself. He slept in his clothes, seldom removing anything but his belt and sandals, and his only covering at night was a piece of coarse cloth. He had no pillow for his head, and spent a great part of the night in tears and prayers for the sins of his life Such was the episcopal life of the brilliant Germanus, the statesman and orator, the delight of Roman society, the keen huntsman in the field, the accomplished magistrate in the court; and such was the second teacher of St. Patrick. The *Irish Lives* call him the 'tutor' of our apostle, and all our ancient authorities are agreed that Patrick spent several years under the guidance of this holy and learned man. Some think he spent thirty years under Germanus; this, however, is an impossi-

bility, for Germanus became bishop in A.D. 418, and went to Britain with St. Lupus of Troyes to extirpate the Pelagian heresy in A.D. 429—three years before the date of St. Patrick's own mission. Others say he spent fourteen years with Germanus, and this is more like the truth. One thing is certain, that our apostle owes to Germanus most of his sacred learning, which was very considerable as we shall see; and he learned not only "Queenly Science, and the forest huge of Doctrine," but what is more, he learned the wisdom that rules, the prudence that moderates, the patience that spares, and above all and beyond all the life hidden with Christ in God.

Germanus had built a monastery beyond the river in view of his episcopal city, but completely cut off from its noise and bustle. Every day he was wont to cross the stream in his little skiff to visit and instruct his beloved monks, of whom St. Patrick was one for many years. Thus slowly and surely, under the guidance of the holiest and most learned men in the West, did God prepare His servant Patrick for the work before him.

The Scholiast on *St. Fiacc's Life of St. Patrick*, which was written in the early part of the sixth century, tells us that Patrick accompanied Germanus on his journey to Britain in A.D. 429. If so, and the statement is highly probable, Patrick must have learned much during that memorable journey, and witnessed the famous 'Alleluia Victory' over the Saxons and Picts. These barbarians were just then making one of their usual incursions on the helpless Christians of Wales, when Germanus hearing of the approaching tumult, and learning the cause, led out on Easter Sunday his newly baptized catechumens, and having posted the mighty multitude amongst the steep hills that overlooked the valley through which the enemy had to pass, he calmly waited their approach. When they entered the valley, suddenly the mighty shout of the 'Alleluia' re-echoed through the mountains, and the affrighted barbarians thinking themselves surrounded by an immense army, fled in confusion without striking a blow. Germanus seems to have returned to France in A.D. 430 or 431.

It is said by most of our ancient authorities that it was Germanus who sent St. Patrick to Celestine to receive episcopacy and authority for the Irish mission.[1] Celestine at

[1] The *Tripartite* says that "Caelestinus, Abbot of Rome, read Orders over Patrick," and the Scholiast on Fiacc's Hymn, says that Germanus said, "Go to Caelestinus that he may confer Orders upon thee, for he is proper to confer them."—*Stokes' Edition*, vol. ii., 419.

first refused, as he had already in A.D. 431 sent Palladius with authority to preach to the Scots, who believed in Christ—"Ad Scotos in Christum credentes." But when news was brought to Rome by his disciples, Augustine and Benedict, of the failure of that mission and the death of Palladius, Germanus sent Patrick again to Rome accompanied by a priest called Segetius, who gave testimony of his merits and desires. Perhaps it was in the interval between these two journeys that St. Patrick went to the Island of Lerins, near Cannes, on the coast of the department, now called the Alpes Maritimes.

Very many of our ancient authorities mention this visit to Lerins, or some other of the rocky islets that abound in that part of the Mediterranean, and several of which were then inhabited by holy men. It is said expressly in the Hymn of St. Fiacc, the oldest of St. Patrick's lives, that he studied the canons with Germanus, that the angel sent him across the Alps, and that he stayed in the islands of the Tyrrhene Sea. It is not easy to fix the date of this visit nor its duration; it is, however, in itself extremely probable, independently of the high authority of Fiacc's Metrical Life as well as of the Third Life, and Probus' Fifth Life. The Third Life represents our saint as spending several years in an island called Tamerencis, or, as Probus puts it, with the barefooted hermits in a certain island of the sea. This island in all probability was Lerins, and the barefooted hermits were the monks of St. Honoratus, who was thus the third teacher of St. Patrick.

When Honoratus, flying fame and friends, came to Lerins in A.D. 410, it was covered with dense shrubberies, through whose tangled masses innumerable serpents glided and scared away the fishermen, who chanced to land on the barren and inhospitable rock. But Honoratus was not to be daunted. With a few faithful companions he set to work, and soon cleared a space for their cells, and for such patches of agriculture, as would supply their scanty needs. The monks were patient and laborious; the soil was naturally not ungrateful. The serpents were banished, the brakes were all cut down, and fruit trees planted in their stead. There was a bright sky above, and glittering seas around; snow-capped mountains arose in the blue distance; orange groves wafted their delicious fragrance over the waters, so that Lerins became an Eden, where the sights of nature were as fair, and the hearts of the men as pure, as they were in Paradise. There, too, St. Honoratus, afterwards raised in

A.D. 429 to the See of Arles, founded a famous school which was long celebrated in the south of Europe, and produced some of the most distinguished scholars of the fifth century. Such were their piety and learning that all the cities round about strove emulously to have monks from Lerins for their bishops.

This was the last school in which St. Patrick made his final preparation before presenting himself to St. Celestine, and receiving his commission to preach the Gospel in Ireland. Not rashly surely, nor without due preparation in the greatest and holiest schools of the Continent, did Patrick undertake the work of God. Letters, borne by angels containing the voice of the Irish, had long been calling him; the wailings of the children from the wood of Focluth, by the shore of the western sea, whence he had escaped to France, were ringing in his ears night and day imploring Patrick to come and walk once more amongst them. He had prepared himself most carefully for his great mission; he was duly commissioned by St. Celestine, as both the *Tripartite* and the Scholiast on Fiacc's hymn expressly inform us; he received the blessing of the beloved teachers under whose guidance he had lived so long; and thus full of courage and trust in God, he set out for the difficult and dangerous task of converting the Irish nation to the faith of Christ.

II.—St. Patrick's Literary Labour in Ireland.

St. Patrick not only converted the Irish, but purified their laws, gave new inspiration to their Bards, and laid the foundations of that system of education which for the next three centuries made Ireland the light and glory of all western Europe. We propose briefly to sketch his labours in these respects.

When Patrick arrived in Ireland in A.D. 432, after a fruitless attempt to convert his old master Milcho, he went straight to Tara, where King Laeghaire was then holding his court, and as might be expected, he at once came into collision with the Druids. They had already, according to the *Tripartite*, foretold his advent, for they were mighty magicians, and the two chief Druids of Erin, Lochru and Luchat the Bald, were then at Tara, as it was the time of the great Feast, and Tara was "the head of the idolatry and druidism of Erin."[1] Patrick lit his paschal fire at Slane

[1] *Tripartite.*

on Holy Saturday, and when the two Druids beheld from the green slopes of Tara the strange fire, they at once told the king that the flame must be extinguished before morning, or it could never be extinguished in Erin. The angry monarch ordered his horses to be yoked, and set out to meet the bold stranger, who had dared to kindle the forbidden flame in sight of the royal palace. The Druid Lochru fiercely and enviously assailed Patrick in presence of the king at Slane, but at Patrick's prayer the impious man was first raised high in the air, and falling down his brains were dashed out on the ground before the king. Now although the monarch and his attendants feared much, and in their fear dared not touch the Apostle, yet we find that next day when Patrick suddenly appeared at Tara, the second Druid, Luchat the Bald, tried to poison him, but that attempt failing, he challenged the Saint to contend with him in miracles before all the people. Patrick readily accepted the challenge, and of course defeated the Druid, who was consumed to ashes in an attempt to save himself from the flames, while the youthful Benignus escaped the fiery ordeal unhurt.

These miraculous stories at least express one undoubted truth, that the conflict between Christianity and druidism was a conflict to the death. One or the other must be utterly routed; there could be no league between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial. The victory gained over druidism at Tara was conclusive; all the nation felt and recognised the might of the man who had conquered the royal Druids; for it was their proud boast that they held dominion over the elements and could make them work their will. But now there appeared a mightier man than they, who utterly vanquished them, and bound in strong bonds the Princes of Darkness, the real authors of their wondrous deeds. Elsewhere indeed they strove to renew the conflict, as when Patrick crossed the Shannon, the Druids of Cruachan, Moel and Caplait, brought a thick darkness over all the plain of Magh Aei. But, again, the power of Patrick's God vanquished them—the darkness was miraculously dissipated by Patrick, and they themselves were converted to the faith of Christ.

Yet when Patrick had proved the might of the God whom he adored, although he burnt the idolatrous books at Tara, and overturned the idols of Magh Slecht in Leitrim, and gave no toleration to heathen rites, still, in other respects he dealt tenderly with the failings and even with the

superstitions of the people. Their sacred places were, in many cases, consecrated and utilized for Christian worship; the Druids themselves, when truly converted, were not deemed unworthy of a place in the Christian ministry; the wells and streams where pagan rites had been often celebrated, were blessed by the Apostle, and the ancient festivals of the Druids were now made to do honour to the Christian saints. Thus it came to pass that the mid-summer festival of paganism became henceforward a festival in honour of John the Baptist, and November Eve of the Druids was made the Vigil of All Saints.

III.—St. Patrick Reforms the Brehon Laws.

One of St. Patrick's greatest works was his reform and ratification of the ancient Brehon Laws as embodied in the great compilation known as the *Senchus Mor*, or Great Antiquity. His labours in this respect claim special attention, for the Brehon Code prevailed in the greater part of Ireland down to the year A.D. 1600, and even still its influence is felt in the feelings and habits of the people. The laws of a nation necessarily exercise a great and permanent influence in forming the mind and character of the people; nor can the provisions of the Brehon Code be safely ignored by those whose duty it is even now to legislate for Ireland.

As explained before, the Brehon Code, which St. Patrick found in Ireland, owed its existence mainly to three sources, first to decisions of the ancient judges (of whom the most distinguished was Sen, son of Aighe), given in accordance with the principles of natural justice, and handed down by tradition; secondly, to the enactments of the Triennial Parliaments, known as the Great Feis of Tara; thirdly, to the customary laws, which grew up in the course of ages and regulated the social relations of the people, according to the principles of a patriarchal society, of which the hereditary chief was the head. This great Code naturally contained many provisions that regulated the druidical rights, privileges, and worship, all of which had to be expunged. The Irish, too, were a passionate and warlike race, who rarely forgave injuries or insults, until they were atoned for according to a strict law of retaliation, which was by no means in accordance with the mild and forgiving spirit of the Gospel. In so far as the Brehon Code was founded on this principle, it was necessary for St. Patrick to abolish or amend its provisions. Moreover, the new Church claimed its own rights and privileges, for which it was important to secure

formal legal sanction, and to have embodied in the great Code of the Nation. This was of itself a difficult and important task.

The *Senchus Mor* explains the motives that prompted the revision of the Brehon Code with great clearness. Dubhthach Mac Ua Lugair, the Chief Poet and Brehon of Erin, was one of the first to believe in Patrick's Gospel at Tara; and it happened to be his duty to pronounce judgment on the man who slew Odhran, Patrick's Charioteer. Thereupon Patrick and Dubhthach convoked the men of Erin to a conference at Tara, as it would seem, and Dubhthach explained all that Patrick had achieved since his arrival in Erin, and how he had overcome Laeghaire and his Druids, by the great signs and wonders which he had wrought. "Then all the men of Erin bowed down in obedience to the will of God and St. Patrick. It was then that all the professors of the sciences in Erin were assembled, and each of them exhibited his art before Patrick in the presence of every chief in Erin. It was then too that Dubhthach was ordered to exhibit the judgments, and all the poetry of Erin, and every law which prevailed amongst the men of Erin, through the law of nature, and the law of the seers, and in the judgments of the island of Erin, and in the poets," who were at first the judges.

"Now the judgments of true nature which the Holy Ghost[1] had spoken through the mouths of the Brehons and just poets of the men of Erin from the first occupation of this island down to the reception of the faith, were all exhibited by Dubhthach to Patrick. Whatever did not clash with the Word of God, in the written Law, and in the New Testament, and with the consciences of the believers, was confirmed in the laws of the Brehons by Patrick, and by the ecclesiastics and chieftains of Erin, for the law of nature had been quite right except the faith and its obligations, and the harmony of the Church and the people. *And this is the Senchus.*"

This great conference took place in the year A.D. 438. Of course the work thus briefly summarised was not done in a day. A regular Commission was appointed consisting of nine learned men representing the various classes and interests of the entire nation.

This Commission of Nine—from whom the *Senchus* was

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[1] What is naturally just comes from the Holy Ghost, as the author of the Natural Law.

called the *Nofis*, or Knowledge of Nine—consisted of three Kings, three Bishops, and three men of Science. The Kings were Laeghaire, Corc, and Daire; the Bishops were Patrick, Benignus, and Cairnech; the men of Science, or antiquaries as they are called by the Four Masters, were Dubhthach himself, Chief Poet and Brehon of all Erin, Rossa, a Doctor of the Berla Feini, or legal dialect, which was very abstruse, and Fergus, a Poet, who represented the most learned and influential class in the country. Evidently Patrick had studied under Germanus to some purpose; no one can help admiring the skill which he displayed in organizing and selecting this great Commission.

It has been said that some members of this Commission, especially Corc and Cairnech, could not have been present from A.D. 438 to 441, that the former was dead, and the latter not yet born, seeing that he died, according to Colgan, in A.D. 534—nearly a hundred years later. This is not the place to enter into details; the answer, however, is very simple. King Corc was, it is true, grandfather of Aenghus Mac Nadfraich, who when a youth was baptized by Patrick at Cashel, in A.D. 445. But the latter had not then commenced his reign, and his grandfather may have been alive in A.D. 441, and for several years later, for we know, both from the *Book of Rights*, and the poems of Dubhthach, that he was a contemporary of St. Patrick.

As to the alleged death of Cairnech in A.D. 530, that Cairnech, whose festival day is set down on the 28th of May, was quite different from St. Cairnech of Tuilen (now Tulane in Meath), whose festival is the 16th of May, and who is said to have been one of the British saints, probably from Cornwall, that accompanied St. Patrick to Ireland. He it was who was chosen to act on the Commission which produced the *Senchus Mor*.

Benignus, was a mere boy of some sixteen years of age when Patrick stayed for a night at the mouth of the Nanny River near Duleek, and being weary from his journey the Saint fell asleep on the green sward. Then the boy gathered sweet-smelling flowers and tenderly laid them in the Saint's bosom as he slept. "Stop doing that lest thou awake Patrick," said the others; and thereupon Patrick awoke, and blessed the boy, and foretold that he was to be the heir of his kingdom. So the boy was baptized and ever afterwards followed the Saint, who appointed him his Coadjutor Bishop in the See of Armagh, so early as A.D. 450. Benignus being young and carefully trained by St. Patrick,

and also learned in the Irish tongue, in all probability acted as Secretary to the Commission, and drafted with his own hands the laws that were sanctioned by the Seniors. According to O'Donovan he was also the original author of the famous Chronicle called the *Psalter of Cashel*, which gives a full account of the laws, rights and prerogatives of the Monarchs of Ireland, and especially of the Kings of Cashel. He seems also to have been the original author of the *Book of Rights*, although in its present form it gives manifest proof of considerable changes, and much later emendations.

Daire, the only remaining member of whom it is necessary to make any remark, seems to have been the same who granted Armagh to St. Patrick as a site for his Cathedral, and whose daughter was one of the first, if not the very first of the Irish maidens, who took the veil from the hands of St. Patrick, and with her companions, some the daughters of kings, spent her life of utter purity in working vestments for the priests, and altar-cloths for the service of the Cathedral. Yet romance was mingled with her name, for she:—

> "The best and fairest,
> King Daire's daughter, Erenait by name,
> Had loved Benignus in her Pagan years.
> He knew it not; full sweet to her his voice,
> Chanting in choir. One day through grief of love
> The maiden lay as dead; Benignus shook
> Dews from the font above her, and she woke,
> With heart emancipate that out-soared the lark,
> Lost in the blue heavens. She loved the Spouse of Souls."[1]

Such was the Commission of Nine selected by St. Patrick to purify the ancient pagan Code. We have still in existence the fruit of their labours substantially unchanged, although as we might expect, a vast mass of accretions, in the shape of commentaries and glosses, has gathered round the original text. The Nine were, however, the real authors of the *Senchus Mor*, which still furnishes the most abundant and authentic materials for the study of our national history. It is a very large work, and the archaic text was so obscure that even O'Donovan and O'Curry were sometimes unable to explain its meaning. It is certainly the greatest monument in existence of the learning and civilization of the ancient Gaedhlic race in Erin.

St. Patrick not only reformed the State Organization, he also established a Church Organization in Ireland. He knew well that it was not enough to preach, and baptize,

[1] Aubrey de Vere, *Legends of St. Patrick.*

and build churches; it was necessary, if his work was to endure, to train a native ministry, and organize the native Church in harmony with the institutions and character of the Celtic tribes in Ireland. It was a very difficult task; for the tribes were still very simple and primitive in their habits, and were moreover devotedly attached to the tribal institutions, which had come down to them from a remote antiquity.

In accomplishing this task, which he did with perfect success, Patrick displayed singular firmness and prudence. Whenever there was question of principle, that is, of the truths of the Gospel and the teaching of the Church, he was, as might be expected, unyielding as the rock. But, on the other hand, he was no root-and-branch reformer; he dealt most tenderly with the usages and with the prejudices of the people. He utilized whatever was good in their existing habits and institutions, reformed what was imperfect, and lopped off what was evil. With druidism, for instance, he could make no terms. There could be no alliance between Christ and Belial; it must be utterly rooted out of the land. Not so with the Brehons, and the Brehon Code. He made no attempt to introduce the Roman Civil Law into Ireland; it would have been utterly unsuited to the tribal system. But he reformed the Brehon Code, and retained "all the judgments of a true nature, which the Holy Ghost had spoken through the mouths of the Brehons, and the just Poets of the men of Erin," thus winning over to his side that influential Order, who might otherwise have been arrayed against the propagation of the Gospel.

In like manner he dealt with the Bards. In a spirit of consummate prudence, he sought to secure the aid of that powerful corporation for his infant Church, and succeeded in establishing a friendly alliance with the Arch-Poet of Erin. Dubthach Mac Ua Lugair held the twofold office of Chief Poet and Chief Brehon of Ireland, and St. Patrick utilized his influence and his services in both capacities. He was the working head of the Commission for the reformation of the Brehon Laws; but St. Patrick seems also to have secured his influence as Chief Poet in procuring eligible candidates for the sacred ministry from the schools of the Bards—the most lettered class in the community. It was thus the young poet, Fiacc of Sletty, was ordained by Patrick on the advice and at the suggestion of Dubthach. St. Patrick indeed had every reason to be grateful to the Arch-Poet; he was the first to believe in the Saint's teaching at Tara, and

rose up to do him honour even against the king's command; he aided in reforming the laws; he gave his most promising young pupils for the service of the altar, including several of his own sons, who otherwise would doubtless have followed the profession of their father.

This friendly alliance between St. Patrick and the Bardic Order is personified in the story of Ossian's relations with the Saint. According to the legend the venerable old man had long survived the fall of his house, and the destruction of the Fenian chivalry on the fatal field of Gabhra, yet lived on to find himself friendless and helpless under a new and strange order of things in Christian Erin. But Patrick in the true spirit of the Gospel took the homeless old man under his own protection, and, treating him with the greatest generosity and forbearance, sought to console him for the vanished glories of the heroic past, and fill his mind with brighter visions of a more glorious and immortal future beyond the grave:—

"Patrick, this other boon I crave,[1]
That I to thee in heaven may sing
Full loud the glories of the brave,
And Fionn, my sire and king."

"Oisin, in heaven the praises swell
To God alone from soul and saint;"
"Then Patrick, I their deeds will tell
In little whisper faint."

"Prince of thy country's tuneful choir,
Thou wert her golden tongue,
Sing thou the new strain, 'I believe,'
Give thou to God her song."

It was in this spirit Patrick dealt with the Bards of Erin. They might keep their harps, and sing the songs of Erin's heroic youth, as in the days of old. But the great Saint taught them how to tune their harps to loftier strains than those of the banquet-hall or the battle-march. He sought to drive out from their songs the evil spirit of undying hate and rancorous vengeance, to impress the poet's mind with something of the divine spirit of Christian charity, and to soften the fierce melody of his war-songs with cadences of pity for a fallen foe. He taught the sons of the Bards how to chant the psalms of David, and sing together the sweet music of the Church's hymns. Thus by slow degrees their wild ways

[1] *The Legends of St. Patrick*, by Aubrey de Vere.

were tamed, their fierce hearts were softened, and the evil spirit of Discord gave place to the heavenly spirit of brotherly Love.

The Irish people[1] have been always passionately fond of music, and this was especially so in those early times when other strong attractions were entirely wanting. There can be no doubt that the Church music exercised a great influence in attracting the new converts to the services of the clergy both in the monastic and secular Churches—a fact of which St. Patrick was fully sensible. Hence we find that from the very beginning he made provision to have his new converts trained in psalmody.

St. Benignus, of whom we have already spoken, the sweet and gentle boy, who strewed the flowers in Patrick's bosom, and would not be taken from his side, is called "Patrick's Psalm-Singer" in the *Lives of the Saint*, as well as in the *Annals of the Four Masters*.

This plainly signifies that Patrick selected Benignus, doubtless on account of his sweet voice and skill in music, to be what should be now called his choir-master. Whenever a new Church and new congregation was founded, it would be the duty of Benignus from such materials as were at hand, to try and organize a Church choir, and conduct the musical service. He seems to have accompanied St. Patrick in all his earlier missionary journeys, and doubtless this would be the principal duty of the gentle youth who so well deserved his name.

This brings us to consider what provision St. Patrick made for training up a native ministry in the Irish Church, which would be competent to continue and perfect his work. The question is a very interesting one, and intimately connected with our subject; but the means of furnishing an answer are exceedingly scanty, and can only be gleaned with difficulty from isolated passages recorded in the *Acts of the Apostle of Ireland*.

The earliest instance on record is that of St. Benignus himself, which shows that from the very beginning of his missionary career, St. Patrick had this purpose of training up a native ministry to continue his work strongly before his mind. When the Saint was on the point of starting on his journey from the house of the father of Benignus, he had one foot on the ground and the other in his chariot, when the boy rushed up, and caught hold of Patrick's foot with his

[1] Almost every member of a family could play on the harp. See Gerald Barry's *Descriptio Kambriæ*, p. 183

two hands, crying out, "Oh, let me go with Patrick, my father."[1] And when they were going to take him away Patrick said—"Baptize him, and put him with me in my car, for he will yet be the heir of my kingdom." This was done, and Benignus never afterwards left Patrick. He accompanied him on his missionary journeys; he conducted the musical services of the Church for Patrick, and he died the heir of his kingdom, that is, Coadjutor Archbishop of Armagh, about the year A.D. 468—long before St. Patrick himself went to his rest. It is evident, therefore, that St. Benignus was trained for the sacred ministry under the personal care of St. Patrick. And, as we shall presently see, this was the usual course before the monastic schools were yet established in Erin, to train the young levites under the personal care of some other ecclesiastic, priest or bishop, as the case might be. In nearly the same way Patrick happened about the same time to meet Mochae of Noendrum, while he was yet a boy, herding swine, and "Patrick preached to him, and baptized him, and tonsured him," thus selecting him as a candidate for the ecclesiastical state. Of this Mochae, one of the earliest disciples of St. Patrick, we shall see more hereafter, when we come to speak of the school of Noendrum.

Yet it must not be supposed that St. Patrick came single-handed to preach the Gospel in Erin, and that he had no assistance until these boys were old enough to become themselves priests and bishops. We know that the contrary was the fact.

We are told by a very ancient authority[2] that the Saint was accompanied to Ireland by a great number of holy bishops and priests and deacons, and other youths in minor orders whom he had himself ordained for the Irish Mission. They were Britons, Franks, and Romans, the latter term simply meaning that some amongst them enjoyed the rights of Roman citizenship. Many of them were his own blood relations, like Sechnall or Secundinus, the son of Patrick's sister, Darerca. Others, like Auxilius and Iserninus, are said to have been sent by Germanus of Auxerre to aid St. Patrick in preaching to the Irish. These two prelates, however, though ordained with St. Patrick, did not come to Ireland for some time after the arrival of St. Patrick. Iserninus

[1] *Book of Armagh.*

[2] Tirechan's Collections—"Et secum fuit multitudo episcoporum sanctorum, et presbiterorum, et diaconorum, ac exorcistarum, hostiarium, lectorumque, necnon filiorum quos ordinavit."—*Book of Armagh*, fol. 9.

founded his church at Kilcullen in the co. Kildare, and Auxilius founded Killossy, in the barony of Naas, which takes its name Cill-Usailli (Gen. of Ausaille) from that Saint.

The names of these two bishops are chiefly memorable in connection with a celebrated Synod—the first held in Ireland—which is commonly called the Synod of Patrick, Auxilius, and Iserninus. Having been ordained Priests, if not Bishops, on the same day with St. Patrick himself, these two prelates seem to have enjoyed a certain kind of co-ordinate authority with Patrick, but still in subjection to his primatial jurisdiction. The name of Secundinus is not mentioned in connection with this Synod, which was held A.D. 447 or 448, either because he was already dead, or did not possess independent jurisdiction as one of the original episcopal founders of the Irish Church. We cannot now enter into the question how far all the Canons attributed to St. Patrick in the great collections published by several writers are genuine, or merely circulated under his name with a view to lend them greater authority.[1] Those attributed, however, to the Synod of Patrick, Auxilius, and Iserninus are commonly regarded as authentic,[2] and indeed bear intrinsic evidence that they were framed at a time when paganism was yet common in Ireland.

The most celebrated of these Canons is that which formally recognises the supremacy of the Holy See as the Supreme Judge of Controversies—Si quae quaestiones (difficiles) in hac insula oriantur ad Sedem Apostolicam referantur.[3] A Canon to the same purport is contained in the *Book of Armagh* (fol. 21, b. 2) and is there expressly recorded as the decree of Auxilius, Patrick, Secundinus, and Benignus. After reciting that if any difficult case arose in the nations of the Scots it should be referred to the See of Patrick, the Archbishop of the Scots, for decision, it is added: "But if the aforesaid cause cannot easily be decided in it (Armagh), we decree that it be transmitted to the Apostolic See, that is, to the See of the Apostle Peter, which has authority over the city of Rome."[4] Another Canon (Lib. xxxiv. c. 2) orders that

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[1] See *Wasserschleben's* great collection, published at Leipzig, 1885.

[2] See Todd's *St. Patrick*, p. 457.

[3] See *Wasserschleben*, page 61, Lib. xx., c. 5; *Haddan and Stubbs*, vol. ii., Part ii., page 332.

[4] "Si vero in illa (Cathedra Patricii) cum suis sapientibus facile sanari non poterit causa praedictae negotionis, ad sedem Apostolicam decrevimus esse mittendam, id est, ad Petri Apostoli Cathedram, auctoritatem Romæ Urbis habentem." "Hi sunt qui hoc decreverunt id est, Auxilius, Patricius, Secundinus, Benignus."—See *Stokes*, p. 356, vol. ii.

if a cleric go security for a gentile—that is, a pagan—and that the gentile fail to keep his engagement, the cleric must make good the loss from his own goods, and not contend with the adversary in armed strife. This Canon shows that a portion of the population was still unconverted, though living on terms of familiar intercourse with the Christians, both clergy and people.

This ecclesiastical legislation of Patrick and his assistant prelates must have exercised a most beneficial influence in restraining crime and superstition amongst all classes. The first element of civilization is the recognition of the reign of law instead of brute force; and that was a lesson which it was especially necessary to inculcate on the Irish tribes.

Hence the Apostle inculcates at some length, and in very beautiful language, the duties of the ecclesiastical judges and of good kings, while he does not spare to draw the sword of excommunication against the crimes and excesses of all, both rulers and subjects.

The judges of the Church, he says, must have the fear of God, not of man; and the wisdom of God, not the wisdom of the world, which is folly in His sight. They must not accept any gifts, for gifts blind the judgment; they must have before their minds, not secular cunning, but the precedents of the divine law (exempla divina). They should be sparing in their words, and slow to pronounce sentence, and above all never utter a falsehood, judging in all things justly, because as they judge others, by the same standard shall they themselves be judged. Principles like these thus solemnly enunciated must have exercised a very great influence in teaching all classes that respect for law and the rights of others, which is the foundation of all civilization.

Then the kings—a numerous class in Erin—were also taught their duties, and by one who was able to give a sanction to his teaching. The duty of the king is to judge no one unjustly; to be the protector of the stranger, the widow, and the orphan; to punish thefts and adulteries; not to encourage unchaste buffoons, nor exalt the wicked, but root them out of the land; to put to death parricides and perjurers; to defend the Church and give alms to the poor; to select just and wise ministers, and prudent counsellors; to give no countenance to druids, or pythonesses, or augurers; to defend his country in strength and in justice; to put his confidence in God, not being elated by prosperity nor cast down by adversity; to profess the Catholic faith and restrain his sons from evil deeds; to give time to prayer, and not to spend it

unduly in unseasonable banquets. This, he says, is the justice of a king, which secures the peace of the people, the defence of the country, the rights of the poor, and all other blessings spiritual and temporal, including fruitful trees, abundant crops, genial weather, and universal happiness. Such were the noble principles inculcated by St. Patrick in his preaching, formulated in his laws, and enforced by all the power of his authority.[1]

Although St. Patrick was accompanied to Ireland by a very considerable number of clerics of every order to aid him in his great task of the conversion of Ireland, still he must have found it difficult, as new churches were founded and the foreign clergy died out, to supply labourers for the ripening vineyard. As yet there were no Christian Schools in Erin. Armagh was probably the first, but Armagh was not founded until A.D. 445, when the site of a cathedral was granted by Daire to Patrick on Macha's Height. The school could not be organized for some years later, perhaps about the year A.D. 450.

But meantime Patrick had organized a kind of peripatetic school, which accompanied the Saint in his frequent missionary journeys through the various parts of the country. He himself spent his time in preaching, baptizing, founding churches, and making such provision, as he could, for the administration of the sacraments and the celebration of Mass. The clerical students, his disciples, accompanied him, and in this way were able to obtain both theoretical and practical instruction in the work of missionary life. The instruction which the Bards, Brehons, and Druids communicated to their disciples was mainly, if not exclusively, of an oral character. The memory was highly trained by exercise, and the art of recitation was carried to a wonderful degree of perfection. The disciples too accompanied the master on his rounds from one chieftain's dun to another, and were sharers in the hospitality and rewards, which were freely bestowed on all.

Oral instruction of a similar character was doubtless also communicated by St. Patrick to his disciples during their missionary journeys, as well as in those places where he and his household remained for any considerable time. Books were scarce, but were not unknown. The British and French clergy no doubt brought with them to Ireland such books as were indispensable for a missionary priest or bishop. These would be a Mass-book, a ritual, and a copy of the psalms,

[1] See Stokes' *Tripartite*, Vol. ii., page 507.

and of the Gospels. They were carried in leathern wallets slung from the girdle, and sometimes in covers, or cases of wood, strengthened and adorned with metallic rims and clasps. Such were the book-covers (*leborchometa*), which St. Asicus of Elphin used to make for Patrick.[1] Once also when Patrick was journeying from Rome he met six young clerics with 'their books at their girdles,' who were going to the holy city on their pilgrimage. And Patrick gave them a hide of seal-skin, or cow skin—it is doubtful which, says the narrator—to make a wallet, as it would seem, for their books, for they had it adorned with gold and white bronze.[2] Palladius left books (*libru*) after him in Leinster, and both Patrick and the Druids had books at Tara, and Patrick's books (*libair*) once fell into one of the streams that flow into the Suir and were 'drowned.' Probably these were some of the books which Celestine gave to Patrick, 'in plenty,' when he was about to come to Ireland.[3] Patrick gave Deacon Justus of Fuerty in the co. Roscommon, his own book of ritual and of baptism (*lebar nuird ocus baptismi.*)[4] He also carried across the Shannon the books of the Law and of the Gospel, and left them in the new Churches which he founded.[5] *Lebar n-uird* is the same as *Liber ordinis*, and means a missal, or Ordo Missae, and the *Liber baptismi* would be what we now call a 'ritual,' containing the forms for the administration of the sacraments. In Tyrawley the Saint gave Bishop Mucknoi, whom he there ordained, "seven Books of the Law," in order that Mucknoi himself might ordain other bishops and priests, and deacons in that country, and as it would seem, have copies of the Books of the Law to give them. (*Book of Armagh*, f. 14).

These books St. Patrick and his companions in all probability carried with them from the Continent. But there was one kind of smaller book corresponding to our smallest and simplest form of catechism, which the Saint usually wrote for his favourite disciples with his own hand. It is sometimes described as the 'Elements,' and sometimes as an 'Alphabet,' or brief outline of the essential truths of Christianity. It was the first book put into the hands of the educated converts, who knew how to read and write, which was always an indispensable qualification for admission into the ranks of the clergy. Of course the common people could be duly taught the essential truths of religion by oral instruction. It was

[1] *Tripartite*, page 97. [2] *Tripartite*, page 75.
[3] Scholiast on *Fiace's Hymn*. [4] *Trip.* p. 105, vol. i.
[5] "Libros legis, evangelii libros, et reliquit eos in locis novis." *Book of Armagh*, f. 9.

for those whom he destined to be themselves teachers that he wrote the 'Elements' or 'Alphabets' of the Christian Doctrine. The phrase in Latin is *scripsit elementa*, corresponding to the Irish *scribais aipgiter*, and sometimes *scripsit abigitorium* (as in the *Book of Armagh*, f. 13).

The word *aipgiter* or *abgitir* has been frequently used in this sense in ancient Irish manuscripts, not to express the letters of the alphabet, but a simple compendium of the art or other subject in question. Thus *abgitir crabaith* means the alphabet of faith, that is, the simple and fundamental truths of faith; *abigiter in crabaid* is the 'alphabet of piety, and so in similar cases. Patrick had no suitable work for this purpose, and, hence, he himself frequently wrote a catechism or outline of these elementary truths of the Christian doctrine suited to the capacity of the learners.

So we find that the equipment of a young priest beginning his missionary work was very simple. He got in the way of books his abigitorium, or catechism, his Mass-book (or *Liber ordinis*), his ritual, his psaltery, and when it could be spared a copy of the Gospels; and then if he were a bishop Patrick gave him also, as he did to Fiaac of Sletty, a case (*cumtach*[1]) containing a bell, a chalice, a crozier, and book-satchel with the necessary books. We have distinct evidence too, from the Epistle to Coroticus, that he himself taught these students. He describes the messenger who carried that letter to the tyrant as a holy priest, whom he (Patrick) had taught from his childhood (infantia). The reference can scarcely be to St. Benignus, his coadjutor in Armagh, for Benignus died A.D. 457 or 458, many years in all probability before the Epistle to Coroticus was written. It is more likely the apostle refers to Mochae of Noendrum, who was a tender youth when the Saint first met him in A.D. 432, when he baptized the boy and gave him a gospel and a *menistir*, which means a chalice and paten. Dr. Whitley Stokes translates it 'credence-table,' which is unlikely, as it was sometimes made of *creduma* or bronze,[2] and in low Latin *ministerium*[3] was frequently used to designate the utensils for the Holy Sacrifice.

St. Patrick, coming as he did, into a pagan country altogether outside the pale of Roman civilization, had many difficulties to overcome, and exercised great ingenuity in

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[1] See "Tirechan's Collections," *Book of Armagh*, fol. 18, *a*2—"Ocus dubbert Patrice cumtach du Fiacc, idon, clocc, ocus menstir, ocus bachall, ocus poolire."

[2] *Trip.* vol. i., page 87.

[3] See Du Cange, *sub voce*.

overcoming them. He sought to procure everything required for public worship of native manufacture, and indeed he had no other means for the most part of procuring them. Whatever was necessary in the public worship of God, with the exception of some books and the relics of the saints, was made in Ireland, and by artificers, who though otherwise well skilled in their various crafts, were quite new to this kind of work. But the apostle met this difficulty by having artificers, who gave their exclusive attention to the manufacture of these necessaries of divine worship, and he promoted them as a reward for their labours even to the highest offices in the Church. His family or household included persons so trained in every branch of technical knowledge necessary for the due equipment of a Church, and they were all in holy orders.

This household, which numbered twenty-four persons generally accompanied him in his missionary journeys from place to place in order to provide all things necessary for the young Churches which he founded. The list of their names and functions is given in the *Tripartite*. Sechnall, his nephew, was his 'bishop,' that is his coadjutor[1] in spirituals and temporals, especially in his episcopal functions, in consecrations, ordinations, and so forth. Benen was his psalm-singer to lead and teach the Church choirs. Mochta of Louth was his priest, or as we now say, his 'assistant priest,' and attendant in the public functions of the church. Bishop Erc, a Brehon by profession, was his judge, and no doubt a very necessary official in dealing not only with the clergy, but also with the frequent controversies that arose amongst the chiefs and were referred to Patrick's arbitration. Bishop Mac Cairthinn was his champion, or rather strong man, to bear him over the floods, and perhaps defend him against rude assaults in an age of lawless violence. Colman of Cell Riada was his chamberlain or personal attendant. Sinell of Cell Dareis was his bell-ringer, an officer whose duty it was to carry with him the famous hand-bell of the Saint, and no doubt also to ring it at appropriate times, especially during Divine Service, for the purpose of securing due attention to the sacred mysteries. He had also a cook, brewer, chaplain at the table, two waiters, and other officers necessary for providing food and accommodation for himself and his household. It must be borne in mind that in those days there were no hotels; frequently the apostle with his attendants had to camp out, and procure their own food—

[1] Benignus succeeded Sechnall as Coadjutor or Auxiliary Bishop

often too, in face of an unfriendly, or even hostile population. Hence, he was sometimes reduced to great straits for food, and more than once we find him begging the fishermen to try and procure a fish for his refection when nothing else was forthcoming.

We are also told that Patrick had three smiths, and three artificers, and three embroideresses in his company. The smiths, like St. Asicus of Elphin, made altars, and square tables, and book-covers, and bells for the churches, which were founded by St. Patrick. His artificers were Essa, Bite, and Tassach. They may be described as artificers both in wood and metal, and church builders, who erected the primitive churches mostly of wood founded by the apostle. Bite was a son of Asicus, and hence a skilled workman like his father, both as a smith and carpenter. Tassach is spoken of as making patens and credence-tables, and altar-chalices; he also made a case for St Patrick's crozier—the celebrated staff of Jesus. He was Bishop of Raholp, not far from Downpatrick, and was privileged to administer the Body of Christ to his dying master. The three embroideresses, Lupait, sister of Patrick, and Erc, daughter of Daire, and Cruimtheris, made with their own pure hands the vestments and altar linens used during the Holy Sacrifice in the churches of Erin.

> "Beneath a pine three vestals sat close veiled:
> A song these childless sang of Bethlehem's Child,
> Low-toned and worked their altar cloth, a Lamb
> All white on golden blazon; near it bled
> The bird that with her own blood feeds her young.
> Red drops her holy breast affused. These three
> Were daughters of three kings."—*Aubrey de Vere.*

Although St. Patrick did not in the ordinary sense of the word establish schools such as are frequently mentioned in the next century, he not only trained candidates for the sacred ministry during the earliest years of his mission, but also seems to have established in his own city of Armagh a school for carrying on that work in a more regular and efficient manner. Having the care of all the Churches of Ireland on his own shoulders, he could not govern this school in person. But we are told that he placed over it his best beloved disciple Benignus, who was, so far as we can judge, eminently qualified to discharge that high office. Before, however, we proceed to give an account of this celebrated school of Armagh, it will be necessary to give a short account of the writings of St. Patrick himself and of those attributed to the more eminent amongst his disciples and contemporaries.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WRITINGS OF ST. PATRICK AND OF HIS DISCIPLES.

"And this is my confession before I die."
—*Confession of St. Patrick.*

THE writings of St. Patrick and his disciples are highly interesting, both in themselves, and in the effects which they produced on the Irish Church. Fortunately several of these monuments of our early ecclesiastical history have come down to our own times, and no rational doubt can be raised about their authenticity by well-informed scholars.

The principal documents attributed to St. Patrick himself are his 'Confession,' the 'Epistles to Coroticus,' and a poem called the 'Lorica,' and sometimes the 'Deer's Cry.' Then we have in praise of Patrick a Hymn by his nephew, St. Sechnall or Secundinus, a metrical Life or Eulogy by St. Fiacc of Sletty, and certain sayings attributed to our national apostle in the *Book of Armagh*. We shall have also something to say of the *Tripartite Life of the Saint*, which is one of the earliest and most important documents connected with the history of the Patrician Church in Ireland.

I.—ST. PATRICK'S CONFESSION.

The *Confession* of St. Patrick, as he himself calls it, or the *Book of St. Patrick the Bishop*, as it is called in the MSS., is the most important and interesting document connected with the primitive Church of Ireland. The text itself is found in the *Book of Armagh*, and in several ancient manuscripts, some of which belong to the tenth century.[1] It is referred to also in Tirechan's Collections in the *Book of Armagh* as the 'Scriptio,' or Writing of St. Patrick himself. At the end of the copy in the *Book of Armagh* it is described as the volume which Patrick wrote with his own hand—"Huc usque volumen quod Patricius manu conscripsit sua." This would seem to imply that the scribe of the *Book of Armagh* took his copy from the autograph by St. Patrick himself.

[1] For instance the Cotton MS. Nero. E. 1, fol. 171; and two in the Bodleian Fell. I., ff. 7*a*-11*b* and Fell. III., fol. 158-164.

The evidence, both intrinsic and extrinsic, in favour of its authenticity is so strong that no competent Irish scholar has ventured to question the genuineness of this venerable document.

Indeed, if not genuine, it is impossible to assign any motive for such a forgery. The tone and spirit of the entire are such as could only come from one who was filled with the apostolic spirit. Many incidental references to Decurions, to the 'Brittaniae,' or Britains, to slave-traffic—all point to the fifth century as the date of its composition. The rude and barbarous Latinity, which some writers use as an argument against its authenticity, is in reality a strong proof in its favour, for it is exactly what we should expect from one who, like St. Patrick, spent the six years which are generally given to the acquisition of a liberal education, herding sheep and swine on the hills of Antrim. As Patrick himself remarks in apologizing for the rudeness of his style, of which he was fully sensible, he had to forego the use of his vernacular Latin during the years of his captivity, and his speech and his language were changed into the tongue of the stranger, "as any one may perceive from the flavour of my style."[1] Of course we should make allowance for the faults of copyists—especially where the original MS. itself seems to have been illegible or obscure, still it must be confessed that the Latin is very rude, sometimes even ungrammatical, and not always intelligible. But the spirit of deep humility and fervent devotion, which breathes in every line, is of itself sufficient to stamp this work as genuine. A falsifier, or impostor, might possibly write such Latin, but he never could forge the spirit that breathes in the language, which is the manifest outpouring of a heart like unto the heart of St. Paul.

The *Book of Armagh* contains the earliest copy of the Confession that we possess, and it appears not a little strange that several important passages are omitted from this copy, which are found in the copies preserved in the Cottonian and Bodleian Collections. Some writers have suggested that these passages of the later copies are interpolations. It is far more likely, however, that the Armagh scribe left out some passages from his own copy, that he could not decipher in the original, which as the marginal notes show, was in some parts obscure or illegible. These omitted passages too

[1] "Nam sermo et loquela mea translata est in linguam alienam, sicut facile potest probari ex saliva scripturae meae."—*Confession.*

are manifestly written in the same style, and in the same spirit as the body of the Confession, and may certainly be regarded as genuine. It may be, also, that the scribe of Armagh left out certain passages from a groundless fear that it would not be to the honour of the great Apostle to speak so strongly of his own unworthiness. That passage, for instance, has been omitted in which the Saint refers to certain elders, who opposed his elevation to the episcopacy on the ground that thirty years previously, before he became a deacon, he had committed some sin, which he then confessed to a dear friend, and which it was now sought to make an obstacle to his promotion.

The Saint's motive in writing this Confession in his old age, as he tells us, was to defend himself against some vague charges of presumption in undertaking the Irish mission, and incompetence in discharging that onerous task, whilst acknowledging in all humility the sins and ignorance of his youth, and the difficulties under which he laboured by reason of his imperfect education.

Patrick points out that in all things he sought to listen to the voice of God, and to be guided by the inspirations of His Holy Spirit. Like St. Paul in similar circumstances, he refers to the perils by which he was encompassed, and the many toilsome duties of his episcopacy. He then vindicates his own disinterestedness, and challenges his accusers to show that he ever received a single farthing for preaching the Gospel and administering baptism to so many thousand persons, even in the remotest parts of the country, where the Word of God was never heard before. Not that the people were not generous, for they offered him many gifts, and cast their ornaments upon the altar; but he returned them all lest even in the smallest point the unbelievers might have cause to defame his ministry, or question the purity of his motives.

Finally, he appeals to the success of his ministry in the conversion of Ireland, as the best proof of God's approval of his work, and bears noble testimony to the sanctity and zeal of his new converts. "The sons of the Scots, and the daughters of their princes, became monks and virgins of Christ . . . not by compulsion, but even against the wishes of their parents, and the number of the holy widows and continent maidens was countless." Even the slave-girls, despising their masters' threats, continued to persevere in the profession and practice of holy chastity. Still in his old age he was surrounded by dangers, but it mattered not; at any moment he was ready to die for Christ, and he solemnly calls

God and His Angels to witness that, in returning to preach the Gospel in the land of his captivity, he came solely for the Gospel's sake, and his only motive was to preach the glory of Christ and share in the recompense of the Gospel. "And this"—said the Saint in beautiful and touching words—"this is my confession before I die."

This Confession contains many interesting references to the personal history and apostolic labours of St. Patrick, which are not always remembered; and which ought to be separated from the more uncertain and controverted facts of his history.

His father was Calpornus, or Calpornius, a deacon, who was the son of Potitus, and Potitus was the son of Odissus, a priest. The text, however, leaves it doubtful whether the word priest belongs to Potitus or to Odissus.[1] His father dwelt in the township (vico) of Bannavem Taberniae. He had also a small villa not far off, "where I was made captive at the age of about sixteen years." He was in ignorance of the knowledge of the true God,[2] which is to be understood of his defective training as a Christian during the years of his boyhood; for he adds that he did not keep God's Commandments, and was not obedient to the priests—our priests—as he calls them, when they admonished him to attend to his salvation. Therefore it was God punished him by this captivity in a strange land, at the end of the world. But that God pitied his youth and ignorance, and showed him mercy, consoling the captive as a father consoles his son. For which he earnestly thanks God, and takes occasion to profess his faith in the Holy Trinity, as Arianism was then rampant in the Church. After much hesitation he resolved to write this Confession in order to show the true motives of his own heart to his friends and relations.

The reason of his delay and hesitation was the rudeness of his style and language in consequence of his captivity when he had to make use of a strange tongue. But he should be forgiven, for the conversion of the Irish was the epistle of salvation, which he had written by deeds, not by words, not in ink, but in the Spirit of God. Though he was a stone sunk in the mire, a man of no account in the eyes of the world, yet God in His mercy exalted him; for which he will always give earnest thanks to God. Hence he wishes to make known God's goodness in his regard, and to leave it as

[1] Patrem habui Calpornum diaconum filium quendam Potiti filii Odissi presbyteri. [2] Deum verum ignorabam.

a legacy of God's mercy to his brethren, and to the thousands of spiritual children whom he baptized.

When he came to Ireland (Hiberione), his daily employment was to feed cattle (pecora); but then it was the love of God began to grow within him, and he used to pray even up to a hundred times a day and as many in the night; he used to rise before the dawn to pray in the woods and mountains in the midst of rain, and hail, and snow.

One night he heard a voice saying to him in sleep—"your ship is ready"—and he travelled 200 miles to the port, where he had never been before, and where he knew no one. Thus after six years' captivity he succeeded in reaching this port. The master of the vessel at first would not take him on board, but afterwards he relented, when Patrick was returning to the cottage where he had got lodging. He was called back, and invited to go on board as one of themselves; but he declined familiar intimacy[1] through fear of God, because they were Gentiles.

In three days they disembarked in a desert land, through which they travelled for twenty-eight days, and were well nigh starving, until relieved at the prayer of Patrick. Reference is then made to the great stone that seemed to fall upon him in a dream, from the weight of which he was relieved by invoking Elias. It seems, too, that he fell into a second captivity, which continued for two months; but the text here is uncertain, and can scarcely be relied on.

He succeeded, however, in reaching the home of his parents in Britain—in Britannis—and they most earnestly besought him to remain with them, now that he had escaped from so many dangers.

But the Angel Victor, in the guise of a man from Ireland, gave him a letter in which the "voice of the Irish" called him away; the voices of those who dwelt near the wood of Focluth, from which he seems to have escaped, also called upon him to come once more and walk amongst them. The Spirit of God, too, spoke within his soul and urged him to return to Ireland. The same Holy Spirit encouraged him to persevere, when objection was made by certain elders to his elevation to the episcopacy. Therefore, he was encouraged to undertake the great task, and his conscience never blamed him for what he had done.

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[1] The strange phrase—"Repuli sugere mammellas eorum"—seems to signify that he rejected the proferred intimate association with them. *Mammella* was used metaphorically as a term of endearment, in classical Latin.

It would be tedious, he adds, to recount all his missionary labours, or even a part of them. Twelve times his life (anima) was in danger, from which God rescued him, and from many other plots and ambuscades also, and therein God rewarded him for giving up his parents and his country, and all their gifts, and heeding not their prayers and tears, that he might preach the Gospel in Ireland, where he had to endure insult and persecution even unto bonds. But he strove to do the work faithfully, and God blessed his efforts, and those wonderful things were accomplished by the apostle, to which we have already referred.

Hence, though anxious to visit his parents and his native country in Britain, and even to revisit the brethren in Gaul—here referred to for the first time—and to see the face of God's Saints there, he was bowed in spirit, and would not leave his beloved converts, but resolved to spend the rest of his life amongst them.

Yet he was not free from temptations against faith and chastity, but in Christ Jesus he hoped to be faithful to God unto the end of his life, so that he might be able to say with the apostle, "Fidem servavi." God, too, deigned to work great signs and wonders by his hands, for which he will always thank the Lord.

He confidently appeals also to his converts, who knew how he lived amongst them, how he refused all gifts, and spent himself in their service. Nay, he it was who gave the gifts to the kings and to their sons—and sometimes they plundered him and his clerics of everything; and once bound him in iron fetters for fourteen days, until the Lord delivered him from their hands. When writing his Confession he was still living in poverty and misery, expecting death, or slavery, or stratagems of evil; but he feared not, because he left himself into the hands of God, who will protect him. One thing only he earnestly prays for, that he may persevere in his work, and never lose the people whom he gained for God at the very extremity of the world.

This Confession clearly shows that St. Patrick was a native of some part of Britain, and that he met more opposition in preaching the Gospel in Ireland than is commonly supposed. He was put in bonds of iron on one occasion for fourteen days, and even in his old age was living in poverty and in daily fear of death. It shows, too, that although the Saint was an indifferent Latinist, he was intimately acquainted both with the letter and spirit of the Old and New Testament, which he quotes constantly, and always from the version

called the *Vetus Itala*—a strong proof of the authenticity of the Confession. It is singular that no reference is made to the Roman Mission, or to his ever having been at all in the City of Rome. But neither does the Saint refer to St. Germanus, although all the Lives agree in saying that he spent many years in Gaul with that holy and eminent prelate, nor does he even tell us where or by whom he was consecrated bishop. Nothing, therefore, can be deduced from his silence regarding St. Celestine and the Roman Mission, especially in face of the ancient and authentic testimonies which assert it.

II.—The Epistle to Coroticus.

The Epistle to Coroticus, or more properly to "the Christian subjects of King (Tyrannus) Coroticus," is also without doubt the genuine composition of St. Patrick. It bears a striking resemblance to the Confession in its style and language, sometimes even entire phrases are re-produced from the Confession with scarcely any change of language. It is not found in the *Book of Armagh*, but it is found in several ancient MSS. dating back to the tenth century. From a reference made to the pagan Franks, it must have been written before their conversion to Christianity, which took place A.D. 496. It is evident, however, that it was written towards the close of the Saint's missionary career—probably some time between A.D. 480-490.

This Coroticus or Cereticus, was most probably a semi-Christian King of Dumbarton[1] or Ail-Cluade, and seems to be the same referred to in the *Book of Armagh* as Coirthech, King of Aloo. He is called in the Welsh genealogies Ceretic the Guletic, which term corresponds exactly with Tyrannus in St. Patrick's letter. Other Welsh authorities, however, have made Coroticus a petty King of Glamorganshire and identified him with Caredig or Ceredig, of the Welsh genealogies;[2] but the former is the much more probable opinion, especially as we find that Coroticus was the ally of the "apostate Picts and Scots," in their bloody raids on the shores of Ireland. After the death of St. Ninian, who converted some of the Scots and southern Picts to Christianity, these latter fell away from the faith, and aided by the King of Dumbarton harried the coasts both of England and Ireland.

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[1] This is the opinion of Skene—*Celtic Scotland*, p. 158, vol. i.
[2] See Todd's *St. Patrick*, p. 391

It was probably towards the end of St. Patrick's laborious life that the incursion took place, which called forth this indignant letter of the Saint. The raiders had landed somewhere on the eastern coast of Ireland, and carried off into slavery a number of men and women, on whose foreheads the holy oil of confirmation, which then usually followed baptism, was still glistening. The white garments which the neophytes wore were stained with their own blood, or the blood of their slaughtered companions. Thereupon the Saint wrote these letters, which he sent by one of his own priests, whom he had taught from his infancy, to be handed to the soldiers of the tyrant, and read for them, as it seems, in his presence. In the first letter he asked to have the Christian captives and some of the spoils restored; but they laughed at the demand in scorn, wherefore the Saint wrote this second letter in which he excommunicates Coroticus and his abettors, calling upon all Christian men not to receive their alms, nor associate with them, nor take food or drink in their company, until they do penance and make restitution for their crimes.

Incidental references are made by the Saint to his own personal history. He himself for God's sake preached the Gospel to the Irish nation, which had once made himself a captive and destroyed the men-servants, and maid-servants of his father's house.[1] He was born a freeman, and a noble, being the son of a decurio,[2] but he sold his nobility for the benefit of others, and he did not regret it. It was the custom of the Gaulish and Roman Christians to pay large sums of money to the Franks for the ransom of Christian captives; but "you—you often slay them, or sell them to infidels, sending the members of Christ as it were into a brothel." "Have you," adds the Saint, "any hope in God—what Christian can help you or abet you?"

Then Patrick in passionate grief bewails the fate of the captives. "Oh! my most beautiful and most loving brothers and children, whom in countless numbers I have begotten for Christ, what shall I do for you? Am I so unworthy before God and man that I cannot help you? Is it a crime to have been born in Ireland? And have not we the same God as they have? I sorrow for you—yet I rejoice—for if you are taken from the world, you were believers through me, and are gone to Paradise."

[1] "Et devastaverunt servos et ancillas domûs patris mei."

[2] The Decurio was under the Empire an official somewhat like a Mayor or Resident Magistrate.

And then in the last paragraph he expresses a hope that God will inspire those wicked men with penance, and that they will restore their captives, and save themselves for this world and for the world to come. Like the Confession, this letter abounds in quotations from the old version of the Bible before it was corrected by St. Jerome.

In the Brussels MS. of the *Book of Armagh* there is a chapter which purports to give an account of "Patrick's conflict against the King of Aloo," whom it calls *Coirthech*, and a little lower down the name is given as Coirctic. When Patrick failed to convert him by his letters and admonitions, which the tyrant despised, he besought the Lord to drive this reprobate "from this world and from the next." A very short time afterwards, as Coroticus was sitting on his throne, he heard a certain magic song chanted, and hearing it he came down from his seat in the hall of justice. Thereupon all his nobles took up the same chant; whereupon suddenly in the midst of the market place, Coroticus was changed into what seemed a fox in the presence of them all, and running away like a stream of water disappeared from their eyes, and was never afterwards heard of.

III.—The Lorica, or the Deer's Cry.

The Lorica, or Shield of St. Patrick, is a rhythmical prayer said to have been composed by the Saint to implore the divine protection, when he and his companions were approaching Tara for the first time to proclaim the unknown God in the very stronghold of druidism, sustained as it was by all the power of the Ard-righ of Erin. It was a bold and perilous thing to do—thus to face the pagan king and his idol priests on the very threshold of their citadel; and it shows how strongly armed in faith St. Patrick was on that day, when he so dared to bid defiance to the powers of darkness.

The Saint was by no means insensible of the danger to which he exposed himself, nor of the strength of the wily foe whom he challenged so boldly to the combat. But he put his confidence not in man but in God, and this poem is simply the poetic expression of the sentiments which filled and strengthened his soul on that momentous occasion. This is the key to the meaning of the poem—"It was to be a corslet of faith for the protection of body and soul against devils, and human beings, and vices; and whoever shall sing

it every day with pious meditation on God, devils shall not stay before him."[1]

It is then easy to understand why it was called the *Lorica*, or Corslet of Patrick; because it was his defence against the ambushes set for him by Laeghaire and his Druids when he was approaching Tara. But it was also called the *Faed Fiada*, or Deer's Cry; because it was said that the apostle and his companions escaped the ambush by seeming to their enemies to be a Deer and her fawns in flight to the shelter of the woods.

Patrick knew that the Druids of Laeghaire possessed magical powers; they even claimed dominion over the elements, and therefore strong in the faith of the Holy Trinity he appeals to the Triune God of all the elements to shield him against evil. God sometimes permits the powers of evil to use His creatures as instruments to injure the wicked and try the good; and therefore the Saint calls upon God to use His creatures on this occasion for His own glory and the protection of His servant. It is in this sense that Patrick calls to his aid not only the Holy Trinity, but all the elements created by God, but sometimes perversely used by the Druids for evil purposes.

"I bind unto myself to-day
The strong name of the Trinity,
By invocation of the same
Three in One and One in Three. . . .

"I bind unto myself to-day
The virtues of the star-lit heaven,
The glorious sun's life giving ray,
The whiteness of the moon at even,
The flashing of the lightning free,
The whirling wind's tempestuous shocks,
The stable earth, the deep salt sea,
Around the old eternal rocks.

"I bind unto myself to-day
The power of God to hold and lead,
His eye to watch, His might to slay,
His ear to hearken to my need.
The wisdom of my God to teach,
His hand to guide, His shield to ward;
The word of God to give me speech,
His heavenly host to be my guard."

This is merely a specimen of the beautiful Gaedhlic hymn as translated—and well translated—by Mrs. Alexander.

[1] Irish Preface to the Hymn.

Even to this day the original is chanted by the peasantry of the South and West in the ancestral tongue, and it is regarded as a strong shield against all evils natural and supernatural.

We know from the *Book of Armagh* that it has been thus recited at least from the eighth century, so that even then its use was universal, and in a certain sense obligatory. St. Patrick is there declared entitled to four 'honours' in all the churches and monasteries of Erin. First, his festival was to be celebrated for three days and three nights with every kind of good cheer except flesh—that being forbidden in Lent; secondly, a special offertory was to be immolated in his honour, which seems to imply that there was a special offertory, and perhaps preface for the Mass on these days; thirdly, his Hymn—that is, the hymn in praise of Patrick written by his nephew, St. Sechnall—was to be sung during these days; and fourthly, "his Irish Canticle was to be always sung" in the liturgy, as it would seem, and apparently also throughout the entire year. So it appears that from the earliest ages this Canticle was regarded in the Irish Church as the genuine composition of St. Patrick, and the greatest efficacy was attributed to its pious recitation.

IV.—Sechnall's Hymn of St. Patrick.

'The Hymn of St. Patrick'—that is, the Hymn composed in his honour by St. Sechnall, to which reference is made in this extract from the *Book of Armagh*—is another very singular and interesting literary monument of our early Celtic Church. It has been published with valuable notes and scholia by the late Dr. Todd in the first volume of the *Liber Hymnorum*.[1] This curious Latin hymn, which is justly regarded both on internal and external evidence, as the genuine composition of St. Sechnall, or Secundinus, owed its origin to a singular circumstance. The following is Colgan's account taken from the Preface to the Hymn, as given by a very old but unknown authority:—

Secundinus (in Irish Sechnall), the son of Restitutus, a Lombard of Italy by his wife Darerca, a sister of St. Patrick, was the author of this Hymn. It was composed at Dunshaughlin, county Meath, which in Irish is called Domnach-Sechnaill, from the name of its founder. It was written in the time of Laeghaire Mac Neil, then king of Ireland; and it must have been written before the year A.D. 447, when,

[1] It was first published in 1647 by Colgan from the Isidore MS., and then by Ware in his *Opuscula S. Patritii*. It is also published in Stoke's *Tripartite* in the series of the Master of the Rolls.

according to the Four Masters, "Secundinus, the son of Patrick's sister, yielded his spirit on the 27th of November, in the seventy-fifth year of his age." The object of the writer was to give due praise to Patrick, also to offer it as a kind of apology for having offended the Saint. For, on one occasion, Sechnall was reported to have said that Patrick would be perfect if he had insisted more strongly in his preaching on the duty of alms-giving for works of charity; for then more property and more land would have been devoted to pious uses for the good of the Church. This remark was carried to the ears of Patrick, and moreover was probably misrepresented. St. Patrick was much displeased with his nephew, and said it was "for sake of charity he forbore to preach charity;" that is, in order that the holy men who were to arise after him might benefit by the oblations of the faithful, which he left untouched for that purpose. Then Sechnall sorrowed much for the rash judment of which he had been guilty, and humbly asked pardon of the Saint, who readily granted it. But in order fully to atone for his sin, Sechnall composed this hymn in honour of Patrick.

It consists of twenty-three stanzas, the stanzas beginning with a letter of the alphabet in regular order from the first to the last. Each stanza consists of four strophes or lines, each line of fifteen syllables. So that it was written in what the grammarians call trochaic tetrameter catalectic. In Irish prosody, however, regard is had in measuring the feet rather to the accent or beat of the verse than to the length of the syllables.

When the hymn was composed Sechnall asked permission to read for Patrick a hymn, which he had composed in praise of a certain holy man, who was still alive. Patrick readily granted this request, for he said he would gladly wish to hear the praises of any of God's household.

Then Sechnall read the poem, suppressing the first line only, which contains Patrick's own name as the subject of the eulogy. Patrick listened attentively until Sechnall came to the line in which the subject of the poem is described as 'greatest in the kingdom of heaven'—*maximus in regno cælorum*. "How can that be said of any man?" said Patrick. "The superlative is there put for the positive," replied Sechnall; "it only means very great." Patrick appeared to be pleased with the poem, whereupon Sechnall insinuated that Patrick himself was the subject of the poem; and, according to the Bardic custom he asked for a reward for his poem. When Patrick, however, learned that

the poem was about himself he was not well pleased, but knowing Sechnall meant well in writing it, he did not wish to grieve him by a refusal. So he answered that Sechnall might expect that our Saviour in His mercy would give the glory of heaven to all who recited the hymn piously every day both morning and evening. "I am content," said Sechnall, "with that reward; but as the hymn is long and difficult to be remembered, I wish you would obtain the same reward for whomsoever recites even a part of it." Then Patrick said that whoever faithfully recites the last three verses of the hymn morning and evening shall obtain the same reward, and Sechnall said, "Deo gratias," and was content.

It was only natural that this hymn, having such a promise of salvation, though written in Latin, should become very popular, and be recited in the monasteries and churches of Ireland as one of the four "Honours of St. Patrick." It bears intrinsic evidence both in style and language that it was written during the lifetime of St. Patrick. He is represented in the hymn as still keeping all God's commandments, and as one who *will* possess the joys of heaven, and will reign with the apostles as saint and judge over Israel.[1]

Of Sechnall himself little is known. All the authorities agree in saying that he was the son of Patrick's sister Darerca, whom others call Lupait, and sometimes Liemania. It is said that she was taken captive at the same time as St. Patrick himself, and was carried with him by the captors to Ireland, and there sold as a slave in the district called Conailli Muirtheimne, which is better known as the patrimony of the greatest of Erin's ancient warriors, the heroic Cuchullin. It included the territory around Dundalk, and stretched northward to the modern barony of Mourne, with its unrivalled mountain scenery.

All the authorities say that Sechnall's father was Restitutus, 'a Longobard of Leatha;' or, as some writers add, 'Armoric Leatha.' Now the Lombards known to history did not conquer the territory, which bears their name, until the middle of the sixth century. This difficulty is met by assuming that 'Leatha' means Brittany in France,

[1] For instance:—

"Maximus namque in regno cœlorum vocabitur,
Qui quod verbis docet sacris factis adimplet bonis;
Bono procedit exemplo formamque fidelium,
Mundoque in corde habet ad Deum fiduciam."

and although we have no historical evidence that a colony of the Longobardi ever dwelt there, still a Roman soldier of the Longobardic race might have been living there, and might have been married to one of the sisters of St. Patrick.

The word Armorica, as it is in Latin, and Airmoric in Celtic, really signifies any western land bordering on the sea; and it is quite possible that in this sense the word should have been applied to Ayrshire or Wigtown in Scotland. Others have suggested that the word Lungbaird, as it is in our earliest native authorities, means nothing more than a 'long-bearded' man of Leatha, or Amorica, which is by no means improbable. This would also help to explain why Eochaidh O'Flanagan, an old poet of the eleventh century, calls St. Sechnall by the surname Ua Baird, or O'Ward, as if the tribe name was really that of Bardi, whom some authorities describe as an ancient race of Gaul or Saxony, from whom the Longobardi derived their origin.[1] Later authorities, knowing nothing of any Longobardi except those of Northern Italy, would readily enough fall into the anachronism of placing them there in the time of St. Patrick.

Sechnall with Auxilius and Iserninus were disciples of St. Patrick from the beginning, and seem to have accompanied him on his arrival in Ireland. The *Annals of Ulster*, however, mark their arrival in Ireland as 'Bishops' to aid Patrick in the year A.D. 439. This seems to be the date of their episcopal consecration, which they received either in France or in Britain, for St. Patrick alone would be unwilling to consecrate them contrary to the canons. Sechnall seems to have been placed temporarily over the Church of Armagh, founded A.D. 445, and hence he is sometimes called Archbishop of that See.

V.—The Hymn "Sancti Venite."

It was in St. Sechnall's Church of Dunshaughlin that a beautiful Eucharistic Hymn, 'Sancti Venite,' was first sung, and most probably composed by that saint himself. In the Preface of the *Leabhar Breac*, it is said that this hymn was first chanted by angels in St. Sechnall's Church, on the occasion of his reconciliation with St. Patrick, to which we have already referred. The choir of angels was heard singing the hymn during the Holy Communion, and "hence arose the custom ever afterwards observed in Erin," says the writer, "of singing this hymn at the Communion;" and

[1] See *Krantz Danaiae*, Liber iv., c. 19.

hence, too, the title which it bears in the *Antiphonary of Bangor*—the only ancient work in which it is found—"Hymn during the Communion of the Priests."[1] We could wish this beautiful hymn were still used in our national liturgy. Denis Florence M'Carthy has left us an excellent translation of this remarkable hymn, of which we give the first and last stanzas:

"Draw nigh, ye holy ones, draw nigh,
And take the body of the Lord,
And drink the Sacred Blood outpoured,
By which redeemed ye shall not die.

* * * *

"The Source, the Stream, the First, the Last,
Even Christ the Lord, who died for men,
Now comes—but he will come again
To judge the world, when time hath passed."

The original stanzas are as follows:—

"Sancti Venite,
Christi Corpus Sumite;
Sanctum bibentes
Quo redempti sanguinem.

"Alpha et Omega,
Ipse Christus Dominus,
Venit venturus
Judicare homines."

St. Sechnall was the first Christian poet in Erin; may his name and memory linger long amongst the children of St. Patrick.

VI.—St. Fiacc of Sletty.

St. Fiacc, Bishop of Sletty, and author of what is perhaps the earliest biography of our national Apostle, belongs also to the Patrician era, that is the fifth century of the Irish Church. A brief account of his life and labours will be found interesting. He was sixth or seventh in descent from the celebrated Cathair Mor, King of Leinster towards the close of the second century. His father is called Mac Dara, a prince of the Hy Bairrche. His mother, the second wife of Mac Dara, was a sister of Dubhtach Mac Ua Lugair, the Chief Poet and Brehon of Erin when St. Patrick arrived in Ireland. Fiacc was not only a nephew of Dubhtach, but also his pupil and foster son; and he is described as a 'young poet' in the retinue of Dubhtach on that famous Easter Sunday morning, when

[1] "Hymnus quando Communicarent Sacerdotes."

St. Patrick first stood in the royal presence on the Hill of Tara. King Laeghaire had forbidden any of his courtiers to rise up in token of respect to St. Patrick, and accordingly, when Patrick came before the King, all remained seated except "Dubhtach the Royal Poet, and a tender youth of his people, named Fiacc, the same who is commemorated in Sletty to-day."[1] Dubhtach was the first who believed at Tara on that day, and doubtless his youthful disciple soon after embraced the same faith as his master; although probably he was not baptized until some years later. At this period the boy-poet was not, it seems, more than sixteen or eighteen years of age, and must, therefore, have been born about the year A.D. 415.

Dubhtach, the arch-poet of Laeghaire, was a Leinster man, and received from Crimthan, King of the Hy Kinnselach, a grant of a considerable territory in North Wexford, eastward of Gorey, in the territory then called Formael—"a wave-bound land beside the fishful sea." St. Patrick had converted and baptized this king, Crimthan, at Rathvilly in the County Carlow, about the year A.D. 450, during his progress through Leinster. On this occasion he very naturally came to see his old friend Dubhtach, the first of the believers at Tara, and found him at a place called Domnach Mor Magh Criathar, that is Donoughmore of "the marshy plain." This marshy plain extends along the sea shore to the north of Cahore Point, Co. Wexford. At the northern extremity of the plain are the ruins of the old Church of Donoughmore, half covered by the sand; and close by is a holy well where a 'patron' was formerly held on the last Sunday of July. The late Rev. Father Shearman has, we think, shown conclusively that this is the Donoughmore, where St. Patrick met Dubhtach, the High Bard of Erin.

On the occasion of this meeting Patrick, anxious to provide for the government of the young Church in Leinster, requested Dubhtach to find him a man of good family, and good morals, the husband of one wife,[2] and with one child only, that he might ordain him Bishop of the men of Leinster. "Fiacc is the very man you require," said Dubhtach; "but at present he is in Connaught"—to which province he went, it seems, at his master's request, to make the usual bardic visitation, and bring home the gifts which the sub-kings

[1] *Tripartite Life.*

[2] We know from St. Paul that no person who has been twice married can be lawfully ordained.—1 Tim. iii. 2.

were wont to offer to the Chief Poet of Erin. Just then it so happened that Fiacc came in sight of the fort of Dubhtach on his return from his visitation in Connaught. "There is the man himself," said the Arch-poet, "of whom we have been speaking." "But he may not wish to receive orders," said Patrick. "Proceed as if to tonsure me," replied the poet, "and we shall see." Thereupon St. Patrick made preparations as if to tonsure the aged poet—it was the first step to orders—whereupon Fiacc said, "it would be a great loss to the Bardic order to lose so great a poet;" and he offered himself for the service of the Church instead of Dubhtach. The offer was gladly accepted, and so Fiacc came to receive *grade*, or orders, and finally became Ard-espog, or Chief Bishop, of the Leinster-men. This was a mere title of honour given to him on account of his seniority and pre-eminent merits. In the canonical sense the office of Archbishop did not then exist in Leinster, nor for many centuries afterwards.

On this occasion we are told that Patrick wrote an 'Alphabet' for Fiacc—that is, a brief exposition of the Christian doctrine; and he is said to have learned in one night, or as others say, in fifteen days, the 'ecclesiastical ordo,' that is, the method of administering the sacraments and celebrating the Holy Sacrifice. It must be borne in mind that previously Fiacc was an accomplished poet, a man therefore of learning, with a highly trained memory, well skilled in his native tongue, and perhaps not altogether unacquainted with the rudiments of the Latin language; at least he must have frequently heard it at Tara and elsewhere, when the clergy were performing their functions.

Fiacc founded two Churches with which his name is intimately connected. The first is called in old writers, Domnach Mor Fiacc, and is described as being situated mid-way between Clonmore and Aghold; and therefore about six miles due east of Tullow on the borders of Carlow and Wicklow. It was also called Minbeg, that is, the Little Wood or Brake, which was probably near the old church. It is identical with Kylebeg, the name of a townland in the same locality. The old church itself has disappeared.

Here he led a life of great austerity until he was commanded by an angel to remove thence to the west of the River Barrow, for there he was to find the "place of his resurrection." He was directed to build his refectory where he should meet with a boar, and his Church where he should see a hind. Fiacc, however, was unwilling to go there

without the sanction of St. Patrick. So Patrick himself came and fixed the site of his Church at Sletty (Sleibhte), and there Fiacc and his son Fiachra were afterwards interred, the two saints in the same grave.

Sletty is about one mile and a-half north-west of Carlow, on the right bank of the River Barrow. It takes its name "the Highlands," from the hills of Slievemargy, in Queen's County, which have also given their name to the entire barony. During the devastations of the Danes, Sletty being so near a large river, was almost totally destroyed by the frequent incursions of those marauders. A portion of the old church still remains, but the See of Sletty was long ago transferred to Leighlin, which is still the name of the diocese.

In his monastery of Sletty, Fiacc presided over many monks, his disciples, and continued to lead the same austere life, as at Donoughmore. He was at once abbot of the monastery at Sletty, and besides performed his episcopal functions through all the surrounding country. Moreover, he was wont every year, at the beginning of Lent, to retire to a lonely cave at Drum Coblai, taking with him a few barley loaves, which were the only food he used, with water from the spring, during all the days of Lent, until he returned to his monastery to celebrate with his brethren the great festival of Easter. This cave of Drum Coblai has been identified with a remarkable cave at the base of the north-east escarpment of the hill called the Doon of Clopook, about seven miles north-west of Sletty, and a little to the east of the old and famous monastery of Timahoe. Near at hand there is an ancient church and graveyard, and it is said that a dim tradition still lingers in the neighbourhood, of a saint, who used to retire to this cave to fast and pray alone with God. As no person could see him leave the cave, he was supposed to return to his own church further south by a subterranean passage, which is believed to be still in existence, although no one can ascertain its whereabouts.

During a great portion of his episcopal life Fiacc suffered much from a fistula, or running sore, near his hip-joint, so that he was unable to walk except with much pain and difficulty. St. Patrick commiserating Bishop Fiacc's infirmity, sent him all the way from Armagh a present of a chariot and horses. But Fiacc in his great humility was unwilling to accept the gift, until an angel appeared to him, and assured him that Patrick sent him the chariot and horses because he was acquainted with the sore infirmity, from

which Fiacc suffered, and wished to relieve him. Then Fiacc reluctantly consented to ride in the chariot.

Thus it was that Fiacc spent a long life in labour, and prayer, and silence, enduring also much physical suffering, until the poet-saint had seen 'three twenties of his own disciples' precede him to the grave. His youth was given to poetry, when he was taught by his uncle to chant the war-songs of Ossian, and the bold deeds of the Fenian heroes; but his manhood and old age were given to God's service when he was wont to chant the diviner songs of the Royal Bard of Israel. He died about the year A.D. 510. He must have been at that time over ninety years of age, and we are told he was buried in his own Church of Sletty.

There is hardly any document of higher importance in connection with the early history of our Irish Church than the *Metrical Life of St. Patrick*, written in his old age by the poet-saint of Sletty. The author having been a Bard by profession very naturally wrote in metre, and in the ancient language of the Bards of Erin. The cultivation of poetry was then as now one of the fine arts most highly esteemed by an imaginative and impulsive race. The authenticity of the poem has been questioned by some critics, who think that there are certain expressions in the work itself, which show that if not written, it certainly must have been retouched at a later age.[1] We have carefully considered these arguments, and we feel bound to say that we consider them very flimsy. Fiacc, it is said, speaks of 'history,' as telling us that St. Patrick was born at Nemptur, and studied under Germanus—language, they say, which a friend and contemporary would hardly use. But these are facts which he could not have known of his own knowledge, and the statements of St. Patrick himself, and also of his associates and companions, whether oral or written might very well be described by the Irish words which the poet used probably because they suited his metre.[2] Another objection is derived from two references to Tara, where the poet says he wished not that Tara should be a '*desert*;' and, again, where he says that the Tuatha of Erin at the advent of St. Patrick, foretold that the land of Tara would be '*waste and silent*,' from which these critics infer that the poem must have been written after the cursing and desolation of Tara, about the middle of the sixth century. But is this a just inference? Can anything be more natural than that the Druids should declare the new

[1] See *Liber Hymnorum*, vol. ii., page 287. [2] *Scela* and *lini*.

faith would be fatal to the pagan royalty of Tara, and that the poet immediately after when proudly referring to Patrick's new spiritual sovereignty at Armagh, and the glory of his grave at Downpatrick should add, to prevent misconception, that he himself did not wish the destruction of the temporal sovereignty then flourishing at Tara—'I wish not that Tara should be a desert.' As to the argument derived from the fact that Fiacc is named Ard-espog of Leinster, we have already stated, that this is merely, like arch-poet, an honorary title to express pre-eminence and superiority in the spiritual office. The ablest of our critics regard the poem as the genuine composition of Fiacc of Sletty, the friend and contemporary of Patrick, written shortly after his death in A.D. 493; and hence the earliest and most authentic biography of the saint that has come down to us. It is, moreover, a document of supreme importance, for competent judges, like O'Curry, have pronounced it to be written in pure and perfect Gaedhlic. "It bears internal evidence," says O'Curry, "of a high degree of perfection in the language, at the time it was composed; it is unquestionably in all respects a genuine native production, quite untinctured with the Latin or with any other contemporary style or idiom." This is a most important fact, because in our opinion it settles the question as to the use of letters and writing in Ireland before St. Patrick. No language could by any possibility in one or two generations be developed from being the rude unwritten jargon of an unlettered people into a perfect written language of artistic structure with definite grammatical form and arrangement. That the poem of Fiacc is an elaborate composition of this character, indicating not only the existence of settled grammatical forms, but also a great richness and flexibility in the language, even the merest tyro in the Gaedhlic tongue can perceive. Indeed in every respect it is much superior to the debased Gaedhlic of the last three centuries.

This important poem was first printed by John Colgan, the father of Irish hagiology. It has been reprinted much more accurately from the copy in the Liber Hymnorum, T.C.D., and also in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* for March, 1868, where the philological student will find not only the text and glosses, but also an accurate translation from the pen of one of our most eminent Celtic scholars, Eugene O'Curry of the Catholic University of Dublin. More recently the poem has been printed in Stokes' *Tripartite* (Rolls Series), and in Haddan and Stubbs' *Councils*, etc.

VII.—The Sayings of St. Patrick.

In the *Book of Armagh* there is a paragraph headed—Dicta Patritii—or Sayings of St. Patrick. They appear to have been certain sayings which were frequently on the lips of the apostle, and which came to be handed down to posterity as expressive of his apostolic spirit. Brief and few as they are, these spiritual maxims have been well chosen, and may be said to govern in their application the whole life of the individual Christian, as well as of the Irish Church.

First maxim—"I had the fear of God as the guide of my way through Gaul and Italy, and also in the islands, which are in the Tyrhene Sea."[1] The second maxim—"From the world ye have gone to Paradise." This saying is taken from the Epistle to Coroticus, in which the Saint after bewailing his slaughtered neophytes, yet rejoices that it happened after they believed, and were baptized; for then they merely left this world to go to Paradise. In course of time this appears to have been adopted in Ireland as a consoling thought for the survivors that their deceased friends had gone from this world to Paradise—"De seculo recessistis ad Paradisum." Third maxim—"Deo Gratias"—thanks be to God. It was always on the lips of St. Patrick—whether the news was good or bad, pleasing or displeasing, the same word was there—"Deo Gratias." The fourth maxim—"O Church of the Scots—nay of the Romans—as ye are Christians, be ye also Romans." That is, as ye are Christians, and bound to obey Christ, so be ye also Romans, obedient to the See of Rome. Maxim the fifth—"At every hour of prayer it is fitting to sing that word of praise—'Lord have mercy on us, Christ have mercy on us.' Let every Church which follows me sing—'Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison, Deo Gratias.'" It would seem that the 'Kyrie Eleison' at the beginning of Mass, and the 'Deo Gratias' at the end of Mass were not at that early period universally chanted in the public liturgy. Hence the Saint, who seems to have a special love for these two brief and fervent expressions of pardon and thanksgiving, made it a rule that they should be sung in the liturgy of all the Churches which he founded in Ireland. The practice has since become obligatory throughout the universal Church.

[1] The entire passage is as follows:—"Timorem Dei habui ducem itineris mei per Gallias atque Italiam, etiam in insulis quae sunt in mari Tyrrheno—De Saeculo recessistis ad paradisum—Deo Gratias—Ecclesia Scotorum, imo Romanorum, ut Christiani ita et Romani sitis—Ut decantetur vobiscum oportet omni hora orationis vox illa laudabilis, Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison—Omnis ecclesia, quae sequitur me cantet, 'Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Deo gratias.'"

VIII.—The Tripartite Life of St. Patrick.

The earliest memoir of St. Patrick was perhaps the Metrical Life by St. Fiacc of Sletty, to which we have already referred. Of the Life of St. Patrick in the *Book of Armagh* we shall speak in the next chapter. But what is called the "Tripartite Life" of the Saint is, as far as we can judge, if not the earliest, certainly the fullest and most authentic account of our national Apostle now extant.

It took its name of the Tripartite, or Three-Divisioned Life from the fact that the whole history of St. Patrick is divided into three homilies, one of which was probably preached by its author on each of the three festival days celebrated in honour of the Saint—the Vigil, or day before—the Feast itself—and perhaps the day after, or the Octave day. The preacher, taking for his text the verses of Isaias—*Populus qui sedebat in tenebris vidit lucem magnam*, etc., etc., declares that Patrick was of that light a ray, and a flame, and precious stone, and a brilliant lamp, which lighted the western world; and that he was Bishop of the west of the earth, and the father of the baptism and belief of the men of Ireland. Then the writer, or speaker, undertakes to narrate "something of the carnal genealogy, of the miracles and marvels of this holy Patrick, as set forth in the Churches of Christians, on the sixteenth of the Calends of April (17th of March), as regards the day of the solar month." The Life, or homily, next states explicitly that Patrick was by origin of the Britons of Ail-Cluade—the Rock of the Clyde—now Dumbarton, a statement in which we entirely concur. Calphurn was his father's name, and a noble priest was he, and his grandfather was the deacon Potitus (Fotid in the Irish MS.). In those early days, especially in the outlying provinces of the empire, it was not unusual to seek for the fittest candidates for Holy Orders amongst men, who had been married, or who were even at the time of their selection married men. They were in fact the best candidates for the sacred ministry that could be had at the time; for most of the young men were not only without special training, but unreliable and licentious. It was, however, the general rule in the western but not in the eastern Church, that the married man after his ordination, and especially after his elevation to the Episcopate, should abstain from all conjugal intercourse with his wife. Such, for instance, was the case with St. Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre, the teacher and friend of St. Patrick. The Irish Canons, too, even of the fifth century,

are particularly imperative on this point, and show clearly that although the celibacy of the clergy was not, strictly speaking, obligatory even in the west during the centuries of the persecutions, no sooner was the Church free to carry out her own purposes than she strove to make this legislation compulsory throughout all Christendom.

The second part of the *Tripartite* begins with St. Patrick's arrival at Tara to preach to King Laeghaire and his Druids, and is by far the most momentous portion of the work. The third part begins with the statement that Patrick left presbyter Conaed in Domnach Airther Maige, in the province of the Northern Hui Briuin, and ends with an account of Patrick's holy death and illustrious burial—"after founding churches in plenty, after consecrating monasteries, after baptizing the men of Ireland, after great patience and after great labour, after destroying idols and images, and after rebuking many kings who did not do his will, and after raising up those who did his will, after ordaining three hundred and three score and ten[1] bishops, and after ordaining three thousand priests and clerics of every grade in the Church besides, after fasting and prayer, after mercy and clemency, after gentleness and mildness to the sons of life, after the love of God and of his neighbours, he received Christ's Body from the Bishop—from Tassach—and then he sent his spirit to heaven"—in the hundredth and twentieth year of his age.

The most interesting question connected with this *Tripartite* life is its date and probable authorship. Unfortunately we have intrinsic evidence for neither; the manuscript itself is silent both as to its date and authorship. Hence there is much difference of opinion even amongst learned and honest scholars. Colgan thought that St. Evin of Monasterevan, who flourished about the middle of the sixth century, was its original author, and O'Curry adopted the same opinion. Petrie thought it a "compilation of the ninth or tenth century;" and Dr. Whitley Stokes, in his excellent edition of the *Tripartite*, undertakes to show that "it could not have been written before the middle of the tenth century, and that it was probably compiled in the eleventh."

His arguments are two-fold—linguistic and historical. So far as the former are concerned, we may fairly say that he is not a better authority than O'Curry, and that if O'Curry thought this Life might have been of the sixth century, no philological arguments of Dr. Whitley Stokes will override

[1] In the early ages of the Church a bishop was placed over every town.

his authority in that respect. But Stokes goes farther, and quotes entries from the *Tripartite*, which he alleges must have been made in the seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries. This, we readily admit, is a weightier argument. He cites nine or ten instances of this kind, which, as he alleges, were neither additions nor interpolations. Such, for instance, is the reference to Connacan, son of Colman, and grandson of Niall Frossach, who was killed in Ulster, A.D. 873.

It is obvious that to prove anything it must be shown conclusively that the event was referred to in the original *Tripartite*, and is that same event which is recorded in our Annals in the ninth or tenth century. Yet it is exceedingly difficult to prove this essential point. Take, for instance, one of the clearest cases mentioned by Stokes, this death of Connacan, grandson of Niall Frossach. Whoever examines this passage, which is at page 174 (not 173) will notice that it is just such a statement as might be added or interpolated by a copyist. The original writer quotes a prophecy of St. Patrick that "the land of thy place (*i.e.*, of Conaed) shall not be reddened." The copyist then adds—apparently as of himself—"Quod probavimus, when Connacan, son of Colman, son of Niall Frossach (the Showery) came into the land with an army." Is this statement that of the copyist or of the original writer? Until it is clearly shown that it is a sentence written by the original author, no argument as to the age of the *Tripartite* can be based on it, or on similar passages.

This *Tripartite* Life is on the whole the most valuable document concerning St. Patrick that has come down to our times. It was written chiefly in Gaedhlic of the purest type of the language, interspersed here and there with passages in Latin. And it was because Jocelin has said that St. Evin wrote a work of this kind,[1] partly in Irish and partly in Latin, that Colgan not unnaturally infers that the *Tripartite* must be the work to which Jocelin refers. We certainly know of no other work of a similar character to which Jocelin's observation can apply, and if there were any other similar work we certainly should have heard of it either as a lost or an extant work. Hence, although, *ratione formæ*, Colgan's logic may be weak, *ratione materiæ*, it is unimpeachable, no matter what Dr. Stokes may say to the contrary.[2]

[1] "Acta S. Patricii partim Latino, partim Hibernico Sermone."

[2] He says that Colgan's argument furnishes a choice specimen of an undistributed middle term.

CHAPTER V.

IRISH MONASTIC SCHOOLS IN GENERAL.

"Fenced early in this cloistral round
Of reverie, of shade, of prayer,
How can we grow in other ground?
How can we flower in foreign air?"

I.—General View of an Irish Monastery.

Before we can understand the nature of a monastic school, it is necessary to get a clear idea of the general character of our Irish monasteries, such as they were before the advent of the Danish hordes to this country. This is all the more necessary, because a Celtic monastery of the olden time was a very different thing from those great mediæval establishments, whose ruins are still to be seen both in England and Ireland.

In ancient Erin they had no such structures as were built in later ages by the Cistercians, Dominicans, and Franciscans—noble piles of buildings with the stately church in the centre, surrounded by beautiful cloisters, dormitories, kitchen, and all other necessary offices. These notions must be entirely removed from the mind, if we wish to get an idea of the primitive Celtic monastery, as it existed in the earliest and best days of our Irish Church.

Of course monasteries in the spiritual sense—as moral entities—have always been much the same in every country and in every age of the Church's history. The plan of the spiritual edifice is found in the Gospel, and has been drawn for all time by Christ Himself.

The true monk is a man, as his name implies, who whether in the city or in the desert, should always strive to be alone with God. In this sense the prophets Elias and Eliseus under the Old Law, like John the Baptist at the threshold of the New Law, were monks in the most perfect sense of the word. Then, again, the monk whether living alone in the desert, or in community with others, must follow those counsels of perfection, which have been set forth by the teaching and example of the Son of God Himself. That is to say, he must renounce all worldly goods and live in

poverty, in chastity, and obedience, when he has a superior. If he has no immediate superior, then he is a hermit, and God Himself, whom he seeks to please in all things, becomes his Superior. These means of perfection have been always deemed essential to the monastic character in the Church of God. One cannot conceive a married monk, nor one in the full enjoyment of his worldly fortune, nor one without a superior, except where he lives altogether alone with God, following His inspirations; and even then the bishop of the locality is always recognised by the Church as the Superior, whom he is bound to obey.

With these essential means of perfection were also combined silence, prayer and labour, whether manual or mental. Idleness is unknown to the monastic state; the monk should be always doing something pleasing to God. It may be to pray, or to read, or to work in the fields, or to take his necessary rest, but he must be always doing the work of God.

Monasticism in one sense or another always existed, and always will exist in the Church. It flourished amongst the first Christian communities at Jerusalem, who had only one heart and one soul, who sold their lands and houses, and laid the price at the feet of the Apostles to feed the poor. It existed in the catacombs during the persecutions, and took more definite shape in the deserts of Syria, Egypt, and Armenia.

At first the monk was, as his names implies, a hermit—eremites—one who lived alone in the desert in the practice of evangelical perfection. Such were St. Paul, St. Anthony, Serapion, and thousands of others who imitated their example and lived in solitary cells or rocky caves in Syria, Armenia, and Nitria on the western shores of the Nile some thirty miles from Cairo. Pachomius seems to have been the first who formed these solitaries into a community following one rule and recognising a common superior. He founded his monastery at Tabenna, on the Nile, in Lower Egypt. His sister is said to have been the first who founded a convent of nuns not far from her brother's monastery, in order that she might have the benefit of his advice and direction. The exact date cannot be ascertained; but as he died rather young, about the year A.D. 349, it cannot have been much earlier than A.D. 340. St. Anthony had indeed already undertaken the guidance of certain solitaries, who had placed themselves under his direction. But it was Pachomius who really changed the monasteries, or rather

the laura, into a 'convent,' in which all the members of the community dwelt within the same building,[1] were subject to the same rule, and obedient to the same Superior. This change, however, as might be expected, was not accomplished at once; it was rather very gradual, and grew out of the necessities of the time. The laura, which was a group or village of monastic cells, surrounding the oratory and cell of the abbot, under whose direction the monks assembled for their common devotions in the church and sometimes for their common meals in the refectory, was the intermediate stage of monastic development, and it continued to be, both in Egypt and in Ireland, for many centuries the prevalent form of monastic life.

From Egypt and Syria monasticism was brought to Rome about the middle of the fourth century by Athanasius, the great champion of the Divinity of Christ, by Honoratus, who founded the island monastery of Lerins, and by John Cassian, whose Institutes were a kind of manual in all the earlier monasteries of the West.

The great St. Martin of Tours, the father of monasticism in Gaul, was inspired by the writings of Athanasius, and under the influence of that inspiration founded his own monastery at Ligugé, and subsequently at Marmoutier, on the banks of the Loire, which became the cradles of monastic life in Gaul. We have already seen that St. Patrick had full opportunity of learning the discipline of Marmoutier; and of course what he learned there and elsewhere, he carried home with him to Ireland. But his life was too full of missionary labours to be given to the government or foundation of monasteries. That work was left to the rising generation; by them it was undertaken and nobly accomplished. Enda of Aran, Finnian of Clonard, Brendan of Clonfert, and their associates of the Second Order of the Irish Saints, were the men who first founded regular monasteries and monastic schools in Erin.

In trying to give a view of the general character of the monastic institutions founded by those holy and learned men, it is well to consider the subject in its various aspects; that is to say, the Buildings, the Discipline and Government, and the Work of an Irish Monastery. We have abundant materials to help us in this inquiry in the Monastic Rules, in the lives of the founders of these houses, and in the

[1] Strictly speaking, that building was a collection of cells, each of which was tenanted by three monks.

remnants of the ancient buildings themselves, which are still to be seen on our remotest shores and islands. But there is one work especially valuable in this enquiry—that is, *Adamnan's Life of St. Columba*, edited by the learned Dr. Reeves, late Bishop of Down and Connor. No other work that we know of is so valuable and so indispensable to the Irish ecclesiastical historian, and none has been edited with greater learning and impartiality.

II.—The Buildings.

The various buildings connected with an Irish monastery were generally but not always surrounded by a circular or oval rampart, which was at once a protection against enemies, or wild beasts, and also a limit beyond which the brethren were not allowed to wander without permission, and within which strangers, as a rule, were not allowed to intrude. Women were in all cases excluded from the sanctuary within this boundary. The wall or rampart was composed sometimes of earth dug up from a fosse at its base, when it was called a *rath* or *lis*; sometimes of stone, when it was called a *caiseal*, and sometimes of earth faced with stone, and then it was known rather as a *caithir* than a *caiseal*. The name *dun*, according to Dr. Petrie, was indifferently applied to any of these structures. But O'Curry quotes an ancient legal tract, which proves that the *dun*, strictly speaking, was "an enclosure made by two walls or mounds, with water between them." (*Manners and Customs*, vol. ii., p. 4.) This mur or mound was sometimes very strong and very high, fenced, too, with stakes on the top, and when necessary was double or threefold, with a deep dyke between each rampart. There was generally only one entrance, and when danger was apprehended from lawless foes, this entrance was strictly guarded night and day. It was considered sufficiently effective against the passing attacks of the native spoilers; but when the Danes began their bloody and relentless raids, the round tower was found to afford a much stronger and safer asylum.

The monks in surrounding the ecclesiastical village with a *rath* or *caiseal*, adopted no new contrivance. It was the custom of the country to surround the home of every chieftain's family with a similar defence, which the unsettled state of the country at the time rendered very necessary.

The principal building within the monastic enclosure was of course the church. If it were a cathedral church, or one of the greater abbey churches, it was usually built of stone,

and termed in Gaedhlic, a *daimhliag*, that is, the stone-house by excellence; because very many of the churches of an inferior kind were built of more perishable materials, composed of clay and wood, or wattles. Hence Colgan used the Latin word 'Basilica,' as equivalent to the Irish term, *daimhliag*. Churches of this kind varied of course in dimensions, but were relatively large; generally speaking, they were about 60 feet in length and 30 broad.[1] If the church were merely an oratory for the abbot and his monks, along with such casual strangers as might happen to be present at the time, it was called a *duirtheach*, and in the southern and western parts of the country, where stone abounded, and wood was scarce, it was frequently built of stone as in Kerry and Galway. But far more frequently, especially in the east and north-east, it was built of wood, which explains the frequent reference in our annals to the burning of buildings of this character.[2] The term itself was derived from *daire*, an oak wood.

Adjoining the church, or oratory, there was frequently another building called an *erdamh* or *urdumh*, which Petrie thinks was a building adjacent to the side wall of the church, whence its name—*ear-dom*, a side-house—serving the purpose of a sacristy and store-house for the sacred utensils. During the Danish period especially, the round tower is found near the west entrance of the principal church, but as we think this was a later feature introduced into the Irish monastic buildings, we decline to discuss that question further for the present. The abbot's house was generally very near his oratory, with which it was sometimes connected by a passage underground, or roofed with flags; and sometimes it was under the same roof with the oratory as in Columcille's house at Kells, and probably also at St. Kevin's *Cro* or 'Kitchen,' at Glendalough. The cells of the monks were distributed in convenient spots over the sacred enclosure, sometimes in the form of irregular streets or squares, according to the nature of the ground. We are inclined to think from the small size of the existing stone cells that every monk had a separate cell for his own use; although it would, no doubt, sometimes happen in Ireland, as it certainly often happened in Egypt, that three or four monks had to live in the same cell. They had no beds, in the modern sense of the word; they either slept on the naked earth, or on a skin, which sometimes covered a heap of straw or rushes. There was only a single

[1] *Petrie*, p. 161. [2] See *Life of St. Moling*, and of other saints.

entrance, and generally speaking no windows of any kind to the cells. In form they were nearly always circular, about ten feet in diameter by seven in height. When built of stone they were cone-shaped and brought to a point at the summit by a gradual inclination of each course of flags above the other, yet the builders seemed to be ignorant of the principle of the arch. More generally, however, the cells were constructed of wood, or wicker work, and these, although by no means so durable, were probably much more comfortable than the cells of stone.

One of the most necessary buildings for a laura or monastery was the kitchen—the *cuicin* in Irish, or *culina* in Latin. St. Patrick's 'kitchen' at Armagh was seventeen feet long, and is spoken of as one of the principal buildings within the lis, or monastic enclosure. The *Tripartite Life* of the Saint in the same place tells us that the Great House was twenty-seven feet in length, and consequently much longer than the 'kitchen' with which it seems to have been connected. The Great House—if not the church—was in all probability the refectory or dining-room, which is more generally and appropriately called in Irish, the *proinn-teach*, or dinner-house. It is doubtful if we have any specimens of the Refectories or Kitchens of our earliest monasteries still surviving, because as a rule they were composed of perishable materials. Another important building annexed to the monastery, but generally outside the enclosure was the Hospice, or Guest-House, where strangers were entertained with the utmost hospitality, whether they came as mere visitors (*peregrini*), or penitents to atone for their sins, and receive spiritual consolation. There was, however, another class of guests (*hospites*), distinguished ecclesiastics or princes, the friends of the abbot or community, who were treated with the greatest consideration. They were admitted within the sacred enclosure, and if bishops or priests they were usually invited to officiate for the community. There is no more beautiful trait of monastic hospitality than the consideration with which the monks treated distinguished strangers, and the care they bestowed on the poor.

There were two other indispensable buildings connected with the monastery—the store-house for provisions, and, wherever a stream of water could be had, a kiln for drying, and a mill for grinding their corn. Bread was always the main sustenance of the monks, and hence the site of the monastery was generally so chosen that a rivulet could be artificially dammed up, and thus supply sufficient power to turn a small water-wheel to grind their corn. We find traces of

these dams even in the most unlikely places, where in our day no one would dream of erecting a mill. The manifest reason is that it was a great saving of manual labour, for if the monks did not grind their corn with water, they should grind it with the hand-quern. For obvious reasons, too, one, or more wells were also near the monastery; sometimes, too, they were covered over to preserve the water from the pollution of cattle or rubbish. These wells, used and blessed by so many generations of holy men, are very naturally now deemed "blessed wells." Such then was the general character of the monastic enclosure and the monastic buildings—not one imposing edifice, as in more modern times, but rather a village of huts surrounding the church and house of the abbot, and enclosed by a large circular rampart of earth or stones. Within the enclosure in the larger monasteries a workshop for the smith and carpenter was generally provided, and the lay brothers were frequently expert in the use of their tools. When the monastery was surrounded by marshy land, a *tochar* or stone causeway was built to the nearest highway, in order to facilitate communications with the outer world.

III.—Discipline.

In monasteries we must not confound the essential discipline of every true religious house with the accidental differences, which may be found in different monasteries, and still more in different Orders, or under different Rules. The essential monastic discipline is always the same, but there are, so to speak, several varieties of the species, and these varieties are best exhibited to us in the various Rules which the founders of Religious Orders have left for the guidance of their spiritual posterity. The learned Dr. Reeves[1] seems to doubt if the founders of our Irish Religious Houses ever promulgated any systematic Rule like that of St. Benedict. We certainly have no Irish Rule, not even that of Columbanus, so definite or so systematic as that of St. Benedict; the legal organizing mind of the Italian herein displays its superiority to the untutored mind of the Celt. Moreover, Benedict is, so to speak, more human; he is not so terribly austere in his discipline as are our Irish Saints; and no doubt this was one great reason why it was that when his Rule and that of St. Columbanus were brought into rivalry in France and Northern Italy, the Rule of Benedict conquered.

[1] Additional Notes, page 336

We cannot, however, admit that our Irish Saints did not frame distinctive and definite Rules, although not at all, in our opinion, so distinctive or so definite as the great Rule of St. Benedict. Eugene O'Curry tells us that he examined in the original Irish, eight different Monastic Rules, of which "six are in verse, and two in prose, seven in vellum MSS., and one on paper." These are the Rule of St. Ailby of Emly, addressed to Eugene, son of Saran; the Rule of St. Ciaran of Clonmacnoise; the Rule of St. Comghall of Bangor; the Rule of St. Columcille; the Rule of St. Carthach of Lismore; St. Maelruain's Rules for the Culdees; a Rule of later date for the Grey Monks; and lastly, the Rule written by the famous Cormac Mac Cullinan, the King-Bishop of Cashel. The three most important of these Rules have been published in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, that is the first, the Rule of St. Ailby, for the son of Saran; the Rule of St. Carthach of Lismore; and the Rule of St. Maelruain of Tallaght.

By comparing the general ordinances laid down by the founders of our early monasteries, and still more by carefully noting the references made to the domestic and religious discipline in the Lives of the founders themselves, we can obtain a very distinct idea of the true character of monastic life in Ireland.

The "Abbot" was the superior of the monastic family, and frequently had several houses under his supreme control. He generally lived at the mother-house, where he had a separate cell larger than that of the other brethren, and usually very near to the church or oratory. The branch houses were then governed by local superiors frequently called 'priors,' but they were subject to removal by the Abbot, who had the right at any time of visiting the establishments subordinate to the mother-house; and this right was repeatedly exercised, as we know, from the Lives of Enda, Brendan, and Columcille. Sometimes the Abbot was a bishop, but more frequently during the sixth century he was not, as in the case of Enda and Columcille, and very probably of St. Brendan also. Nearly always, however, in that case a bishop was a member of the religious community, who performed all the episcopal functions and received all the honour due to his office; but, as a member of the community, he was inferior in jurisdiction, and otherwise obedient to the Abbot. During this period diocesan jurisdiction was not well defined, because there was a great number of bishops in the country, and dioceses properly so called were only in process of formation. At this early age the diocese, or 'parrochia,' of a bishop

in many cases extended only to the church or churches which he or his predecessor had founded, and to their adjacent territory. It was a fixed maxim, however, that if one saint had established himself in a district another was not to intrude on his territory without his permission. St. Brendan is said to have at first established himself near the Shannon, at a place called Tulach Brendain; but when he found that he was within hearing of the bell of St. Ruadhan of Lorrha, he removed further to the north and established himself at Clonfert, whereupon St. Ruadhan prophesied that Brendan's 'parrochia' would be blessed by God, and in after years become greater than his own. And so it came to pass.

The monastic "Family" included priests, deacons, minor clerics, and lay brethren, who all yielded implicit obedience to the Abbot as to the representative of God in their regard. The life of the community was a 'warfare;' they were soldiers of Christ, and hence were to be trained and armed for this spiritual combat. Therefore they stripped themselves of the encumbrance of worldly goods, and entered the 'arena' quite 'naked.' They were obedient to the voice of the general, and always ready to sacrifice their lives for Christ. Their obedience was like that of Christ—an obedience unto death. St. Brendan once told one of his monks to go to save another who was sinking, and die in his stead. The monk did so without a murmur—the brother was saved but the rescuer perished.[1]

The Rule of St. Columba prescribes absolute *nakedness* from worldly goods in imitation of Christ. No brother could possess anything of his own—everything was in common. The community itself was poor; the inmates were to be content with the bare necessaries of life—anything beyond that was for the poor and the stranger. Of course chastity was deemed essential, so much so that no woman was permitted to enter the monastic enclosure; in certain cases they were even excluded from the island on which the monastery was built. The members of the community were to be "virgins in mind and in body;" it was not mere celibacy, but perfect chastity—in thought, and word, and work—that was required from all true monks. In all this, however, there is nothing peculiar to Irish monasteries—these virtues have been always considered essential to the monastic state, although not always professed by solemn vow.

"Silence, which is the practice of justice," says the Rule

[1] *Vita Brendani*, cap. 14.

of St. Columbanus,[1] "must, at every task and in every place, be carefully observed." The tongue is the source of many sins, and hence the monks are strictly forbidden to speak except when there is need, and even then with caution. Of course when abroad it would be difficult to observe silence, but still the spirit of the Rule was to be followed. Even the Abbot, in his necessary communication with his subordinates, was to be brief and to the point. The monks frequently communicated their more usual wants by silent signals, especially in the refectory, lest speaking would interfere with the reading, which always took place at meal time.

"Humility" in spirit and the external practice of that virtue were specially inculcated, because spiritual pride is one of the sins most dangerous to religious men, and most difficult to guard against. The Rule of St. Carthach of Lismore requires the monk to live in humility and self-abasement towards all persons, high and low, showing to every one "devotion, humbleness, and enslavement." The brethren in Columcille's monasteries spoke to the Abbot on their knees. If rebuked by his superiors for any fault the monk remained prostrate on the ground until the words of blessing admonished him to rise up—it mattered not whether the brother was really culpable or not, he was to demean himself as a culprit.

One of the characteristic virtues of our Celtic monasteries was their spirit of hospitality. Every monastery had its guest-house for the reception of strangers. They were to be saluted both when coming and going by bowing down the head, and in case of persons of greater consideration by prostration. St. Comgall of Bangor, himself, washed the feet of Columba and his companions, when they came to visit him at Bangor. Upon their arrival the guests were generally received either by the Abbot in person, who gave them the kiss of peace, or by the brother in charge of the hospice, who attended to their immediate wants. One of the first things done was to wash their feet; they were then led to the church to join in a short prayer for their safe arrival. Afterwards they partook of refreshment, and had an opportunity of conferring with the Abbot. When a distinguished guest arrived, the best cheer the monastery afforded was produced. It became a feast day for the entire community; even if it were an ordinary fasting day, by St. Benedict's Rule the fast was to be relaxed in honour of the guest. No sinner, who

[1] Cap. II., De Silentio.

came in a spirit of penance was excluded; but if not penitent, notorious sinners were very properly excluded from the monastic enclosure.

The discipline of the Irish monasteries as to fasting was very rigid. This rigour began in the monasteries of Egypt and Syria, and was afterwards imitated in the West. But in the cold and stormy climate of Ireland such observances must have been exceedingly trying to human nature. Yet, perhaps, nowhere in the Church were these penitential exercises carried out with such unsparing rigour. The penances, even apart from fasting, practised by some of our Irish Saints were simply appalling. In our days we should consider them almost suicidal. To spend half the night up to the neck in a stream of cold water, to sleep on the rock in a cell or cave without coverlet or pillow, to wear the same coarse garment until it fell to pieces in rags, to spend the whole of Lent in the woods or mountains with only a few loaves of bread and a little water, were not unusual exercises of mortification in those days of primitive fervour. This was, however, mostly the case with hermits or recluses. The discipline of the regular monastic life was severe, but not quite so rigorous as this.

The ordinary meal for the 'family' was barley or oaten bread, with milk when it could be had, and a little fish, perhaps sometimes eggs. Flesh meat was rarely allowed except on high festival days or when distinguished strangers came to the monastery. The brethren were then allowed a share of the good cheer provided for the strangers. There was, however, except for those labouring in the fields, only one meal in the day—the Columban Rule borrowed from Bangor expressly says that the fare was to be plain and taken only in the evening, that is, after noon.[1] Vegetables, porridge, and baked bread are the principal items mentioned as allowable, and barely as much as would support life. Excessive abstinence from food, however, was to be deemed a vice, not a virtue; but to some extent a monk was to fast every day. The 'order of refection, and of the refectory,' is one of the most interesting portions of the Rule of St. Carthach of Lismore.[2] He allows an ample meal for the workman and special delicacies for the sick. On Sundays and other festivals of the year, especially on the greater festivals, meals were 'increased.' From Easter to Pentecost was also a season of full meals—"without fasting, heavy labour, or great vigils." The Summer and Winter Lent are more bitter to laics than

[1] "Cibus sit vilis et vespertinus." [2] See *I. Eccles. Record*, Jan. 1865.

to monks, for to the latter all seasons should be as Lent. The meal was to be at vesper time only, except from Easter to St. John's Day, when a refection was also allowed at noon. The bell was to be the signal for the meal, but first there was a Pater with three genuflections in the church; then the meal was blessed. Alleluia was sung, and a benediction pronounced by the Senior, who said, "God bless you." The meal was followed by thanksgiving, after which all retired to their cell for private prayer preparatory to vespers. Wednesday and Friday were generally fast days.

The ordinary dress consisted of a *cuculla* or habit of coarse undyed wool with a hood, and a tunic or short underneath garment. Sandals were sometimes worn when travelling, but rarely at home. There is no mention made of any covering for the head but the cowl or hood, which was sometimes thrown over it. No doubt a leathern or hempen girdle was worn round the loins. The monk slept in his clothes on a pallet of straw in his cell. He had a straw pillow under his head, and probably some kind of a rug for a coverlet in severe weather. St. Columba himself slept on the bare stone, which was covered only with a skin, and this practice seems not to have been unusual.

IV.—The Daily Labour of the Monastery.

St. Columbanus tersely describes the daily work of every monastery when he says—"Ergo quotidie jejunandum est, sicut quotidie orandum est, quotidie laborandum, quotidieque est legendum."[1] Fasting and prayer, labour and study, are the daily task of the monks in every monastery. How patiently and unselfishly that toil was performed the history of Europe tells. The monks made roads, cleared the forests, and fertilized the desert. Their monasteries in Ireland were the sites of our cities. To this day the land about a monastery is well known to be the greenest and best in the district; and it was made fertile by the labour of the monks. They preserved for us the literary treasures of antiquity; they multiplied copies of all the best and newest works; they illuminated them with the most loving care. They taught the children of the rich and the poor alike; they built the church and the palace; they were the greatest authors, painters, architects, since the decline of the Roman Empire. They were the physicians of the poor when there were no dispensary doctors; they served the sick in their hospitals and at

[1] Regula., cap. 3.

their homes. And when the day's work was done in the fields or in the study, they praised God, and prayed for men who were unable or unwilling to pray for themselves. Ignorant and prejudiced men have spoken of them as an idle and useless race. They were in reality the greatest toilers, and the greatest benefactors of humanity that the world has ever seen.

Religious exercises were the first duty of the monk—'*Orare.*' This was called the Work of God, and consisted of Mass, the Divine office, with private prayer and meditation. The Holy Sacrifice was celebrated every day, at which all the community was to attend; it was generally at an early hour in the morning, before the labour of the day began. The ordinary canonical hours were chanted in choir—Matins and Lauds generally at midnight. Mistakes, even from inadvertence in chanting, were punished by Columbanus with a small penance-genuflection. The brethren labouring in the field were not required to attend in choir during the day. The entire psaltery seems to have been recited during the daily office at least at certain times of the year. If a brother had any leisure he might, at any time, retire to the oratory to pray. At all their incomings and outgoings they made the sign of the cross, sometimes turning themselves to the east. It seems, too, that making the same holy sign was a frequent method of salutation.

A novitiate of varying length was observed before a candidate was admitted to the brotherhood. After suitable probation, he took the monastic vow[1] before the Abbot and the brethren on his knees in the church. It was a very solemn vow taken "in the Name of the High God." The tonsure (up to A.D. 640) from ear to ear was generally received by the brethren, even when they did not intend to proceed to higher orders. It was considered to be a sign of the total renunciation of the world, and a dedication of oneself to the service of God. Yet, the monk did not, properly speaking, belong to the clergy.

Study.—The study of the Sacred Scriptures was daily practised by the learned members of the community—the younger got by rote a portion of the Psalter until they could recite the whole from memory, for books were then very scarce. They had also the study of the Greek and Latin languages, and of the Fathers in the Irish Monasteries, as we shall more fully explain hereafter. The Lives of the

[1] "Votum Monasticum."—*Adamnan.*

Saints were read for the community and conferences—collationes—like those of Cassian on spiritual and theological questions were frequently held under the presidency of the abbot or prior.

Writing formed a principal part of the literary work in every monastery. There was a special building set apart for that purpose called the *Scriptorium* where all necessary appliances, waxen tablets, parchments, inks, styles, pens, were to be had, and a library was also kept for the use of the students and the custody of the books. Too often both buildings were burned, and their precious treasures lost for ever. The work of transcription was executed with great care and beauty. To be 'a choice scribe' was an accomplishment highly prized by the individual and by the community. That our Celtic monks were indeed the choicest of the choice is abundantly proved by the marvellous beauty of many of our existing manuscripts.

Manual Labour.—It was a maxim in all our primitive Irish monasteries that the monks were to support themselves by the labour of their hands. The mendicant orders, who lived to a great extent on the alms of the faithful, were a later institution, first introduced into Ireland about the year A.D. 1225. Hence, in every monastery a number of the stronger brethren devoted themselves mainly to manual labour, and indeed all, even the scribes as well as the literary and artistic workmen, were required to give some time to manual labour also. In their case it would serve as healthy recreation, while, at the same time it would remind them that all the members of the community were on terms of strict equality, and that no privileged classes were recognised amongst them. Everything that the community needed was produced or procured by themselves. They raised their own corn; they themselves dried and ground and baked it into bread. They had their own dairy; they milked their own cows; they made excellent cheese and butter; for no female was allowed to live amongst them, or even permitted to enter the monastery. They had their own sheep, and their habits were produced from the wool, combed, spun, and woven by themselves. They built their own churches and cells, whether of stone or of timber; they made their own simple furniture and kitchen utensils; they cut and dried their own fuel, both turf and wood; they washed their own habits, about the cleanliness of which, however, they were not always over particular. When a monk died there was no need of an undertaker—his brethren made the grave, and he

was simply buried in his babit, with the cowl over his head. No man could say they were idlers, or that they were a burden to the community. They owed nothing to the general community, but the community owed much to them. Everything needed for food, clothing, and shelter they produced themselves—even the very soil of their fields they reclaimed from the woods and the wilderness.

Both church and monastery were furnished in the simplest style—they devoted more attention to holiness of life and purity of heart than to the magnificence of their buildings. As we have already seen, the church was not large, only what was needed for the accommodation of the brethren, and where the community was large we find several churches close together, to which the various subdivisions of the community repaired. The altar was generally of stone, sometimes merely a rectangle of plain masonry—not even cemented—and covered with a flag or slate. Such is the altar in the oratory of St. Molaise on Innismurray Island, which is still to be seen in that highly interesting spot, within the little stone-roofed duirteach of St. Molaise. The chalices were of simple workmanship—of metal, wood, or even sometimes of stone, if the vessel No. 34, second cross case, in the Royal Irish Academy, be indeed an ancient chalice. The paten was generally composed of the same material as the chalice itself. St. Patrick is said to have discovered chalices of glass or crystal in a cavern in the mountains of Breifney, after crossing the Shannon for the first time into Connaught. We have no specimen of very ancient vestments; they were, probably, of a simple character, but certainly not destitute of embroidery.[1]

In some of the churches mention is made of an *urdumh*, or sacristy, properly a 'side-house,' opening on the chancel of the church, and having also an exterior door for the

[1] St. Patrick had, we are told, three maidens who were constantly employed on embroidery work for sacred purposes—one was his own sister, Lupait, another is called Cruimtheris, and the third was King Daire's royal daughter.

"Beneath a pine three vestals sat close veiled;
A song these childless sang of Bethlehem's child,
Low-toned, and worked their altar cloth, a Lamb,
All white, on golden blazon."

Columcille, too, had his own special embroideress for working his vestments and altar cloths. She was called Coca, and has given her name to the ancient church of Kilcock, in the County Kildare, which she founded.* In the *Book of Kells*, too, we find examples of vestments in the ornamentation portrayed in the richest and most vivid colouring.

* See O'Curry, *Manners and Customs*, vol. iii., p. 123.

clergy as at present. In several of the churches, however, we find no trace of any sacristy. Bells were used to summon the community to the church and to the refectory; they were generally square hand-bells, made of sheet iron or bronze, of which some very ancient specimens are still extant.

In the refectory we find reference made to the table, also to the use of knives, drinking-cups, probably made of wood, and ladles; in the kitchen we hear of frying-pans, grid-irons, pots and water jars, doubtless similar to those used in the houses of hospitality throughout the country generally, specimens of which may still be seen in the museum of the Royal Irish Academy. They were able to fuse metals in Hy, for on one occasion we are told that St. Columba blessed inadvertently a butcher's knife, but his attention being called to the nature of the article, he said it would never hurt man or beast again. As the butcher tried in vain to kill a heifer with the knife—it could not on account of the saint's blessing, even pierce the skin—the knife was smelted down, and all the instruments were dipped in the liquid metal, so that they never again cut or wounded any flesh on account of the might of the saint's blessing. It would seem, therefore, that, at least in the larger establishments, besides the carpenter, there were also brothers of the community, who worked in metals, such for instance as smiths and braziers. Existing remains prove beyond doubt that in metallurgy the Irish monks were pre-eminently skilful, both in originality of design and delicacy of execution. In this special department they seemed to have distanced all rivalry during the Middle Ages.

We see, then, that in the monastery there were not merely artisans, such as are needed for the purposes of every-day life, but artists of the greatest skill and ingenuity.

We shall take occasion hereafter to point out how instruction was communicated in the schools, and to explain what educational appliances were at their disposal, the subjects that were taught, and the proficiency attained.

In connection, however, with this chapter, it is necessary to say something of the Three Orders of Irish Saints, to which reference will frequently be made in the following pages.

V.—The Three Orders of Irish Saints.

We shall find, at least, to some extent, a new departure in the great monasteries and monastic schools, founded during the sixth century by the saints of the Second Order.

Every one who knows anything of the history of this period will have heard of these Three Orders of Saints in the Celtic Church, but by whom they were first thus arranged and characterised is altogether unknown. Tighernach, the celebrated annalist of Clonmacnoise, is the earliest who refers to them as thus classified, and he died A.D. 1088.

The ancient document in which they are thus formally classified purports to be a "Catalogue of the Saints in Ireland, according to the different times in which they flourished."

The First Order was in the time of St. Patrick. They were all then great and holy bishops filled with the Holy Ghost, 350 in number, the founders of churches, worshipping one head, namely, Christ, following one leader, Patrick, and having one tonsure, and one celebration of Mass, and one Easter, which they celebrated after the vernal equinox; and what was excommunicated by one Church all excommunicated. They did not reject the service and society of females, because founded on Christ the Rock, they feared not the wind of temptation. This Order flourished during four reigns, that is, during the time of Laeghaire, son of Niall (A.D. 432), who reigned thirty-seven years, and of Ailill Molt, who reigned thirty years, and of Lugaid, who reigned seven years. And this Order continued to the last years of Tuathal Maelgarbh (A.D. 543). They all continued holy bishops, and they were chiefly Franks and Romans,[1] and Britons, and Scots by birth.

The Second Order of Saints was as follows:—In the Second Order there were few bishops, but many priests—in number 300. Whilst worshipping God as their one head, they had different rites for celebrating, and different rules of living; they celebrated one Easter on the 14th moon; they had a uniform tonsure, videlicet, from ear to ear. They shunned the society and services of women, and excluded them from their monasteries. This Order also flourished during four reigns, *i.e.*, during the last years of Tuathal Maelgarbh, and during the thirty years of the reign of Diarmaid, the son of Cearbhall, and during the time of the two grandsons of Muiredach, who reigned seven years, and during the time of Aedh, son of Ainmire, who reigned thirty years (A.D. 597). These received their rite for celebrating Masses from the holy men of Britain, from St. David, and St. Gildas, and St. Docus. And the names of these are—Finnian, Enda, Colman, Comgall, Aidus, Ciaran, Columba, Brandan, Birchin,

[1] The Romans were those who enjoyed the rights of the Imperial citizenship, which at this time had come to be in reality a badge of slavery.

Cainnech, Coemghan, Lasrian, Lugeus, Barrind, and many others who were of this Second Order of Saints.

The Third Order was of this kind:—They were holy priests and a few bishops, one hundred in number, who dwelt in desert places. They lived on herbs and the alms of the faithful; they despised all things earthly, and entirely avoided all whispering and detraction. They had different rules (of life), and different rites for celebrating; they had also a different tonsure, for some had the crown (shaven), but others kept their hair (on the crown). They had also a different pashcal solemnity; for some celebrated it on the fourteenth, but others on the thirteenth moon. This Order flourished during four reigns, that is, from the time of Aedh Slaine, who reigned only three years, and during the reign of Domhnall, who reigned thirty years, and during the time of the sons of Maelcobha, and during the time (of the sons of) Aedh Slaine. And this Order continued down to the time of the great plague (in A.D. 664). Then follows a list of their names.

Whereupon the writer says:—"Note that the First Order was most holy, the Second holier, and the Third holy. The First glowed like the sun in the fervour of their charity; the Second cast a pale radiance like the moon; the Third shone like the aurora. These Three Orders the blessed Patrick foreknew, enlightened by heavenly wisdom, when in prophetic vision he saw at first all Ireland ablaze, and afterwards only the mountains on fire; and at last saw lamps lit in the valleys. These things have been extracted from an old *Life of Patrick*."[1]

Such is the account given in our ancient books of the Three Orders of the Irish Saints.

We have here followed the copy of this ancient document, taken from the *Salamanca MS.*, lately published at the expense of the Marquis of Bute. It is beyond doubt a very ancient and most interesting document; but for the present we can only refer to those points that concern our immediate purpose.

It clearly marks a transition as having taken place in the early part of the sixth century from the missionary church of St. Patrick, who was engaged in founding churches and preaching the Gospel, to the monastic church of the sixth century. It emphasises the rejection of female ministration by the monks, and the exclusion of females from the monasteries, a thing that could not be done and never has been

[1] See the *Salamanca MS.*, p. 161.

done in the case of the secular clergy living in the world, and engaged in missionary labour. The observation that "what was excommunicated by one church was excommunicated by all," seems to point to a more perfect unity in the Patrician Church than existed during the second half of the sixth century. The central authority both in Church and State during the latter period was notably weakened. It is clear, too, that different rules of life were followed in different monasteries, and also that different rites were used in the celebration of Mass, and this document asserts that the rite used by the saints of the Second Order was derived from Wales—from David, Gildas, and Docus. This is a most important statement, if it is well founded; for it shows that these saints of the Second Order derived both their liturgy and discipline, not from St. Patrick and his immediate disciples, but rather from the great Welsh Schools that grew up during the sixty years when St. Patrick was engaged in preaching the Gospel in Ireland. Indeed, although Ware says that St. Patrick himself wrote a monastic Rule, we can find no good authority for the statement. His hands were full, and he was too busy to attend to the organization of monastic life, beyond laying down these general principles that are common to all monastic houses. It is a much stranger thing that the saints of the Second Order should introduce into Ireland, so soon after St. Patrick's death, those later modifications in the liturgy which they saw in use in the Welsh monasteries. It is insinuated, too, that St. Patrick and his disciples followed the correct Easter, but that the saints of the Second Order introduced the British Easter, which was celebrated on the fourteenth day of the moon, as well as the frontal tonsure from ear to ear. As we shall hereafter see, this statement about the time of celebrating Easter is quite inaccurate, but may have crept into the text through the fault of copyists.

The important point to bear in mind is that these saints of the Second Order are represented as deriving their liturgy and discipline from British sources; and it is also expressly stated that this liturgy and discipline differed in some respects from the liturgy and discipline introduced into Ireland by St. Patrick, and practised by his immediate disciples. This is a question of great interest, but by no means easily solved. As a matter of fact, it seems highly probable that the saints of the Second Order did, to a great extent, derive their monastic discipline from two great British sources, as will again be more fully explained in treating of St. Enda of Aran and St. Finnian of Clonard.

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CHAPTER VI.

SCHOOLS OF THE FIFTH CENTURY.

Our Kings sat of old in Emania and Tara;
These new Kings whence are they? Their names are unknown!
Our saints lie entomb'd in Ardmagh and Kildara;
Their relics are healing, their graves are grass-grown.

I.—The School of Armagh.

The School of Armagh seems to have been the oldest, and always continued to be one of the most celebrated, of the ancient schools of Ireland. It dates in all probability from the very foundation of the See of Armagh, for it has always been regarded in the Church as one of the primary duties of a bishop to make provision for the training and education of his ecclesiastics, and as far as possible under his own immediate supervision. We may be sure that our great Apostle did not neglect his duty; and, indeed, the most ancient writers inform us that the School of Armagh dates from the foundation of the See—the history of one is in fact told in the history of the other.

St. Patrick had purposed to build his Church and found his primatial See in the sweet and flowery fields of Louth, where the deep seclusion of a sheltered meadow wooed his weary heart to build a house for God, and a home for his own declining years. But God had willed otherwise. "Get thee northward," said the angel visitor, "to the height of Macha (Ard-Macha); it is there that Providence wills that you should build your church and fix your chair for ever." Promptly, though regretfully, the Apostle obeyed; and crossing the slopes of Slieve Gullion soon came in sight of the swelling hills of Macha of which God's angel spoke—

"So long as Sea
Girdeth this isle, so long thy name shall hang
In splendour o'er it like the stars of God."

The place had long been famous in the legendary history of Ireland. It was the classic ground of poetry and romance. Navan fort, just one mile to the west of the present city of

Armagh, was the site of the ancient and famous palace of Emania, founded three hundred years before the Christian era by Macha of the golden hair, who traced the site of the rath with the brooch of gold from her neck, and hence it was called *Eamhuin*, in Latin *Emania*, but pronounced in Irish *avan*, so that with the article prefixed it becomes *Navan*, or "the fort of the neck-brooch," the name which it retains to the present day. Macha of the golden hair was buried on the height called from her Ard-Macha, although the spot cannot be exactly identified. To the westward of Navan fort is a townland now called Creeveroe, which takes its name from the famous Red Branch Knights (Craebh-ruadh), who dwelt on that western slope of Emania where they had a school of Chivalry, in which they were trained to all martial feats of valour, and were always at hand to defend their sovereign and follow him to the battle-field. When St. Patrick came to Ard-Macha, that home of chivalry was silent and deserted, for Emania had been totally destroyed by the Three Collas about the year A.D. 322, after it had flourished for more than 600 years. The old order changed, yielding place to the new, and the foundress of Emania gave her name to the royal seat of a more enduring kingdom.

When Patrick, with his train of clerics, came to Armagh, he went straight to the local dynast, whose name was Daire —a grandson, it seems, of Eoghan, son of Niallan, who gave his name to the barony of Oneilland. Daire was a rough and bold, but not a cruel prince; he had heard, too, of Patrick and of the God of Christians; so when the Saint asked him for a site of a church on the Ridge of the Willows (Druim-Saileach), although he refused him that proud site on the hill, he granted him leave to build a church in the neighbouring plain to the west, which was called *Na Fearta*, or the Church of the Graves. But Daire, greedy even for what he had given to God, sent down two of his fleet coursers to graze on the green and fertile meadow which Patrick had enclosed for his church. It was very necessary to teach the rude warriors of the time that God's acre may not lawfully be profaned by man or beast, so it came to pass that when the horses tasted of the grass, they both fell dead, and the king's servants brought word to their master that the Christian priest had killed them. Daire's brow grew dark, and mentally he swore that he would slay Patrick and all his people, when suddenly he sickened with a sickness nigh to death. Then in great haste the queen, "whose lustrous violet eyes were lost in tears," sent a messenger to

the Saint and besought him to heal her husband, for she knew his malady was a chastisement from God. Patrick yielded to the woman's gracious prayer, and blessing water from the font, he gave it to the messengers, and bade them sprinkle therewith the horses and the king. This was done, and lo! the horses came to life again, and the king's sore sickness left him.

Then Daire sent to Patrick as a gift a huge bronze cauldron, in those days a gift not unworthy of a king. The Saint, raising his eyes from his breviary, said "Deo gratias," but no more. "How did the priest receive my gift?" said the king. "'Gratzicam' was all he said," replied the messengers. Then the king in wrath bade them go again, and bear away the gift from the ungrateful priest; and again Patrick merely said, "Deo gratias." "What said he now?" asked the king. "Only 'Gratzicam,'" answered the messengers. "It is strange," said Daire. "'Gratzicam,' when it is given; and 'Gratzicam' when it is taken away. The word must be good. I will restore him the cauldron, and give him the Ridge of the Willows that he may build a church unto his God."

So Patrick, and Daire with his queen, and the clerics and the warriors of Daire ascended the slope, and on the crown of that sacred hill, Patrick, book in hand, marked out the site of the church, and all the buildings connected therewith, and consecrated it to God for ever. Now it came to pass that as the concourse was advancing, a doe with her fawn was lying under a tree. The startled doe flew swiftly away to the north, and the king's attendants were going to kill the little fawn, but Patrick said, "No"; and stretching forth his hand he took the fawn, and put it on his own shoulders, and the doe taking courage followed him home, and remained with the nuns of Na Fearta ever after, giving them milk, too, beside feeding her fawns. This lesson of love and tenderness even to the brute creation produced a great effect on the warriors of Daire. They saw how Patrick pitied the poor doe, and would not hurt its offspring; they saw in him the image of that Good Shepherd of whom he spoke to them so often; and thus they were made to learn that the Gospel of Patrick was a message of love—of love for God, their great Father in heaven, and for all their fellow-men on earth.

According to the *Book of Armagh*, written about the year A.D. 807, the doe with her fawn was lying on the very "spot where the altar of the northern church in Ard-Macha now stands;" and Patrick carried the fawn on his shoulders until

he laid it "on another eminence at the north side of Armagh where, according to the statement of those who know the place, miraculous attestations are to be witnessed to this day." (Fol 6: b. 2.) The northern church to which the reference is made—built on the very spot where the doe was lying—is generally thought to have been the Sabhall, or Barn, called also the "*Ecclesia Sinistralis*," because it was to the left of the great church, for persons entering the latter from the west. The great church itself known as the *Damhliac* (Duleek), or the great Stone Church, occupied the site of the present Protestant cathedral; and it is an extraordinary coincidence that the new Catholic Cathedral, the crowning glory of modern Armagh, stands on the opposite hill to the north dwarfing by its majestic proportions the Protestant church—and stands, it is said, on that very "eminence to the north" whither the great apostle carried the fawn on his shoulders! The hunted doe there found rest; and there, too, that other "milk white hind," during the stormy centuries of the past, so often doomed to death, yet fated not to die, was destined to find a refuge and a home. "Great shall be the glory of this last House, more than of the first, and in *this place* I will give thee peace, said the Lord of Hosts." (Agg. 2, 10.)

There were many other ecclesiastical buildings at Armagh, of which we can only mention the names. There was the *Damhliac Toga*, or the "Stone Church of the Elections," on the south side of the Cathedral, but close at hand; there was a *Cloictech*, or Round Tower, at its north-west angle; there was a *Teach Screaptra*, or House of Writings, also within the original rath; and besides the Abbot's House, we hear of the *Cuicin* or Kitchen, the prison for refractory monks or students, and the *Reilig* or Cemetery, which was more to the south, but afterwards extended all round the church. It was there that Brian Boru and his gallant son, Murchadh, were interred after the battle of Clontarf in 1014. Maelmuire, the Primate, proceeded with his clergy and relics to Swords, and waked the royal dead with all honour and reverence. Then they carried the bodies to Armagh, and they were both interred in the same new tomb.

All these buildings, including the houses for the monks and students, crowned the summit of the holy hill, and were surrounded with a large rath or earthen mound, as well as by a *Fith-nemhedh*, or Sacred Grove, where learning and religion sat side by side enthroned for many centuries in spite of much turbulence and bloodshed.

The Churches and Schools of Armagh are said to have been founded between the years A.D. 450 and 457—we can scarcely assign an earlier date. At that time St. Patrick had done much for the conversion of Ireland, but much still remained to be accomplished, so he chose and consecrated as his coadjutor Benignus, his young and faithful desciple, to preside over the Church of Armagh and over all its monasteries and schools. Thus in truth we may regard Benignus as the first president, and one of the chief professors of the young seminary which St. Patrick had just founded. Benignus from his boyhood had been trained by St. Patrick himself; he had accompanied him hitherto on all his missionary journeys; he was "psalm-singer" to the Saint, by whom he was tenderly loved, and not without good cause. The brief story of the life of Benignus is very touching—beautiful with a beauty that is all divine.

As we have seen, when St. Patrick first came to preach the Gospel in Ireland, he coasted northward, seeking a suitable spot to land, and amongst other places he put in for a little at the stream now called the Nanny Water in the County Meath, a little to the south of Drogheda. There he visited the house of a certain man of noble birth, by name Sescnen, whom, after due instruction, he baptized, together with his wife and family. Amongst the children there was one, a fair and gentle boy, to whom the saint, on account of the sweetness and meekness of his disposition, gave in baptism the appropriate name of Benignus. Shortly after the baptism Patrick, wearied out with his labours by sea and land, fell asleep where he sat, as it would seem, on the green sward before the house of Sescnen. Then the loving child, robed in his baptismal whiteness, gathered together bunches of fragrant flowers and sweet smelling herbs and strewed them gently over the head and face of the weary Saint; the child then sat at his feet, and pressed Patrick's tired limbs close to his own pure heart and kissed them tenderly. The Saint's companions were in the act of chiding the boy, lest he might disturb Patrick, who thereupon awaking and perceiving what took place, thanked the tender-hearted child for his kindness, and said to those standing by: "Leave him so; he shall be the heir of my kingdom," by which he meant, says the author of the *Tripartite Life*, to signify that God had destined Benignus to succeed Patrick in the primatial chair as ruler of the Irish Church. After this nothing could separate the boy from his spiritual father; he hung on the words of wisdom that fell from Patrick's lips; he accompanied him everywhere, and

thus from his boyhood was trained by the apostle himself in all divine and human knowledge. We cannot stay to discuss the question whether Secundinus preceded Benignus as coadjutor to St. Patrick in the See of Armagh. It seems he did; it is certain at any rate that for ten years, about the time we speak of, that is, from A.D. 455 to 465, Benignus ruled under the guidance of Patrick the Church and School of Armagh.

His voice was sweet and pleasing, and his knowledge of the chants of the church was very considerable, acquired doubtless from Patrick himself, who had been trained in Gaul and Britain. Hence he was "psalmist" to Patrick, he led the choir of priests and monks at all the solemn ceremonies, and he trained the "wild eyed" Celtic youth to sing the praises of God like another Orpheus, softening them into Christian meekness by the charms of sweet melody—the melody of his voice and the still sweeter melody of his gentle heart.

Yet though a child of grace he had need of caution. His own sweet winning ways,[1] the music of his voice, his face so modest and so fair, deeply, though to himself unconsciously, won the affections of Ercnat, the beautiful and yet unbaptized daughter of King Daire. Most of all she was smitten by his sweet voice in the choir of the church. But she told no one; only going home she pined away in silence, and "through grief of love the maiden lay as dead." Then at length Benignus hearing the cause, went and told his father Patrick, and Patrick gave him holy water, and bade him go and sprinkle it over the dying maiden. At once she awoke to a new life, with her heart emancipated from every trace of earthly love.

> "Thenceforth she loved the spouse of souls.
> It was as though some child that dreaming wept,
> Its childish playthings lost, by bells awaked—
> Bride-bells, had found herself a Queen new wed
> Unto her Country's Lord."
>
> —*Aubrey de Vere.*

St. Benignus died, it is generally stated, on the 9th of November, A.D. 468. A short time before his death he is said to have resigned his primatial coadjutorship, for St. Patrick was still alive, at least according to the much

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[1] Benignus was, says the author of the *Tripartite Life* of St. Patrick, an "adolescens facie decorus, vultu modestus, moribus integer, nomine uti et in re Benignus," and his voice "cunctos oblectans."

more general and more probable opinion, which places his death in A.D. 493, at the great age of 120 years. The death of Benignus is thus noticed in the *Martyrology of Donegal:*

"November 8th, Benignus, *i.e.* Benen, son of Sescnen, disciple of St. Patrick, and his successor, that is Primate of Ard-Macha . . . The holy Benen was benign, was devout; he was a virgin without ever defiling his virginity, for when he was psalm-singer at Ard-Macha along with his master, St. Patrick, Ercnat, daughter of Daire, loved him and she was seized with a disease so that she died (appeared to die) suddenly; and Benen brought holy water to her from St. Patrick, and he shook it upon her, and she arose alive and well; and she loved him spiritually afterwards, and she subsequently went to Patrick and confessed all her sins to him, and offered her virginity to God, so that she went to heaven; and the name of God, of Patrick, and of Benen was magnified through it."

The celebrated Irish work called the *Leabhar Na g-Ceart*, or *Book of Rights*, has been generally attributed to St. Benignus, although there seems to be good reason for doubting if he was really its author, at least in its present form. The title or inscription of the book certainly attributes it to Benignus. It is to this effect: "The beginning of the *Book of Rights*, which relates to the revenues and subsidies of Ireland as ordered by Benen, son of Sescnen, Psalmist of Patrick, as is related in the *Book of Glendaloch*."

The *Book of Glendaloch* is no longer extant; but it seems clear from this very title that the work in its present form is derived from the ancient compilation known as the *Book of Glendaloch*, and which the Four Masters tell us was in their hands when composing their own immortal work. The copy in the *Book of Glendaloch* may have been itself made from the original treatise on the subject by St. Benignus, who was in every way well qualified for the task, both by his literary training as well as by his knowledge of his native language, and his familiarity with the laws and customs of the various provinces.

The title of the book very fairly describes its contents. It gives an exceedingly minute and interesting account of the revenues and rights of the supreme king; of the services and duties rendered to him by the provincial kings and inferior chiefs, as well as of the gifts and subsidies which he owed them in return. It gives also a full account of the revenues and rights of each of the provincial monarchs, and the services to be rendered to them by the sub-chiefs of the various districts, and the hereditary offices and honours held by the heads of the great families in the provincial assemblies. The work is partly in poetry and partly in prose; and although

in its present form it cannot have dated from the time of St. Benignus, it is still an exceedingly valuable work as illustrating the internal organization of the entire kingdom, and its minor principalities, and may have been originally drawn up by that learned and holy man, with a view of preventing internecine feuds, by definitely and authoritatively fixing the rights and duties of the various princes and chiefs of the kingdom. This work has been translated and annotated for the Dublin Archæological Society by the late John O'Donovan. St. Benignus is said by Jocelin to have written also a life of St. Patrick, but no copy of it is now known to exist; and he has been always regarded as one of the compilers of the great collection of Brehon Laws known as the *Senchus Mor*.

The School of Armagh seems to have been primarily a great theological seminary. This is only natural; for the seat of authority should be also the fountain of sound doctrine. Of course in those far distant days theological learning had not assumed the strictly scientific form which was given to it by the great scholastic doctors, and which has been retained and gradually perfected ever since. It was the Positive Theology of the Fathers that was taught in our ancient Irish schools. But the difference regards the form rather than the matter; in both cases the matter is derived from divine revelation. The Fathers, however, explained and enforced the great principles of Christian doctrine and morality with rhetorical fulness and vigour, exhibiting much fecundity of thought and richness of imagery, but not attending so closely as the great scholastics to scientific arrangement, or to the accurate development of their principles and the logical cogency of their proofs. Each of these systems has its own merits and defects; the former is better suited for the instruction and exhortation of the faithful, the latter for the refutation of error; the Positive Theology was of spontaneous growth; the Scholastic System has been elaborately constructed; the one is a stately tree, that with the years of its life, has gradually grown in size and beauty to be the pride of the forest; the other is the Gothic Cathedral that from its broad and deep foundations has been laboriously built up, stone by stone, unto the glory of its majestic proportions and the strength of its perfect unity.

One of the most famous books in the schools of Ireland, and especially of Armagh, was the *Morals of St. Gregory the Great*. It is a very large treatise in thirty-five books, and

though nominally a commentary on the *Book of Job*, it is in reality one of the most beautiful works on moral theology in its widest sense that have been ever penned. Every verse of Job is made the text for a homily, not a homily of a formal character, but a series of moral reflections conveyed in sweet and touching language—language in which argument and exhortation are very happily blended.

On Sacred Scripture St. Jerome seems to have been their great authority. We know both from the fragments of Aileran the Wise, published by Migne, and from the Irish manuscripts of St. Columban's great monastery at Bobbio, that our Irish scholars were familiar with nearly all his works. In Dogmatic Theology we do not think that during the first two centuries of their history the Celtic scholars were familiar with the writings of St. Augustine on Grace; they seem to have derived their dogma from St. Hilary, and other writers of the French Church, rather than from the great Father of the African Church.

One of the earliest and most distinguished teachers of the School of Armagh, after the time of St. Patrick and Benignus, was Gildas the Wise. Many writers think there were at least two great saints of this name—the Albanian Gildas, and his namesake, Gildas of Badon (Badonicus), to whom the appellation of the Wise more properly belongs. We are inclined to think there was only one great saint of the name, and that the distinction is due to that confusion and uncertainty in our early chronology, which has been the fruitful parent of many errors. However, we are more concerned with facts than with dates, and it is an undoubted fact, stated by his biographer, Caradoc of Llancarvan, that Gildas was Regent or Rector of the great School of Armagh for several years, after which he returned to Wales from Ireland about A.D. 508, when he heard that his brother Huel had been slain by King Arthur, who, by the way, in sober history is by no means the "blameless King" he is represented to be in the romantic idyls of Lord Tennyson. Here are the exact words of Caradoc, the biographer of Gildas. After stating that Gildas, a most "holy preacher of the Gospel," passed over to Ireland from Wales, and there converted very many to the Catholic faith, he adds:—"Gildas, the historian of the Britons, who was at that time (when his brother was killed), living in Ireland, being rector of the school, and a preacher in the city of Armagh, hearing of the death of his brother," returned to Wales and was reconciled to Arthur. Thus we learn that Gildas, the historian of the

Britons, was the same Gildas who had been head of the School of Armagh, the preacher renowned throughout all the Britains, and the first historian of that nation. His work called *The Destruction of Britain*,[1] is still extant, and shows that he was a man of large culture and of great holiness, in every way qualified to rule the Schools of Armagh. He gives a fearful picture of the Britons of his time, reduced as they were, to the greatest extremities by domestic tyrants and foreign foes. The first part of his work gives a sketch of British history, both civil and ecclesiastical, during the Roman domination in Britain, of the devastations by the Picts and Scots, and of the advent of the Saxons and Angles. The second part, called the "Epistle of Gildas," is addressed to the five petty princes, or tyrants, of Britain—to Constantine, whom he charges with perjury, robbery, adultery, and murder; to Aurelius, whom he calls a "lion's cub;" to the "panther," Vortiporius; to the "butcher," Cuneglass; and to Magnoclunus, the "insular dragon." On the whole, it is a very spicy piece of writing, and clearly proves that the Welshmen of the time more than merited by their crimes the bitter chastisements which they received at the hands of the Saxons. The third part of the work is addressed to the clergy, and he rebukes them with no less severity of language. He is a new Jeremias, denouncing woe against the faithless pastors who sold the priesthood, who are the blind leaders of a blind flock, which they bring with themselves into perdition. There is certainly no want of vigour, although there sometimes may be of eloquence, in the style of this work. It shows a wonderful familiarity with the text and the application of Sacred Scripture; and shows, too, that Gildas the Wise, the regent of the School of Armagh, was in truth a deep divine, and must have been, beyond all doubt, a powerful preacher.

We know little or nothing of the writings of the subsequent teachers in the School of Armagh, but we have a record of the names of several, with eulogies of their wisdom and scholarship. The number of English students attracted to these schools by the fame of their professors was so great that in later times we find that the city was divided into three wards, or thirds, as they were called—the Trian Mor, the Trian-Masain, and the Trian-Saxon—the last being the English quarter, in which the crowds of students from Saxon-land took up their abode, and where, as we know on

[1] The full title of the work is *De Excidio Britaniæ Liber Querulus.*

the express testimony of a contemporary writer, the Venerable Bede, they were received with true Irish hospitality, and were all, rich and poor, supplied gratuitously with food, books, and education. No more honourable testimony has been ever borne to any nation's hospitality and love of learning than this. Alas, that England, in the centuries that followed, could make no better return to the Irish people, who, says Bede, had been always most friendly to the English, than to make it penal for an Irish Catholic to teach a school in his native land.

In the opinion of the learned Bishop Reeves, the Trian-Saxon was the district now occupied by Upper English Street and Abbey Street, and gave its name to the former.

Any one glancing at the Annals of the Four Masters will find frequent reference made from the sixth to the twelfth century to the deaths of the "learned scribes," the "professors of divinity," the "wise doctors," and the "moderators," or rectors of the School of Armagh. In A.D. 720, 727, and 749, we find recorded the death of three of these learned scribes within a very short period. Their duty was to devote themselves to the transcription of manuscript-books in the *Teach-screaptra*, or House of Writings, corresponding to the modern library. The *Book of Armagh*, transcribed there in A.D. 807, shows how patiently and lovingly they laboured at the wearying work; "as if," says Miss Stokes, "they had concentrated all their brains in the point of the pen." In A.D. 829 died Cernech, a priest and scribe who was known as the Wise by excellence; in A.D. 925 died Maelbrighde, successor of Patrick, "a vessel full of all the wisdom and knowledge of his time," and eulogies of this fashion are of very frequent occurrence in recording the deaths of the great scholars of Armagh.

And yet, during these very centuries the schools, the churches, and the town itself suffered terribly from the lawless men of those days, especially from the Danes. Armagh was burned no less than sixteen times between the years A.D. 670 and 1179, and it was plundered nine times, mostly by Danes, during the ninth and tenth centuries. How it survived during these centuries of fire and blood is truly marvellous. In A.D. 1020, for instance, we are told by the Four Masters that "Ard-Macha was burned with all the fort, without the saving of any house in it except the House of Writings only, and many houses were burned in the Trians (or streets), and the Great Church was burned, and the belfry with its bells; and the other stone churches were

also burned, and the old preaching chair, and the chariot of the abbots, and their books in the houses of the students, with much gold, silver, and other precious things." It is evident that on this occasion the efforts of the community were directed to secure their invaluable manuscripts, the loss of which could never be repaired. Yet the city and schools of St. Patrick rose again Phœnix-like from their ashes. In A.D. 1100, Imar O'Hagan, the master of the great St. Malachy, was made abbot just two years before the death of St. Malachy's father, the blessed Mugron O'More, who had been "chief lector of divinity of this school, and of all the west of Europe."

It was this same Imar O'Hagan, who, when made archbishop in A.D. 1126, rebuilt the great church of St. Peter and St. Paul in more than its ancient splendour, and introduced into the Abbey the Canons Regular of St. Augustine. These Canons by their learning and zeal effected a complete restoration of piety, discipline and learning, which had been much neglected during the ravages of the Danes. Twelve years later we have a record of the death of O'Drugan, chief professor of Ard-Macha, "paragon of the wisdom of the Irish, and head of the council of the west of Europe in piety and in devotion." Just at this time, in A.D. 1137, the great Gelasius, who well deserved his name—the Giolla Iosa, or servant of Jesus—succeeded St. Malachy in the See of Armagh, and in spite of the disturbed state of the times raised the school to the zenith of its splendour. In A.D. 1162 he presided over a synod of twenty-six bishops, held at Clane in the County Kildare, in which it was enacted that no person should be allowed to teach divinity in any school in Ireland who had not, as we should now say, graduated in the School of Armagh. To make Armagh worthy of this pre-eminence, we find that in A.D. 1169, *the very year in which the Norman adventurers first landed in Ireland,* King Rory O'Connor "granted ten cows every year from himself, and from every king that should succeed him for ever, to the professor of Ard-Macha in honour of St. Patrick, to instruct the youths of Ireland and Alba in learning." And the professor at the time was in every way worthy of this special endowment; for he was Florence O'Gorman, "head moderator of this school and of all the schools in Ireland, a man well skilled in divinity and deeply learned in all the sciences." He had travelled twenty-one years in France and England, and at his death in A.D. 1174 had ruled the Schools of Armagh for twenty years. It was well for the venerable sage that he

died in peace. Had he lived four years more, he would have seen the sun of Armagh's ancient glory set in darkness and in blood, when DeCourcy and DeBurgo and DeLacy year after year swooped down on the ancient city, and plundered its shrines, and slaughtered or drove far away its students, its priests, and its professors. Once again Emania was made desolate by ruthless hands, and that desolation was more complete and more enduring than the first. We may hope, however, that the proud cathedral just built on Macha's Height gives promise of a glorious future yet in store for the ancient city of St. Patrick.

In connection with the School of Armagh we may appropriately speak of the *Book of Armagh*. It is one of the oldest, and, beyond any doubt, the most valuable of the ancient books of Ireland.[1] Its contents are singularly varied and interesting, and its history, too, has a melancholy interest for Irish scholars. To Dr. Ch. Graves, Protestant Bishop of Limerick, is due the merit of fixing the date of its transcription. In one place there is an entry asking a prayer for Ferdomnach—pro Ferdomnacho ores—and in another place there is an entry which Dr. Graves deciphered with the use of acids, to this effect—"Ferdomnach wrote this book from the dictation of Torbach, the heir of St. Patrick."[2] Torbach was primate only for a single year (A.D. 807); and we find from the *Annals of the Four Masters* that Ferdomnach "a sage and choice scribe of the Church of Armagh," died in A.D. 844. We are justified, therefore, in concluding that Torbach, the primate in A.D. 807 (he died on the 16th of July in that year) had this great work transcribed under his own direction by the choice scribe, Ferdomnach. Moreover, before his elevation to the primacy, Torbach had been himself a scribe of the Church of Armagh, and thus very naturally took an interest in the transcription and preservation of this great treasure of his church.

The Danes, too, at this time, hungry for pillage and slaughter, were hovering around the coasts of Ireland. They had as yet made no descent on Armagh, but they had at several points round the coast, especially on the islands, as at Rathlin in A.D. 794, and Innismurray, off the coast of Sligo, in A.D. 804, and at Iona where sixty of the clergy and laity were slain by the foreigners. It was of the highest

[1] "The penmanship is," says Bishop Reeves, "of extreme elegance, and is admirable throughout for its distinctness and uniformity."

[2] "Ferdomnach hunc librum, dictante Torbach, herede Patricii scripsit." The only word somewhat illegible is "Torbach."

importance, therefore, just at this time, to secure a copy of this ancient book. We know, too, from several marginal entries, that it had in some places become so illegible from age and use that the "choice scribe" had great difficulty in ascertaining the genuine text, so that we are justified in inferring that even in A.D. 807 it was a very old book, highly prized in the Church of Armagh. The sketch of the life of St. Patrick given in this book purports to be taken down by Bishop Tirechan from St. Ultan, who so early as A.D. 650 was Bishop of Ardbraccan, in Meath, and partly also from the dictation of Muirchu Maccu Mactheni, at the request of his preceptor, Aedh, Bishop of Sletty. It is not too much then to say that the Life of St. Patrick in the *Book of Armagh*, is perhaps the oldest and certainly the most authentic document of its kind in existence in Ireland. The handwriting of the book, too, is uniform throughout, and very beautiful, showing that Ferdomnach was, indeed, as he is called in the Annals, a "choice scribe."

Some leaves are wanting in the beginning, but they do not seem to be of great importance. We have, first of all, the short life of St. Patrick, and annotations thereon in Latin and Irish—the Irish is now, perhaps, the very oldest form of the language to be found anywhere. We have next a treatise on the rights and privileges of the Church of Armagh; then the Confession of St. Patrick, followed by the words—and they are very important—"Hucusque volumen quod Patritius scripsit manu sua"—*this is the part of the volume which Patrick wrote with his own hand.* The reference seems to be principally to the *Confession*, and clearly implies that the original copy was made from the autograph of the apostle himself.

After this come several other tracts, amongst them an entire copy of the New Testament,[1] Gospels and Epistles, including the spurious epistle to the Laodiceans. The Gospels, in Dr. Todd's opinion, are of the recension of St. Jerome, but not so the Epistles. They bear no traces of his correction, a thing, however, not without example in ancient manuscripts. There is next a copy of the beautiful life of St. Martin of Tours, written by the "Christian Sallust," Sulpicius Severus, which is the last complete treatise in the book, although there are, here and there, extracts

[1] This is the only *complete* copy of the Scriptures of the New Testament, which has come down to our times from the Celtic Church of Ireland. The rest were all destroyed by the Danes.

from that work so famous in the early Irish Church, the *Moralia* of St. Gregory the Great.

One of the most remarkable features in the *Book of Armagh* is that many of the Gospel headings are written in Greek characters, and the last entry of all is a colophon of four Latin lines, but written in Greek letters, showing clearly that even at this early date a knowledge of Greek was general in our Irish schools.

This book was, not unnaturally, looked upon, on account of its sacred character and great antiquity, as the priceless treasure[1] of the Church of St. Patrick. It was incased in a shrine so early as A.D. 937 by Donogh, son of Flann, King of Ireland, and a special custodian was appointed to guard it. He was called the *maor*, or steward, who had the custody of the book, and as the office became hereditary in one family, they were allowed lands for their support, and came to be called MacMoyres—the descendants of the Keeper. Alas, for human nature! when Oliver Plunket, the martyr Primate of Armagh, was tried in A.D. 1681 for treason, in London, and sentenced to be executed on the testimony of those whom the sainted prelate described as "merciless perjurers," two of the MacMoyres, Florence and his brother John, were amongst the perjured witnesses that swore away his life. And what is saddest of all, the wretch, Florence MacMoyre, was at the time the custodian, or keeper, of the *Book of Armagh*, and pawned it for £5 to a Protestant gentleman, Arthur Brownlow of Lurgan, that he might, it seems, find means to go over to London and earn his blood-money by betraying the noblest Heir of Patrick that ever sat in his primatial chair.

The folios of the *Book of Armagh* were arranged, numbered, and incased by Mr. Brownlow, in whose family the work continued down to the year A.D. 1853, when it was purchased for £300 by the late venerable and learned Dr. Reeves, who had been for many years preparing to print it, and there was none more capable than he to execute that task. From Dr. Reeves the book passed on the same terms to Primate Beresford, by whom it was presented to the library of Trinity College, where it is open to the inspection of all scholars through the great courtesy of the librarian, Dr. Ingram, F.T.C.D.

[1] The ornamentation is so minute and elaborate that Professor Westwood declares that he counted in the small space of three quarters of an inch long by less than half-an-inch in width, no fewer than 158 interlacements of a slender ribbon pattern! —*Archæol. Journal*, vol. x. p. 278.

CHAPTER VI—(*continued*).

SCHOOLS OF THE FIFTH CENTURY.

II.—The School of Kildare.

"Brigid is the Mary of the Gaedhil."

—*Book of Hymns.*

From Armagh we not unnaturally turn to Kildare. If St. Patrick is the father, St. Brigid is the mother of all the saints of Erin, both monks and nuns. She may be regarded not only as the foundress of the monasteries and School of Kildare, but also, in one sense at least, of the diocese of Kildare itself. She has always been deemed one of the three great patron saints of Ireland. Her festival was honoured next after that of St. Patrick himself. The name has always been a favourite one with the daughters of Ireland. She was a woman not only of great virtues but of great talents; and exercised a powerful influence on the Church in her own day. She was the hope of the poor, the counsellor of bishops, the guide of kings; and to some extent that influence is felt even at the present hour. Her history, too, is exceedingly interesting, and throws much light on the manners and morals of those early days. We can, however, only give the reader a brief sketch of the leading incidents in her very remarkable career.

Although Brigid was the greatest, she certainly was not the first of the daughters of Erin who dedicated their virginity and their lives to the service of Jesus Christ, and received the veil from St. Patrick himself.

The sisters twain who died after their baptism at Clebach's Well, on the slopes of Rath Cruachan—Fedelm the ruddy, and Ethne of the golden hair—were probably the first daughters of Erin[1] who put on the veil for Christ.

"Patrick put a white veil upon their heads," as we are told in the *Tripartite*, and having received Communion—Christ's Body and His Blood—they fell asleep in death, and Patrick laid them side by side under one mantle in the same bed. And their friends bewailed them greatly; but God's angels rejoiced, for they were the first fruits that the Spouse took to himself from all the land of Erin.

[1] If the nuns at Clonbroney, Co. Longford, were not before them.

About the same time Mathona, the sister of the young and gentle Benignus, received the veil from Patrick in the first bloom of her youth and beauty. It seems she accompanied her brother, who attended the Apostle all the way from the banks of the Boyne; and that she, too, had the privilege of ministering to Patrick and his companions. She had heard, if she had not seen, how, when Patrick abode at her father's house near Inver Boinde, the earth opened wide its jaws and swallowed up the wizard or Druid, who had mocked at Mary's virginity;[1] and she resolved to become a virgin like unto Mary. So when Patrick had crossed the Shannon, and was come to Elphin in Roscommon, we are told that he went thence to Dumacha of the Hy Ailella, and founded there at Senchell, near Elphin, a church in which he placed Maichet, and Cetchen, and Rodan, the arch-priest, and Mathona, Benen's sister, who took the veil from Patrick and from Rodan, and became a religious. She afterwards crossed the mountain to the north-east and foundcd a church and convent of her own at Tawnagh, near Lough Arrow, in the county Sligo. This is the second express reference to the profession of a nun in Ireland. Bishop Cairell was also placed by St. Patrick in Tawnagh to watch over that infant establishment.

It is not unlikely that the 'sisters twain of Fochlut's wood,' whose infant voices had summoned Patrick over the sea, calling him to come and walk once more amongst them, were also clothed with the religious veil by the Saint, when he went to Tyrawley. He certainly baptized them there, and we are told that they are the patronesses of the church called "Cell Forgland," which was situated a little to the north of Killala over the present road to Palmerston.

"On a cliff
Where Fochlut's Wood blackened the northern sea,
Their convent rose. Therein these sisters twain,
Whose cry had summoned Patrick o'er the deep,
Abode, no longer weepers. Pallid still
In radiance now their faces shone; and sweet
Their psalms amid the clangour of rough brine."[2]

We are told in the same *Tripartite* that once when Patrick was at Armagh, nine daughters of the King of the Lombards came over the sea, and a daughter of the King of Britain came

[1] *Tripartite*, page 37.—"Patrick went to Inver Boinde. He found a wizard in that place who mocked at Mary's virginity. Patrick sained the earth, and it swallowed up the wizard."

[2] Aubrey de Vere, *Legends of St. Patrick*.

also on a pilgrimage to Patrick, and they tarried at the place near Armagh, called Coll-nan-Ingen—the Hazel of the Daughters. Some of the virgins died and were buried there, but the others went to Drum-Fendeda, and there abode. The virgin Cruimtheris, however, went and set up at Cengoba, and Benen used to carry food to her until Patrick planted an apple tree for the holy virgin; and then she lived on the fruit of that tree and on the milk of a doe, that grazed in her little orchard.

There is no doubt therefore that Patrick received the vows of many holy virgins in Erin before St. Brigid was professed. As Benen himself was the earliest and apparently the best beloved of Patrick's disciples, so his sister was amongst the first of the daughters of Erin that he clothed with the veil of virginity, and there is every reason to believe that her holy relics sleep in the old church of Tawnagh, in Tirerrill, co. Sligo.

It is not improbable, too, that Patrick received the vows of St. Fanchea, the sister of the celebrated St. Enda of Aran, whose convent was established at Rossory, on the shore of Lough Erne. Hereafter we shall see how Enda owed his own conversion to his sister, St. Fanchea, and as this event must have taken place about the year A.D. 480, she herself may have seen St. Patrick, if she did not receive the veil from his hands.

We shall see hereafter also, when treating of St. Brendan, that the convent of St. Ita was founded about the same time.

She was the Brigid of Munster and the nursing mother of many other saints besides St. Brendan. Her memory is fondly cherished to this day in the co. Limerick, and immense crowds of people still assemble on her feast day at Killeedy, where the ruins of her ancient church are still to be seen. So the virgins of Christ were established everywhere in Ireland during the life-time of St. Patrick himself, and many must have made their profession before St. Brigid. But that holy virgin in other respects has eclipsed them all, and has come to be regarded as the queen and the mother of all the holy virgins, whose names are known in Erin, or as Ængus calls her—'the head of the nuns of Erin.'

A great controversy rages round the parentage of St. Brigid. Cogitosus, the author of the *Second Life*, as given by Colgan, was a monk of Kildare, who flourished not later than the end of the eighth century, and must therefore be recognised as a competent authority. He declares that she was born of Christian parents of a noble race, and this statement

is confirmed by the author of the *Sixth Life*, who was a monk of the island of Iniscaltra, in Lough Derg. All the authorities, indeed, admit that she was noble on the father's side, for Dubhtach, her father, was a chieftain, the tenth in descent from the celebrated Feidhlimidh Rechtmar, the Lawgiver, a King of Ireland, who flourished in the second century of the Christian era. But the authors of the *Third*, *Fourth*, and *Fifth Lives* of the Saint declare that Brigid's mother was a female slave or captive in the house of Dubhtach, that her own birth was illegitimate, and that shortly before that event took place, the captive maiden, her mother, whose name was Brocessa, was driven from her home through the bitter jealousy of her master's wife, and sold to a certain Druid or magus, who carried her to Faughart, where the future saint was born. It is difficult to assign any reason why the admirers of St. Brigid should invent this story; on the other hand it is easy to see why Cogitosus, jealous for glory of the foundress of his own Kildare, might be induced to pass it over in silence. It is certainly consistent with the manners of the time, for the Brehon Code clearly shows that then and long after slavery and its attendant evils existed in Ireland. The very fact that Brigid was not born in the house of her father, who seems to have dwelt in Leinster, appears to be a further confirmation of the story. St. Patrick was at one time a slave, and so it appears, too, that Brigid, to whom Ireland owes so much, was born of a slave-mother, and during the years of her youth had herself to endure, even after she came to her father's house, the bitter taunts of her father's wife, and the ceaseless drudgery of a captive maid. So it was that Providence prepared her, as it prepared Patrick, for the accomplishment of her lofty mission.

There are still many interesting memorials of St. Brigid at Faughart. The village is not quite two miles to the north-east of Dundalk. It is situated amid fertile fields, overlooking the sparkling waters of the Bay, and nestling under the shelter of the Carlingford mountains. It was once ruled over by Cuchullin, the Hound of the North, who kept the ford of Ardee against the hosts and the heroes of Queen Meave; and in its old church-yard was buried the headless trunk of the gallant Edward Bruce, who was slain close at hand—the spot is still shown—in the year A.D. 1318. St. Brigid's Well is there, roofed over with masonry, but its waters are gone. The flag on which she was placed after her birth is also pointed out, and there also are Brigid's Pillar, and Brigid's Stone, of a horse-shoe shape, and the remains of an old

church, but certainly not dating from Brigid's time. The old church-yard surrounding it is crowded with ancient graves, and enclosed by a tall hedge of fragrant hawthorns. There are several 'forts' and ancient 'mounds' in the neighbourhood, which show that it had been a populous and important place, probably from the pre-historic ages of Cuchullin. One of them is sixty feet in height, and its level summit is still crowned with the foundations of a strong octagonal building, the purpose of which cannot now be ascertained.[1]

St. Brigid was born about the year A.D. 450, and was baptized shortly after her birth, with the consent of the magus or Druid in whose service her mother was engaged. She grew up, according to all her biographers, to be a young girl of singular grace and beauty, greatly favoured by nature, but still more richly endowed by grace. The daughter of the captive was watched over by guardian angels; her food was the milk of a white cow, that typefied the purity of her own young heart; and the butter from her master's dairy, that she too generously gave to the poor, was miraculously replaced that she and her mother might not be blamed on account of waste or extravagance.

We cannot trace all the events of her marvellous history—how she was carried to Connaught and to Munster; how many suitors vainly sought her hand; how she returned to her father's house and provoked the jealousy of her step-mother; how for peace sake her father offered to sell his beautiful daughter to the king of North Leinster, as he had sold her mother to the magus. But Providence watched over her in all her ways, and at length brought about the consummation of her most ardent wishes. With seven other young virgins she received the religious veil from the hands of Bishop Macaille, whose church was on the eastern slope of Cruachan Bri Eile in the modern King's County, not far from the historic field of Tyrrells Pass. It is still called Croghan Hill, and an old church-yard yet marks the site of St. Macaille's church. It is uncertain, however, whether Brigid was veiled there or at Uisnech Hill in Westmeath, where, according to other accounts, the holy bishop was at the time. The exact spot would be worth knowing, for during the course of the ceremony when Brigid's hand touched the wood of the altar, that dry wood felt the virtue of the virgin's touch, and became in the sight of all as fresh and green as it

[1] See O'Hanlon's *Life of St. Brigid.*

was on the day when it felt the wood-man's axe in the forest. It is not unlikely that Brigid and her seven virgin companions lived for some time at Croghan Hill under the care of St. Macaille; afterwards, however she returned to her father's territory and founded, nigh to an old oak tree, the church, which ever since bears the name of Kildare—the Church of the Oak. It was founded in Magh Liffe, the Plain of the Liffey, and it is remarkable that even when her most ancient lives were written, the holy virgin is represented as driving in her chariot over the Curragh of Kildare, which even then was used as a race-course.

Some authorities say that Brigid made her religious vows in the hands of St. Mel of Ardagh, whose name is frequently mentioned in some of her lives. It is strange that so little reference is made to St. Patrick, if he were indeed alive, as is commonly supposed, for many years after Brigid's profession, which took place about the year A.D. 467. There is no mention made of Brigid in the *Lives of St. Patrick* except once. The Saint had founded the Church of Clogher for St. Mac Cairthinn, and afterwards went to preach in the neighbourhood at a place called Lemain, a plain watered by the river Laune, which takes its name from the plain. For three days and three nights he was preaching, and Brigid fell asleep during his preaching; but the saint would not allow Brigid to be disturbed, for he knew that she was sleeping a mystic sleep. As she slept she dreamt, and thought she saw at first white oxen in white cornfields; then she saw darker oxen, and lastly oxen that were black. After these she saw sheep, and swine, and dogs, and wolves quarrelling with each other—all of which, Patrick explained, were symbols of the present and future state of the Irish Church—a prediction that has been wonderfully verified by the event. It was on the same occasion that King Echu allowed his daughter to be united to Christ, and Patrick made her his own disciple, and she was taught by a certain virgin at Druim Dubain, in which place both virgins have their rest. It is stated in Tirechan's collections in the *Book of Armagh* that Bishop Mac Cairthinn was the uncle of the holy Brigid—'Brigtae'—the abbreviated form of the name. This fact would explain her presence at Clogher on this interesting occasion.

We are told that Kildare was first called Drumcree—Druim Criaidh—before it took the name of Cell-Dara from the beautiful oak tree which Brigid loved much, and under whose shade she built her first little oratory. That tree remained down to the end of the tenth century, when Animosus

wrote her life; and it was held in such veneration that no profane hand dare venture to touch it with a weapon. In a very short time after its foundation Kildare grew to be a great religious establishment, having two monasteries separate, yet side by side, one for women and one for men—and both, to a certain extent, under her own supervision. "Seeing," says her biographer, "that this state of things could not exist without a pontiff to consecrate her churches, and ordain the sacred ministers, she chose an illustrious anchorite, celebrated for his virtues and miracles, that as Bishop he might aid her in the government of the Church, and that nothing should be wanting for the proper discharge of all ecclesiastical functions." It is obvious from these words that Brigid herself selected St. Conlaeth, or Conlaedh, to rule her churches and monasteries, but in accordance with her suggestions and advice. She, of course, conferred no jurisdiction on St. Conlaeth, but she selected the person to whom the church gave this jurisdiction. Her biographer does not say that Conlaeth was subject to Brigid, but that Brigid chose him to govern the Church along with herself—ut ecclesiam in episcopali dignitate *cum ea* gubernaret. These few simple words dispose of a vast amount of foolish talk about Brigid's jurisdiction over St. Conlaeth. She, herself, never claimed nor possessed any such thing.

It is, however, abundantly evident that Brigid was a woman of strong mind and of great talents, that she was admirably fitted to rule and to organize, that her influence was widely felt, and her wisdom and prudence held in the highest estimation by the greatest ecclesiastics of her time. Moreover, her great virtues were confirmed by many miracles, so that crowds of men and women came from all parts of the country either to make a pilgrimage, or place themselves permanently under her guidance. But Brigid did more than this. One of her greatest virtues was her hospitality to all the ecclesiastics who came to visit her, and especially to the bishops. She seems, too, to have accepted their invitations, and to have made many journeys, especially through the South and West of Ireland, where she made so deep an impression by her preaching, her miracles, and her example, that her memory is still fondly cherished in all parts of the country. She became the "Mary of Ireland"—what Patrick was for the men, she was for the women—their national saint and patroness. They called their daughters by her sweet name. The wells at which she drank and prayed became for ever blessed wells. The parishes which she visited were in

many instances placed under her special protection, and called by her name.[1] And so we have Tubber-bride and Kil-bride in all parts of the country, exactly as we have Kil-patrick and Tubber-patrick.

It is very manifest that St. Brigid felt from the beginning that a monastery of men at Kildare, presided over by a bishop, would be a great means of protecting her own nunnery of tender virgins and widows. It was a lawless age, as the history of St. Enda shows, and hence Brigid wished for security, as well as for instruction and religious guidance, to have the bishop and his clergy near her. She was anxious to have a complete and self-sufficing religious city at Kildare, and such, in fact, it very soon became. Besides St. Conlaeth to rule and to ordain, she had another bishop, St. Nadfraoich, to instruct herself and her nuns, for Bishop Mel had told her that she should never take food without having first heard the Word of God preached to her. She had secured another holy prelate, St. Ninnidhius, to administer the viaticum to her when dying, and that saint hearing this covered his right hand with a case or shell of metal, so that the hand which was to give the Communion to Brigid might never be defiled. Hence he was called Ninnidh of the Clean Hand.

It is said—but the tradition is rather uncertain—that Brigid had the consoling privilege of weaving with her own hands the winding sheet in which the body of St. Patrick was laid. At the time of his death, if, as is generally believed, he died in A.D. 493, Brigid must have been a nun for several years, and have already founded her own great convent at Kildare. She lived, however, until A.D. 523, or more probably until A.D. 525, and then dying in her own holy city, was buried at the right of the High Altar—Bishop Conlaeth, having been already laid on the left hand of the same altar, and both within the sanctuary.

Brigid is called by Ængus the chaste head of the nuns of Erin; and St. Cuimin of Connor describes her "as Brigid of the blessings, fond beyond all women of mortification, of vigils, of early rising to pray, and of hospitality to saintly men." Her very name was prophetic, for it signifies either a 'fiery dart' or the 'strength' of her virtue—*brigi* being the Celtic for strength or might.

Kildare, as might be expected, became, during the life and after the death of Brigid, a great city and a great school—Cogitosus, with pardonable exaggeration, describes it as the head city of all the bishops, and calls Conlaeth and his successors Arch-bishops of the Bishops of Ireland, and Brigid

[1] She was in an especial manner the patroness of the 'Sons of Reading,' as students were then called; "and the Lord gives them, through Brigid's prayer, every perfect good that they ask."—*Irish Life.*

(and her successors) the Abbess, whom all the Abbesses of Ireland hold in veneration. He says that no one could count the crowds of people coming to Kildare from all the provinces of Erin; that some come for the feasting or food—*ad epulas*—that the sick come to be healed; the rich come with gifts for the shrine of St. Brigid, especially on the 1st of February; and that sight-seers come to enjoy the wonderful spectacle.

He also gives a most interesting description of the great Church of Kildare in his own time. It was very lofty and very large, richly adorned with pictures, hangings, and ornamental door-ways. A partition ran across the breadth of the church near the chancel, or sanctuary; at one of its extremities there was a door which admitted the bishop and his clergy to the sanctuary and to the altar; at the other extremity, on the opposite side, there was a similar door by which Brigid and her virgins and widows used to enter to enjoy the banquet of the Body and Blood of Christ. Then a central partition ran down the nave, dividing the men from the women—the men being on the right and the women on the left, each division having its own lateral entrance. These partitions did not rise to the roof of the church, but only so high as to serve their purpose. The partition at the sanctuary, or chancel, was formed of boards of wood, decorated with pictures and covered with linen hangings, which might, it seems, be drawn aside at the consecration to give the people in the nave a better view of the Holy Mysteries. Such was the great Church of Kildare in the seventh and eighth centuries, before the advent of the Danes to Ireland.

In connection with St. Brigid and the School of Kildare, we may here make brief reference to the celebrated scholars who have compiled her biography.

The first of the six Lives printed by the learned Father John Colgan is the metrical Hymn of the Saint commonly attributed to St. Brogan Cloen of Rostuirc in the Diocese of Ossory. The original Hymn is written in the Irish language; Colgan also gives a Latin translation. But the Irish original has been printed by Dr. Whitley Stokes, and also in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* for February, 1868. This Irish original has been preserved in the *Liber Hymnorum*, and also in a MS. in Trinity College of very recent date. The following Irish preface is prefixed to the Hymn in the MS. of St. Isidore's, now in Merchants' Quay, Dublin.

The place where this hymn was composed was Sliabh Bladhma (Slieve Bloom), or Cluain Mor Moedhog. The author was Brogan Cloen. The time (to which it refers) was when Lughaidh, son of

Laeghaire, was King of Ireland, and Ailill, son of Dunlang, King of Leinster. The cause of writing it, viz., "Ultan of Ardbraccan, the tutor of Brogan, requested him to narrate the miracles of Brigid in suitable poetical language, for Ultan had collected all the miracles of Brigid for him."

We gather from this interesting statement that St. Ultan of Ardbraccan, who was an uncle on the mother's side of St. Brigid, collected the materials for this poem. It is true St. Ultan did not die until the year A.D. 656 or 657, but if he were then, as is stated in the *Martyrology of Donegal*, 189 years of age, he might well have been the uncle and contemporary of the Virgin Saint. He was a very celebrated man, and was especially remarkable for his love of poor orphans, for he often had no less than 200 of them together, whom he used to feed with his own hands. He was also very mortified in his life, sleeping on the bare board in his narrow stone cell, and bathing his body in cold water in the sharpest blasts of the wintry wind. "It was he," says the same authority, "that collected the miracles of Brigid in one book, and gave them to his disciple Brogan Cloen to render them in verse."

St. Brogan Cloen himself lived, it seems, for some time in the monastery near Slieve Bloom, founded by St. Molua, and afterwards in that of Clonmore, in the barony of Bantry, county Wexford, which was founded by St. Aidan about the year A.D. 620. The scholiast doubts whether he composed this hymn while at Slieve Bloom or Clonmore; so we may fairly suppose that it was composed sometime between A.D. 620 and 657, when St. Ultan died. The statement of the scholiast as to the time of the hymn seems to refer not to the time of its composition, but to the time of the events which it narrates; and which, he says, took place during the reign of Lughaidh, King of Tara, and Ailill, King of Leinster. The former reigned 25 years and died in A.D. 503; the latter died in A.D. 523, so that their joint reigns would exactly mark the period during which St. Brigid flourished in Kildare. The hymn consists of 212 lines or 53 stanzas of four lines each. It describes at great length the virtues and miracles of St. Brigid, but is unhappily too meagre in historical facts. The writer assumes that because her history was well known in his own time, it would continue to be equally well known to future generations. It is, however, a most interesting monument of our early Irish Church, and competent judges pronounce it to be an admirable specimen of early Celtic versification.

There is also in the *Book of Hymns* published by Dr. Todd, what seems to be a fragment of an ancient Latin hymn in praise of St. Brigid. The preface to this Hymn attributes it either to St. Ninnidh of the Clean Hand, Brigid's chaplain, or to St. Fiacc of Sleibte, or to St. Ultan of Ardbraccan. This last conjecture, however, seems to arise from the statement that Ultan collected the miracles of St. Brigid into one book. It was an abecedarian hymn originally, and is undoubtedly a very ancient composition. At present it consists of four stanzas of four lines each, having a rhyme or assonance in the middle and at the end of each line, which properly should consist of sixteen syllables. The first line at present is :—

"Christus in nostra insula quae vocatur Hibernia,"

and notwithstanding the statement of the scholiast that the hymn was abecedarian, these words—Christus in nostra insula—appear to have been always regarded as the beginning of the hymn. In the eighth line Brigid is declared to be "Mariae sanctae similem," an expression which may have given origin to the saying that Brigid was the "Mary of the Irish." The following passage from the *Leabhar Breac* gives a glowing eulogy of St. Brigid, and formally calls her the "Mary of the Gaedhil."

"There was not in the world one of more bashfulness and modesty than this holy virgin. She never washed (as was then not unfrequent) her hands, or her feet, or head before men. She never looked a man in the face. She never spoke without blushing. She was abstinent, unblemished, fond of prayer, patient, rejoicing in God's commands, benevolent, humble, forgiving, charitable. She was a consecrated shrine for the preservation of the Body of Christ. She was a temple of God. Her heart and mind were the throne of the Holy Spirit; she was meek before God. She was distressed with the miserable. She was bright in miracles. And hence in things created her type is the Dove among birds, the Vine amongst trees, and the Sun above the stars."

This beautiful eulogy concludes by declaring that Brigid is "The Queen of the South. She is the Mary of the Gaedhil."

The *Second Life*, printed by Colgan, is the celebrated work of Cogitosus, to which we have already referred. He tells us himself that he was a monk of Kildare, and that he wrote in obedience to the wishes of the community, not of his own presumptuous motion. In the last chapter he asks a prayer, "Pro me Cogitoso culpabili," but it is evident when he calls himself a 'nepos,' that he does not mean that he was the 'nepos' of St. Brigid, as some have fancied. In his

humility he uses the word in its secondary classical sense, and calls himself a sinful spendthrift of God's time and of God's graces. The use of the word 'nepos,' therefore, furnishes no argument that this Life was written shortly after the death of St. Brigid. On the other hand, there is nothing in this Life that, as Basnage insinuates, 'smells of a later age' than the eighth or the beginning of the ninth century. As we have already observed, the description which Cogitosus gives of the great Church of Kildare, of its wealth, of the tomb of its founders, and the inviolable character of the city, clearly proves that it must have been written earlier than the ravages of the Danes. There are, however, some expressions that show it was written a considerable time after the decease of St. Brigid and St. Conlaeth. The writer speaks of 'the prosperous succession' of prelates and abbesses who ruled in the sacred city, *ritu perpetuo*, a strong expression, which points to a long series of successors in Kildare. The very use of the Latin word 'archiepiscopus,' which Cogitosus uses when speaking of the prelates of Kildare, shows that the work cannot have been written before the eighth century. Petrie in his observations on this subject makes one remark which we venture to think is founded on a false assumption.[1] Cogitosus tells us that in his own time the bodies of St. Brigid and of St. Conlaeth were placed in tombs richly adorned, one on the right and the other on the left of the high altar. Now the *Annals of Ulster* state that A.D. 799, the relics of Conlaeth were placed in a shrine of gold and silver, whence Petrie infers that Cogitosus must have written after this enshrining, that is, after A.D. 799, but before A.D. 835, when Kildare was pillaged by the Danes and half the church burned. But Cogitosus speaks of the bodies of the saints as being placed in *tombs*, not of the enshrining of the relics of one of them, which is a very different thing. The shrine was a metal case, highly ornamented, for containing the relics of a saint, not a tomb for the body. Rather the language of Cogitosus clearly shows that he must have written before this enshrining of the relics of Conlaeth, for in his time the body of that saint was in a tomb. The truth seems to be that about this time, and through fear of the Danes, the relics of St. Brigid were carried to Downpatrick as being then a safer place, and at the same time the relics of Conlaeth were also taken from the tomb-monument, and placed in the rich

[1] See *Round Towers*, page 203.

shrine, which was easily portable, and might be carried off at the approach of danger, with its precious contents.

The language and style of Cogitosus show considerable acquaintance with the Latin tongue, and the work furnishes us with a very creditable specimen of the scholarship possessed by the monks of Kildare in the eighth century.

We need make no special reference to the other four anonymous Lives printed by Colgan. The Third is attributed, but without any proof, to St. Ultan; the Fourth is probably the work of a monk called Animosus, of whom nothing else is known; the Fifth was written by an Englishman, Laurence of Durham, in the twelfth century. The Sixth, like the First Life, is a poetic work in Latin, which Colgan got from Monte Cassino, and which the MS. itself attributes to Chilien, or, perhaps, more properly, Coelan, a monk of Iniscaltra, or the Holy Island, in Lough Derg, who probably flourished in the eighth century. We know that many monks from Holy Island went abroad in the ninth and tenth centuries to preach the Gospel, and, doubtless, one of them carried this MS. with him either to Bobbio, or some other Benedictine Monastery, whence it might easily find its way to Monte Cassino. The prologue of the poem is attributed to Donatus, an Irish prelate in Tuscany, during the ninth century. This also helps to explain how the Irish-born prelate would get this volume from some of his countrymen abroad, and also write a prologue to this poetic life of the Queen of Ireland's virgin saints.

Kildare is the only religious establishment in Ireland which preserved down to a comparatively recent period the double line of succession, of abbot-bishops and of abbesses, and what is more, the annalists take care to record the names of the abbesses as well as of the abbots. This, no doubt, arose from the fact that at least in public estimation the lady-abbesses of Kildare enjoyed a kind of primacy over all the nuns in Ireland, and, moreover, were in some sense independent of episcopal jurisdiction, if, indeed, the Bishops of Kildare were not rather to some extent dependent on them.

St. Conlaeth was not only a scholar and a bishop, but also a most cunning artificer in metal work, and made all kinds of chalices, patens, bells, and shrines for the use of his churches and monasteries. It appears to be quite evident, too, that he founded a school of metal work and decorative art at Kildare, which was conducted with much success under his successors in that see. In our own times sacred art is left to

take its chance; little or no official patronage is extended to the workmen, and no special care is given to their training. Not so in ancient Erin. The greatest attention was paid to these subjects, and, as we know, the arts of metallurgy, of the illumination of MSS., of sculpture, and of architectural ornamentation were carried to the greatest perfection under the patronage of distinguished ecclesiastics.

The ancient buildings of Kildare have, with the exception of the Round Tower, completely disappeared. This is all the more to be regretted, when we see the beautiful ornamental door-way of the Round Tower, a class of buildings in which ornamentation of any kind is rarely met with. Even in the time of Giraldus Cambrensis it was a venerable building, and he tells a story of a falcon that used to nestle in its summit all alone, admitting no mate, and was on quite familiar terms with the monks and citizens, for it was called St. Brigid's bird. This beautiful tower, the tallest in Ireland, is 136 feet 7 inches in height, and still pointing heavenward, as of old, marks out for every stranger who travels by the Great Southern Line, the sacred city of St. Brigid, in the great plain of the Liffey.

Notwithstanding the ravages of the Danes, we find the obits of many of the Professors of the School of Kildare recorded in the Annals. We find also reference made to the Chief Professor of Kildare, Cosgrach, who died A.D. 1041; and Cobthac, another professor of Kildare, who died in A.D. 1069, was celebrated for "his universal knowledge of ecclesiastical discipline." In A.D. 1110, died Ferdomhach, the Blind Professor of Kildare, who was eminently skilled in the Holy Scriptures. In A.D. 1135 Diarmaid Mac Murrogh, who had even then begun his career of violence and crime, "forcibly carried away the Abbess of Kildare from her cloister, and compelled her to marry one of his own people." Next year Diarmaid O'Brian and his brothers plundered and burned the town. Yet the holy line of Brigid's successors was still carried on—there was a Comorbana of Brigid who died in A.D. 1171. But in A.D. 1220 Henry de Loundres put out the fire of St. Brigid, called the inextinguishable, which had been preserved burning by the nuns of St. Brigid, in all probability from the time of the foundress herself. It was lit again by order of the Bishop of Kildare, and continued to burn in spite of all the troubles of the times down to the total suppression of the monasteries by Queen Elizabeth.

We find no satisfactory account of the origin and purpose of this perpetual fire of Kildare. De Loundres thought,

perhaps, there was something savouring of paganism or superstition about it, or he would hardly undertake the risk and odium of having it extinguished. His conduct would be still more inexplicable if this fire were kept always burning in the guest house, as some think, for the comfort of benighted travellers. But English prelates have never been discerning judges of Irish usages, and we are not bound to set much store on the soundness of the Norman bishop's judgment in this instance. They came over to reform, as well as to conquer; and if abuses did not exist, it was necessary for appearance sake to assume their existence. Can it be that the Kildare nuns anticipated the general and now obligatory rule of keeping a perpetual lamp before the Blessed Sacrament? Or was it a sacred fire that was kept always burning before the tomb of their holy foundress? "The early Christians, as well as the Jews and pagans, were accustomed to place lamps in the company of the dead,"[1] great numbers of which have been found in the catacombs and elsewhere. Many of them, too, are beautifully wrought in various material, and bear characteristic Christian symbols. In all probability the perpetual fire of Kildare was for the purpose of keeping the lamps lit before the shrines of its holy founders. Many accidents might lead to the lamp itself being extinguished, but the sacred fire, night and day, under the sedulous care of St. Brigid's daughters, might be cherished 'through long ages of darkness and storm,' if not extinguished by the Danes or reformers like Henry de Loundres.

Gerald Barry also tells us another fact which shows to what a degree of perfection the art of illumination was carried in the monastic schools of Kildare. Nothing, he says, that he saw at Kildare appeared to him more admirable than the wondrous book, which as report goes, was written from the dictation of an angel in the time of the holy virgin herself. It was a manuscript of the Four Evangelists, according to St. Jerome's version, but every page was illuminated with various figures, delineated with the utmost distinctness in every variety of colouring. The symbolical figures of the Evangelists themselves were wrought with extraordinary subtilty and grace, and all the other drawings and figures likewise were so delicate, and subtile, so close and so narrow, so knotted and interwined together, yet every most intricate line and point and knot so vivid, as if with quite recent colours, that one would think it all was the work of angelic,

[1] *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*.—'Lamps.'

and not of mere human skill. The more carefully he looked at it, the more he was astonished, and the more things he saw worthy of admiration.

Gerald Barry's description of this famous Evangelistarium, which unfortunately appears to have perished, will not appear exaggerated to any person who has ever seen the *Book of Kells*. They were both written about the same period, and illuminated by equally skilled hands; still it is greatly to be regretted that this wondrous *Book of Kildare*,[1] which won such a eulogy from the fastidious Welshman, is no longer amongst the extant literary treasures of Ireland.

It is not unlikely that the great manuscript known as the *Book of Leinster*, was originally compiled and preserved in Kildare; or perhaps, more accurately speaking, it was copied from originals that were compiled and preserved at Kildare. The work of copying in great part was certainly executed by Finn Mac Gorman, who was Bishop of Kildare from A.D. 1148 to 1160, when his death is recorded. He was evidently a man of much learning, and an entry in his own hand testifies that he wrote the work for Hugh Mac Crimthann, tutor of Diarmaid Mac Murrogh, King of Leinster. The work was no doubt written by O'Gorman before A.D. 1148, when he became Bishop of Kildare The manuscript at present consists of 177 loose leaves of vellum, which are preserved in Trinity College, and seven additional leaves of the same original, which belong to the Franciscans of the Irish Province. No doubt the entire work belonged to them originally, but was taken from them by force or fraud, and thus found its way to Trinity College. Its contents are of an exceedingly various and interesting character—heroic tales and poems, genealogies, calendars of saints, and various tracts used in the Irish monastic schools, dealing with both sacred and profane learning.

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[1] Dr. Todd was of opinion that the manuscript described by Gerald Barry must have been the *Book of Kells*, which might have been removed at that time to Kildare for safe custody. But there is no historical foundation for this conjecture.

CHAPTER VII.

MINOR MONASTIC SCHOOLS OF THE FIFTH CENTURY.

"The chapel where no organ's peal
Invests the stern and naked prayer!—
With penitential cries they kneel
And wrestle; rising then with bare
And white uplifted faces stand,
Passing the Host from hand to hand."

—*Arnold.*

I.—The School of Noendrum.

There were a few other early monastic schools founded during the lifetime of St. Patrick to which reference must be made here, before we pass to the more celebrated schools of the sixth century. Although St. Patrick could not attend in person to the government and organization of these seminaries, he gave every encouragement to his disciples in carrying on that necessary and excellent work. It was specially for this purpose, as we have already seen, that he placed St. Benignus over his own school at Armagh. With the same purpose in view, he chose the youthful Mochae, or Mochay, of Noendrum first to be his own disciple, and afterwards to be the guide and teacher of others in their preparation for the sacred ministry.

Mochae was one of St. Patrick's earliest converts in Ireland. Like St. Benignus, he seems to have been a mere boy, when he first believed and was baptized, before St. Patrick had yet met King Laeghaire on the royal Hill of Tara.

It is thus narrated in the *Tripartite*:—"Now whilst Patrick was going on his journey from Saul (near Downpatrick) he saw a tender youth herding swine. Mochae was his name. Patrick preached to him and baptized him and tonsured him, and gave him a Gospel and Mass-chalice. And he gave him also later on a crozier, that had been bestowed on them by God, to wit, it fell from heaven with its head in Patrick's bosom, and its foot in Mochae's bosom, and this is the *Etech* of Mochae of Noendrum. And Mochae promised a shaven pig every year to Patrick (that is, to his Church), and this is still offered."[1]

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[1] *Tripartite*, p. 40.

This is a very interesting passage, and points to Patrick's mode of procedure, when he found a youth suitable for the ecclesiastical state. This boy was, we are told,[1] the son of Bronach, daughter of Milchu, with whom Patrick himself had spent the years of his own captivity at the same occupation—herding swine. Patrick had been probably acquainted with the mother of this youth; he remembered his own boyhood, which he spent in the midst of many sorrows and much labour on the barren slopes of Slemish; so his heart was touched, and he preached the new Gospel of peace and love to this grandson of the master who had held him so long in bondage. The boy's heart, too, was touched by grace—he believed, was baptized, and tonsured. The tonsuring, if it took place then, could only mean that Patrick destined the youth for the sacred ministry. We are also told that he gave him a copy of the Gospels, doubtless when he had learned to read a little Latin, and a *menister*, which Stokes strangely translates 'credence-table,' but which is manifestly a loan-word from the Latin *ministerium*,[2] and signifies the chalice and paten necessary for offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Later on this youth became a bishop, he was consecrated by Patrick himself, and Patrick gave him this crozier—a heavenly gift—which came to be known from that circumstance as the *Etech*, or flying crozier of Mochae of Noendrum.

This name is simply Oendrum with the article prefixed, and the island in which Mochae founded his monastery and school was so called because it was formed as it were of a single hill or rising ground—*oen-druim*—the one-ridged island. It is now corrupted into Mahee Island from the name of its holy founder, which still survives in the mouth of the 'stranger' though its origin is quite forgotten. The island contains about 170 acres of land, and is situated not more than a quarter of a mile from the western shore of Strangford Lough, anciently known as Lough Cuan. The saint built his monastery and church on the very summit of the ridge, which rises to about the height of sixty feet, and commands a fine view of the far-reaching inland sea, whose western marge especially is studded with pleasant islets and bordered by many a grassy down and fertile field, rich, when we saw them, with the promise of abundant harvests. The

[1] O'Clery's *Martyrology*.

[2] Du Cange. See Dr. M'Carthy's able Paper in the *Proceedings of the R.I.A.*, May, 1889. In the *Tripartite* (Stokes, p. 251), *menister* seems to mean the paten, and *mias* (quasi *mensa*) the altar-table.

original edifice was, as we gather from a story in the saint's life, constructed of wood, which he helped to hew down himself and carry on his own shoulders. The later buildings, however, were of stone, and the church—for many centuries a cathedral church—was 58 feet long by 22 wide. Only its foundations can now be traced; but the castle on the summit of the hill, and the outer concentric earthworks that were thrown up to protect it, can still be seen. During the Danish incursions it suffered much, and a small round tower was built as usual near the church's western door to afford an asylum to the monks. A small portion of it still remains.

Mochae was about the same age as Benignus, and it is not improbable that he founded his island monastery quite as early as St. Patrick founded the See of Armagh. Patronised as it doubtless was by St. Patrick, and presided over by one of his earliest disciples, Noendrum soon became a celebrated centre of sanctity and learning. Two very remarkable men received their education there—St. Colman of Dromore and St. Finnian of Moville. Of the latter we shall speak later on when we come to give an account of his own celebrated school at the head of Lough Cuan. The life of Colman, however, furnishes us with some interesting particulars concerning Noendrum and its monastic school.

Colman, like Mochae, was a native of the territory of Dalaradia, and in his youth was sent, we are told, by his parents to the blessed Caylan, otherwise called Mochae, the Abbot of Noendrum, that he might be trained in learning and virtue. The young man made great progress in his studies, and still more in the practice of all virtue, so that once when he had got his lesson by heart, and asked the holy abbot what he was to do next, the abbot replied: "Break up that rock which is in the way of the brethren when going to matins." Matins were recited before day dawned, and no doubt the rock was an obstacle in the darkness to the brethren when going from their cells to the church. Obedience is the first virtue of a monk, so Colman made the sign of the cross over the rock, and forthwith it split up in pieces. "Now, cast them into the sea," said the abbot, and Colman did so with the help of God's angels; and lo! the fragments were again united together into the great stone on the seashore before the monastery, which is still called Colman's Rock.

From Noendrum Colman went to St. Ailbe of Emly, to study the Sacred Scriptures. St. Ailbe, as we shall see presently, had even at this early period founded a great

school at Emly, and having himself been trained abroad, when he came home, he gave his newly converted countrymen the benefit of his learning. Colman, after his return from the South, again paid a visit to his old preceptor, St. Caylan, or Mochae of Noendrum, which shows that the latter must have been alive at the close of the fifth century.

Very friendly relations existed between Noendrum and Candida Casa in Galloway, which was founded by St. Ninian about the year A.D. 398. Ninian himself is said to have visited St. Caylan at Noendrum; and as it is highly probable that Ninian lived until the middle of the fifth century,[1] this is by no means impossible. Other writers have sought to identify St. Ninian of Candida Casa with Nennio, or Monennio, who is said to have founded a church at Cluain-Conaire in Hy Faclain—now Cloncurry, in the co. Kildare. There are, however, grave chronological difficulties against this hypothesis, to which we shall refer hereafter.

St. Mochae was, like his successors down to the close of the tenth century, both bishop and abbot. They appear to have exercised episcopal jurisdiction in their own neighbourhood. The saint is said to have died A.D. 496—that is only three years after the death of St. Patrick himself. There was another saint who died A.D. 644, and was called Mocua, a similarity which probably gave rise to the strange story told both by Ængus and O'Clery, that Mochae of Noendrum was enchanted for 150 years by the song of a black-bird, so that he felt not the flight of time nor the withering influence of the passing years.

He went with seven score young men to cut wattles to build his church. He himself was engaged cutting timber like the rest. He had got his load ready before the others, and sat down beside it. Just then he heard a beautiful bird singing on the boughs of a blackthorn bush close at hand. It was the most beautiful bird he had ever seen, and speaking with a human voice the Bird said:—"This is diligent work of thine, O cleric." "It is required," replied Mochae, "for building a church in honour of God;" and then he added, "Who, may I ask, is addressing me?" "A man of the people of my Lord is here," replied the Bird, "that is, an Angel of God from heaven." "All hail to thee," said Mochae, "and why hast thou come hither?" "To speak to thee from thy Lord, and amuse thee for a while." "I like it," said Mochae. Then Mochae remained for three hundred years listening to that Bird, having his load of wood by his side, and the wood was not withered, and his flesh decayed

[1] It has been said that Ninian died A.D. 432; but as Skene observes, without any authority. See *Celtic Scotland*, vol. ii., p. 4.

not, and the time did not seem longer than one single hour of the day. At length God's Angel bade him farewell, and Mochae returned home with his load, and he found his church built, and he saw only strange faces, for all his friends and acquaintances had long been dead. But when he told them his strange story, they believed it, and knelt before him to do him honour, and built a shrine on the spot where he had seen God's Angel, and heard the heavenly song. Ængus says the Bird sang three songs only, but each lasted fifty years, so that the three hundred given in the *Martyrology of Donegal* was probably by a mistake in the figures put for one hundred and fifty. If one Angel's song can be so sweet and so beguiling, what a joy to listen to the chorus of all the heavenly choirs!

We have seen that St. Colman of Dromore went from the School of Noendrum to be instructed by St. Ailbe of Emly in the Sacred Scriptures. It is stated also in the *Life of St. Ibar* of Beg Erin, that his first instructor in the Sacred Sciences was Saint Motta, who if he be not St. Mochta of Louth, must have been St. Mochae of Noendrum. This is all the more likely, as we know that St. Ibar was himself a native of Dalaradia, and doubtless received his early training from the oldest Christian teachers of his native territory. This brings us to give a sketch of the history and of the schools of these three distinguished saints—Mochta of Louth, Ailbe of Emly, and Ibar of Beg Erin—all of whom certainly founded their monastic schools during the second half of the fifth century. We shall begin with Mochta, or Mochteus, whose history is in some respects very interesting.

II.—The School of Louth—St. Mochta.

St. Mochta, or Mochteus, the founder of the School of Louth, was a disciple of St. Patrick and a Briton by birth. Adamnan describes him as a British immigrant, a disciple of St. Patrick, and a very holy man.[1] He was accompanied to Ireland by twelve disciples, and preached the Gospel chiefly in the county Louth. The *Annals of Ulster*, A.D. 534, give the beginning of one of his letters in which he describes himself in his humility as "Mochta the sinful priest, a disciple of St. Patrick." His Life is given in the recently published Salamanca MS., from which Colgan extracted it to publish under date of the 24th of March.

[1] "Proselytus Brito, homo sanctus, S. Patricii discipulus." *Secunda Praefatio*, p. 6.

From this Life we learn that Mochta was born in Britain, and that whilst still a child he was brought with his parents to Ireland by a certain magus, or Druid, called Hoam. The Druid took up his abode in the territory of Hy Conail, that is in the County Louth, and there the young Mochta was brought up in the Druid's house as a member of his family. One day an Angel brought waxen tablets to the boy, from which he learned his letters, and then commanded him to go to Rome to study Sacred Scripture. The boy obeyed, and went his way to Peter's City, where he made so much progress in learning and holiness that he was consecrated a bishop by the Pope, and many disciples placed themselves under his guidance.

By command of the Pope he then returned home accompanied by twelve disciples, one of whom, Edanus, in Irish Aedhan, seems to have been his favourite disciple, and succeeded the Saint in the first church which he founded in Ireland. This church is called in the Latin life Cella magna, or Kill-mor, and is said to have been built in nemoribus Metheorum—in the woods of Hy Meith. This was the territory called in Irish Hy Meith, and Hy Meith Macha, and the Church itself is identified by Colgan as Cill-Mor-Aedhan in Hy Meith Macha. It is referred to in the *Martyrology of Donegal* as the Church of Aedhan, son of Aenghus, who was doubtless the disciple of the Saint.

The graveyard of Kilmore is still made use of; it is about four miles south of the town of Monaghan, in the barony of Monaghan, which corresponds with the ancient territory of Hy Meith Macha.[1]

It seems the people of this district compelled the Saint to depart from amongst them; and so leaving his monastery of Kilmore to his disciple, he betook himself to Louth, which was still in the possession of the Druids, or magi, according to this Latin life. Here he built his cell and his oratory, which was surrounded by a cemetery, to be the last resting place of the brethren and the place of their resurrection.

We are told in the Life of St. Patrick that when he contemplated founding his own great Church in that "sweet and flowery sward" of Louth—a beauteous meadow land, blooming with all the fairest promise of the year—an angel told him to go northward to Ard-Macha; that Louth was destined by God for a pilgrim from the Britons, who should one day build therein a monastery which would afterwards pass under the dominion of Patrick's successors; and so in truth it came to pass.

[1] *Four Masters*, A.D. 922.

Here then in the flowery meads of Louth beside a limpid stream, which was said to have followed the saint from Kilmore,[1] he built his cell. In a very short time the odour of his virtues was diffused over all the land; and monks gathered round in swarms like bees in summer to place themselves under the direction of one so eminent for his learning and virtues, so that he reckoned amongst his disciples before his death no less than 100 bishops and 300 priests. In this way from the parent hive at Louth new swarms went forth yearly to people other schools and monasteries, and preach the Gospel all over the land.

St. Patrick himself in his old age came and spent some time with his beloved disciple Mochta; for it seems he greatly loved the place, and loved the man who, like himself, was of British blood, and like him had come to preach and dwell amongst the kindly Scottic race.

Mochta wished to leave the place entirely to Patrick, because he knew Patrick loved it much—even more than Macha's Height; but Patrick told him the word of God sent by the angel could not be changed. But both promised that whoever pre-deceased the other, when dying should commit his religious family to the charge of the survivor. Patrick died first, and we are told that for a few days Mochta took charge of Armagh, but then committed the burden to another, that is, to Benignus, second of that name.

The Druid Hoam had a virgin daughter, who wished to preserve her virginity for Christ. Her father, however, gave her in marriage; but on the same day she was called away by her Heavenly Spouse, whilst the lily of her chastity was still inviolate. Her parents then consented to resign all claim over her to Mochta, if he could raise her again to life. Mochta full of confidence in God besought the Lord, and the virgin was restored to life at the prayer of the saint. For thirty years afterwards she lived, serving God in perfect chastity as a professed nun, and her time was wholly given to making vestments for the priests and altar-cloths for the altars at which 'they offered the sacrifice.' It is said that the virgin, like St. Brigid, was of wondrous beauty, but it was heavenly and awe-inspiring:—

> "From her eyes
> A light went forth like morning o'er the sea,
> Sweeter her voice than wind on harp; her smile
> Could stay men's breath."

[1] We believe this stream is a tributary of the Fane river, which in fact does come from the County Monaghan to Louth.

And so the maiden lived above the world clothed in the light of holiness, the first of that bright choir from the fair Hy-Conail land, that gave themselves to Christ led on by love divine.

Now this same Hoam, the Druid, was betrothed to another Christian maiden named Brigid. But he fell sick, and the maiden ministered to him ; and we are told that by her prayers and the bright example of her virtues, the Druid became a Christian, and a fervent penitent. He renounced all claim to his bride, that he and she might serve God in holiness, and sickening shortly afterwards, he died a holy death, as Mochta had foretold.

It is highly probable that the Brigid here referred to was the great St. Brigid of Kildare. We know that she was sought in marriage by many suitors, and that her own master was a Druid, who lived near Dundalk, and in this way she might easily have been noticed by the Druid Hoam, who lived in the neighbourhood. But his earthly passion was elevated and purified by its object into a diviner flame, that brought him from paganism to Christianity, and from sin to life eternal.

Many striking miracles are recorded of St. Mochta of Louth, which we cannot now recount. The extraordinary length of life attributed to him is probably due to an error of the copyists, who wrote *trecenti* (three hundred), for *triginta* (thirty). The statement in the Life is that such was the self-denial of the man of God, that for 'thirty' years he never tasted flesh, nor spoke an idle word ; but the copyist seems to have made it 'three hundred' years. The *Annals of Ulster* give his death in the year A.D. 534, others at A.D. 536, when he was doubtless a very old man. He is said to have been the last survivor of St. Patrick's disciples.

We may infer from the fragment referred to in the *Annals of Ulster* that the saint was an accomplished scholar and writer. He was the author of a Rule for his monks, of which, however, no trace remains. He seems to have been especially skilled in Sacred Scripture, the knowledge of which was the foundation of all the theology known at that time.

Besides the Rule for his monks, and the Letters already referred to, it seems that Mochta was also the original author of a work called the *Book of the Monks*, or the *Book of Cuana*. It is cited by the author of the *Annals of Ulster* under date of the year A.D. 471. In the same *Annals of Ulster*, A.D. 527, the same work seems to be referred to ; it

is there called the *Book of Mochod.* It was probably a series of annals begun in the monastery of Louth by St. Mochta, or Maucteus, and afterwards continued under the direction of the abbots, his successors. O'Curry thinks that the *Book of Cuana*, quoted in the *Annals of Ulster*, was written at Treoit (now Trevit), in Meath, by a scribe of that place called Cuana, whose death is recorded in the same Annals, A.D. 738, after which the book is quoted no more. We are rather inclined to think that Cuana, or Cuanu, from whom this book gets its name, was the person whose death is noticed by the Four Masters in A.D. 823, and who is described in the *Annals of Ulster*, A.D. 824, as Cuana of Lughmadh, or Louth, "a wise man and a bishop," as the Four Masters also describe him. It seems highly probable therefore, that this work was begun by Maucteus in Louth, that it afterwards was called the *Book of the Monks*, and finally the *Book of Cuana*, the wise man and bishop, who was probably its compiler in the shape in which it is quoted in the *Annals of Ulster*, first under the year A.D. 468, and for the last time under date A.D. 610.

The death of this distinguished bishop and scholar, "who was a man of uncommon erudition, and as a doctor was universally esteemed," marks the period at which the School of Louth reached the zenith of its fame. It were bootless to tell how it was again and again burned and pillaged by the Danes, who during the tenth century seem to have taken permanent possession of the monastery, although a round tower had been built to protect it, which was blown down in A.D. 981. The Celtic princes during the eleventh century frequently imitated the bad example of the Danes, for we are told that in A.D. 1043 one of the O'Rorkes organized a plundering expedition, or a hosting, as they loved to call it, against the monasteries of Louth and Dromiskin.

Yet the torch of learning still flickered on in Louth during the disastrous eleventh century, for the death of Molassius, lector of Louth, is recorded in A.D 1047. It was totally destroyed in A.D. 1148, and although subsequently rebuilt, its fame as a school was eclipsed by other institutions during the twelfth century. But the monastery itself lived on down to the general suppression, and was largely endowed by successive generations of benefactors.

III.—The School of Emly—St. Ailbe.

When St. Colman left Noendrum, he went to study Scripture under St. Ailbe of Emly, and after his return he

paid a visit to St. Caylan, or Mochta, who was therefore still alive. His death is given as occurring in the last years of the fifth century; and hence the School of St. Ailbe must have been founded some years previously.

This, however, raises another very interesting question as to the existence of pre-Patrician bishops in Ireland, that is, prelates who, although themselves contemporaries of St. Patrick, derived their orders and jurisdiction from another source. We cannot enter into a lengthened discussion of this question; but, on the other hand, we must not pass it over when treating of the monastic schools of the fifth century.

It is now generally admitted that there were many Christians in Ireland when St. Patrick first landed on our shores. He was neither the first nor the only Christian captive carried to Erin; and as we have already seen, frequent intercourse, whether friendly or hostile, did exist before St. Patrick's time between the Britons and the Celts of Ireland. The existence of Christians in Erin is in any case conclusively proved from the statement in St. Prosper's Chronicle, that Palladius was sent by Pope Celestine to preach to the Scots, who believed in Christ.[1] To explain this definite statement as if it merely meant that he was sent to convert them to Christ, is to do violence to the language. The words clearly imply that the primary object of this mission was to gather into regular Christian communities the believers scattered throughout the island, to organize the Irish Church, and of course to labour also for the conversion of unbelievers. His mission was only very partially successful. He met with so much opposition in Leinster, that although he founded a few churches, his labours did not extend beyond that province, and after a short time he abandoned his Irish mission in despair.

We are told, too, in the ancient *Tripartite Life* of St. Patrick, that after crossing the Shannon near Battle Bridge, at a place then called Dumha Graidh—now Doogary—Patrick ordained his disciple St. Ailbe, to minister for the sons of Ailioll in that district, since called Shancoe, in the Barony of Tirerrill; and he showed him "a cave in the mountain and within it a wonderful stone altar, and on it were four chalices of glass." Such chalices were undoubtedly sometimes used in the early Church. Mention is also made

[1] Ad Scotos in Christum credentes ordinatus a Papa Caelestino Palladius primus episcopus mittitur.

of this wonderful stone altar in the *Book of Armagh*, so that the story is beyond doubt authentic, and shows that before St. Patrick's advent into Connaught there were Christians already there, and in a remote district, too, who had worshipped God in secret, like the early Christians of the Catacombs. Indeed, it would be a very extraordinary thing if there were no Christians to be found in Ireland before St. Patrick, seeing the frequent intercourse, sometimes friendly and sometimes hostile, that existed between the eastern coasts of Ireland and the western coasts of England.

But the question then arises, were there any prelates in Ireland exercising jurisdiction before the arrival of St. Patrick, who were not his disciples in the ordinary sense, and did not receive episcopal consecration at his hands? Such eminent authorities as Usher and Colgan, relying on the statements made in several ancient Lives of Saints, incline to the opinion that there were at least four bishops in Ireland before Patrick or Palladius, namely, Ailbe of Emly, Ciaran of Saigher, Declan of Ardmore, and Ibar of Beg-Eri. On the other hand, many recent authorities, led by Dr. Lanigan and Dr. Todd, hold that there is no foundation in our earliest documents for these pre-Patrician bishops; that the Lives containing an account of these prelates are forgeries of the eleventh or twelfth century, invented in the south of Ireland for the purpose of contesting the claim of Armagh to the primacy of all Ireland, and of establishing the new-fangled claims of the Bishop of Cashel to a primacy over the Southern Province. It is quite impossible with the evidence attainable at present to settle this question; so we shall only refer to it briefly.

There is a Life of St. Ailbe of Emly in the Salamanca MS. recently published. It certainly abounds in marvellous anachronisms as well as in marvellous miracles; and by itself cannot be deemed worthy of credit. From this Life we learn that Ailbe was a native of eastern Ara Cliach (not Eliach as Dr. Todd has it); that he was the son of Olcu (in the MS. Olcnais) by a female slave named Sant, and that King Cronan in whose household he was born, ordered him to be exposed under a steep cliff, where he was afterwards found alive[1] by a man named Lochan, who gave him to a family of the Britons to be nurtured. It is a striking fact that we find Britons in eastern Ara Cliach at this period, and it is conjectured that from them the Barony of Bally-

[1] Hence the name Ailbe = *ail-beo*, "living under the rock."

brit takes its name. This fact would also go to explain how the child was reared a Christian at this early period by those Christian Britons. There Palladius, when he came to Munster, found the boy and baptized him. But when it is said by this writer not only that Palladius came to Ireland many years before St. Patrick, but conversed with King Conor Mac Nessa, who flourished in the first century of the Christian era, we see how little credence can be given to his statements.

Afterwards Ailbe went to Rome, and studied sacred Scripture there under the Bishop Hilary, who sent him to Pope Clement, in whose presence he was consecrated bishop by the 'ministry of angels.' There was a Pope Hilary who flourished from A.D. 461-467, but there is no record of any Pope Clement during the fourth or fifth century in Rome.

We are told that many of his countrymen followed Ailbe to Rome—twelve Colmans, twelve Kevins, and twelve Fintans—and lived with him in community in the holy city. Then Ailbe went to preach the Gospel in the cities of the Gentiles, where he wrought many miracles, and finally returned to his native country, landing first in the north of Ireland, in which he founded the Church of Cell Roid in Dalaradia. Then we find him in Magh Liffe with St. Brigid, and afterwards, according to the narrative, he met St. Patrick at the court of Ængus Mac Nadfraich at Cashel. We find him in the plain of Magh Femhin going to salute St. Patrick in company with Ibar; and an angel declared, when Ailbe was giving precedence to Ibar as the elder, that Ailbe, and not Ibar, should go first. This certainly looks like a suspicious attempt to procure a recognition of the primacy for Ailbe's See, which during the twelfth century was united to that of Cashel.

Ailbe also preached the Gospel in Connaught, and wrought numerous miracles there; but he must be distinguished from another Ailbe, the disciple of St. Patrick, who was ordained by that saint in Tirerrill, and "who is in Shancoe," as the *Tripartite* informs us. Afterwards an angel brought Ailbe to the place of his resurrection in Imleach Jubhair, or Emly of the Yew Tree. So this Life of Ailbe represents that saint as consecrated at Rome, getting an independent mission from the Pope to preach to the Gentiles, and while deferring to St. Patrick's higher authority, still duly constituted with the sanction of that saint as Metropolitan of Munster.

The Life of St. Declan contains some further particulars to the same effect not explicitly stated in the Life of Ailbe.

Declan was of the Nandesi race, who then dwelt in the Barony of Decies in Waterford—his father Erc being a chieftain of that tribe. The boy was baptized by a certain Colman and educated by Dimma, who was a learned and holy man that came to Waterford from foreign parts. By his advice it seems Declan also went to Rome, where he met St. Ailbe and became a member of his community. In Italy he also met St. Patrick, and Usher says this meeting took place so early as A.D. 402—thirty years before St. Patrick came to Ireland. Having been consecrated bishop in Rome, Declan returned to his native country to preach the Gospel amongst his own kindred, and there founded the see of Ardmore on an eminence overlooking the sea. He also tried to convert Ængus of Cashel, but failing in this attempt, he paid a visit to St. David in Wales. Here is a singular statement, which makes David Bishop of Menevia before Ængus was converted by St. Patrick—an event which took place nearly a hundred years before St. David's episcopacy. This Life of Declan then describes how the four prelates ordained abroad met St. Patrick, and how they entered into a friendly arrangement with him, not however without some difficulty. First of all Ciaran, the first-born of the saints of Erin, "yielded all subjection, and concord, and supremacy to Patrick both when present and absent." Ailbe also came to Cashel and accepted Patrick as his master and superior in presence of Ængus the king. And this was all the more admirable, because the three Bishops, Declan, Ciaran and Ibar, had previously constituted Ailbe as their master and metropolitan; and hence he came to make his own submission to Patrick lest any of them might resist him. Ibar was the most reluctant to accept this arrangement, for being a decided home ruler "he was unwilling to receive a patron of Ireland from any foreign nation," and Patrick, though nurtured in Ireland, was by birth a Briton. At first, says the Life, there were conflicts between them—that is Patrick and Ibar—but afterwards at the persuasion of an angel, they made peace, and concord, and fraternity together.

If St. Peter and St. Paul had their own little disputes, it is not to be wondered that Celtic saints should sometimes differ amongst themselves. In the same spirit Declan, who at first was unwilling to submit to Patrick, as he himself also had the apostolic dignity, yet when admonished by an

angel, crossed Slieve Gua, and came to Patrick to profess his obedience and submission.

"Thereupon Patrick and King Ængus, with all the people, ordained that the Archbishopric of Munster should be in the city and see of Saint Ailbe, who was then by them ordained archbishop for ever;" and Declan was formally authorized to take spiritual charge of the Desii, and became also their patron for ever. It is singular that no mention is made of Ciaran and Ibar as assenting to this arrangement, although it was previously stated that they also "came to an arrangement with Patrick."

It cannot be denied that this entire narrative, which is mainly taken from the *Life of St. Declan*, is exceedingly suspicious, and hence it is worth while to point out the arguments in favour of the possibility of its truth, and also the great difficulties against it.

There is one very significant reference to Ibar and Ailbe in the *Tripartite Life of St. Patrick*, which, notwithstanding the arguments of Dr. W. Stokes, we believe to have been written originally by St. Evin in the seventh century. It is this: when Patrick came to Cullen in the present barony of Coonagh, Co. Limerick, the *Tripartite* tells us that he ordered a Culdee of his household to resuscitate a child that had been half-devoured by a pig. "His faith failed him, however, and he said he would not tempt the Lord. Then Patrick ordered Bishops Ibar and Ailbe to bring the boy to life, and he besought the Lord along with them, and the boy was brought to life through Patrick's prayer."

> "The Apostle turned
> To Ibar, and to Ailbe, bishops twain,
> And bade them raise the child. They heard and knelt;
> And Patrick knelt between them: and these three
> Upheaved a mighty strength of prayer; and lo!
> All pale, yet shining, rose the child, and sat,
> Lifting small hands, and to the people preached,
> And straightway they believed, and were baptized."

This passage represents St. Patrick as meeting these two *Bishops* in Munster, of whom there was previously heard nothing, and so far seems to confirm the statement in the Lives of these Saints that they were consecrated abroad, and not by St. Patrick.

Again, why should there not be bishops in Ireland before St. Patrick as well as priests and laymen? In his Confession, which has been always regarded as an authentic document, St. Patrick himself says:—"For your sake I faced

many dangers, going even to the limits of the land where no one was before me, and whither no one had yet come to baptize, or ordain clerics, or confirm the faithful." This certainly seems to imply that in the less remote parts of the country there may have been priests, or even bishops, who did perform these functions before him.

The chief difficulty against the authenticity of the Lives of St. Ciaran, St. Declan, and St. Ailbe, is a chronological one. If they were bishops before St. Patrick, how could they have lived down to the first quarter or even to the middle of the sixth century, as some of them are said to have done? St. Ibar died, it seems, the earliest, about A.D. 500; but Ailbe's death is given in the *Annals of Ulster* under date of A.D. 526, and again at A.D. 533 and 541, which shows that at least he must have lived through the first quarter of the sixth century. Ciaran of Saigher was at the School of Clonard, and is spoken of as the friend of his namesake of Clonmacnoise, and of the two Brendans, who were students in the same great seminary; and according to many authorities, Declan lived late into this same century, if not into the next. The authors of the Lives were not unconscious of this difficulty, and boldly meet it by giving to these saints lives of extraordinary duration, extending from 200 to 300, and even to 400 years. Statements of this kind cannot of course be accepted, and of themselves throw suspicion on the authenticity of those Lives. As a matter of fact, however, it is not at all necessary to assume that those saints lived so long in order to be contemporaries of St. Patrick, and even consecrated before him. St. Patrick, according to the common chronology, was about sixty years of age when he came to Ireland, so that Ibar or Ailbe might have been consecrated before him and still have outlived him some twenty or thirty years, if we only assume that they reached the same great age as St. Patrick himself. Our own opinion is that Ibar and Ailbe, if not also Ciaran and Declan, were not consecrated in Erin but abroad; that probably they had returned to their native country before St. Patrick, and were engaged in preaching the Gospel to their countrymen when he arrived in Ireland; but the great fame and success of St. Patrick eclipsed their labours; and then they also consented to become his disciples and recognise his superior authority and greater success.

IV.—St. Ibar.

There is, however, in the Scholia on Ængus a curious story which would seem to imply that Ibar, at least, was at

first somewhat reluctant to yield to St. Patrick's authority. It is said that he had a great conflict with Patrick, and that "he left the roads full and the kitchens empty in Armagh." Patrick was thereupon angry with him, and this is what he said: "Thou shalt not be in Ireland," quoth Patrick. "Ireland (Eri) shall be the name of the place wherein I am," quoth Bishop Ibar. Whence, Beg-Eri (or Little Ireland) was so called, that is, the island which is in "Ui-Cennselaig and out on the sea it is."[1] It is stated in the same place that Bishop Ibar was 353 years when he died.

It seems to us highly probable that Ibar was a pre-Patrician bishop; although he afterwards yielded to St. Patrick, and in a certain sense became his disciple. He was of the race of the Hy-Eathach of Ulster, who have given their name to the barony of Iveagh in the Co. Down, not in Armagh as Todd seems to assert. Of his life only few notices are preserved besides those already referred to. Mella, his sister, was mother of St. Abban, and it is in the Life of this nephew of Ibar that we find the most important notices with reference to Ibar himself. We cannot say with certainty where Ibar received his early training; an abbot, St. Motta, is mentioned as his first instructor in sacred learning, but, if he be not St. Mochtae of Louth, nothing further is known concerning him. In Tirechan's Collections in the *Book of Armagh*, an ancient and venerable authority, we find the name of Iborus in the list of bishops consecrated by St. Patrick, and the name seems identical with Ibar.[2] At one time it is said the saint was placed by St. Patrick in charge of St. Brigid's community at Kildare, in which office he was succeeded by St. Conlaeth. He afterwards preached the Gospel in Leix and Hy-Kinselagh, converting many to the faith. At length he came to Wexford and resolved to retire from the active missionary life, and devote the remainder of his years to prayer and sacred study. For this purpose he took possession of the small island of Beg-Eri, or Begery, in the north-west of Wexford Harbour. Here he built his oratory and cell about the year A.D. 485, some fifteen years before his death. Like many other of our Irish Saints, he loved to rest within the hearing of the great Sea, and we are told that he had previously spent some time in one of the islands off the wild west coast of Ireland—perhaps in Aran.

A man so famed for sanctity and learning could not thus

[1] See Stokes' *Calendar of Ængus*,—April 23rd.

[2] In the *Tripartite* he is represented as founding Pallas Green in the Barony of Coonagh, co. Limerick

escape from his disciples. They soon discovered his retreat, and crowded round him in his island home. It was easy enough to build their cells of stone or wattles; fish abounded in the channels around the island, and countless flocks of wild fowl covered the pools, so that it would not be difficult to find food for the scholars, even in this small island of twenty-one acres. Amongst the rest was his own nephew, St. Abban the Elder, who became one of his most distinguished scholars, and was the spiritual father and first teacher of the great St. Finnian of Clonard.

We are told in the *Life of St. Abban* that "at this time innumerable holy monks and nuns in various parts of Ireland lived under the direction of Ibar, so that in the Litany of Ængus are invoked three thousand father confessors, who gathered together under Bishop Ibar to consider certain questions. He lived, however, chiefly in his celebrated monastery of Beg-Eri, because he loved that place more than any other. It is situated in a small island off the southern part of Hy-Kinselagh, ramparted by the sea; and in that same island the remains of the holy prelate rest, and the place itself is greatly honoured by all the Irish on account of their veneration for St. Ibar, and the wondrous miracles performed there through his intercession."

We are also told that Abban was only twelve years old when he came to the School of Beg-Eri, and that he made great progress there under the direction of Ibar in the study of the Sacred Scriptures and of all the liberal arts, so that his companions wondered much at his great learning and eloquence. Ibar wishing to go to Rome on a pilgrimage, resolved to leave the charge of his monastic school to Abban during his absence. Abban, however, ardently desiring to see the Holy City of the Apostles, earnestly besought his uncle to allow him to go in the same ship; but all in vain, until with the aid of an angel he was borne over the waves, and thus reaching the vessel, he was allowed to come on board. Thus both the pilgrims visited Rome, passing through Britain on their way, and after many wonderful incidents returned in safety to Lough Garman. Then Abban himself went through Erin preaching the Gospel, and founding monasteries in various parts of the country. So it came to pass that the learning and discipline of the School of Beg-Eri were carried to other parts of Ireland, and that seed was scattered, which in the next century produced such marvellous fruit throughout all the land. St. Ibar died on the 23rd of April, A.D. 500, in his beloved island retreat; and

there he was buried, where the prayers of his children and the voices of the sea would murmur round his grave for ages.

Not for ever—for Beg-Eri was one of the first of our religious schools to feel the destroying presence of the Danes around our coasts. So early as A.D. 819 it was plundered by the Danes. In A.D. 884 is recorded the death of its abbot, Diarmaid, and of Cruinmeal in A.D. 964. The citizens of Wexford kept it as a place of refuge and security for their Norman prisoners, when the town was besieged by Strongbow in A.D. 1172. The veracious Gerald Barry tells us that St. Ibar had expelled the rats from his island, so that not one of them could live there, or even be born in it afterwards.

For ages, however, it continued to be regarded as a very holy shrine, and the men of Wexford made frequent pilgrimages to the grave of its holy founder.

Colonel Solomon Richards, a Cromwellian adventurer, who settled in Wexford, published, in A.D. 1682, an interesting, but bigoted account of the Barony of Forth.[1] He tells us that in "the little chapel (of Beg-Eri) there was a wooden image of the Saint (whom he calls Iberian), and people go there to worship him, and settle any cases of controversy that may arise amongst them by oath before the image of the Saint. Moreover, if any false charge were made against a man, the parties take boat to the island, the suspected man swears that the charge is false, and this oath before the Saint is at once readily accepted as satisfactory proof of innocence. Once or twice, 'idle fellows who love not wooden gods,' stole away St. Iberian, and burned him, but the image was miraculously restored, as the silly people believe, once more to its place." It is well known that similar wooden images of the patron saints have been preserved in the islands of Innismurray and Inisgloria down to our own time.

Beg-Eri is no longer an island. The slob-lands of the harbour have been reclaimed, and this most interesting spot has become part and parcel of the main-land. It was discovered during the process of the reclamation works that Beg-Eri was in ancient times connected by a causeway or *togher* with the adjoining 'Great Island.' The remains of the *togher*, consisting of two rows of oak piles, were still found *in situ;* an ancient wharf also stood at the northern extremity of the island, close to the Bunatroe Channel, which ran between the island and the shore, but it has now disappeared.

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[1] See *Kilk. Arch. Soc.*, vol. iv., New Series, page 90.

The old church of Ard Colum and a holy well are on the main-land due west of Beg-Eri; to the south was another old church and well dedicated to St. Coemhan, brother of the saint of Glendalough, and popularly called Ard-Cavan. The ancient oratory of Ibar on Beg-Eri has entirely disappeared, but the remains of a much more modern church are still to be seen surrounded by a grave-yard, with numerous ancient head-stones. Two of these flags—one red and the other green—are inscribed with ancient crosses, but no names are to be found. Taking into account its antiquity and history, we must regard Beg-Eri as one of the most interesting spots in Ireland, and we cannot but regret that its insular character has been effaced by modern improvements.

V.—Early Schools in the West of Ireland.

Neither was the West of Ireland without its own schools even so early as the latter part of the fifth century. The first school in the West seems to have been established by St. Benignus at his own monastery of Kilbannon, about three miles to the north of Tuam. His sister Mathona was, as we have seen, one of the first nuns veiled in Erin, and settled down at Tawnagh, in the county Sligo, where she founded a church and convent under the guidance of Bishop Cairell, a disciple of St. Patrick.

Benignus belonged to the race of Cian of Cashel, son of Oilioll Olum.[1] Two offshoots of this family established themselves, one in the barony of Keenaght, in the County Derry, to which they gave their name, and the other in Bregia, to which the family of St. Benignus belonged. It is stated indeed in the *Leabhar Breac*, and in the *Book of Rights*, that he belonged to the Cianachta of Gleann Geimhin (Glengiven), but that is clearly a mistake, except the name be taken to include both the families of Meath and of Derry, which is not unlikely.

A third branch of the same family had settled down in the barony of Leyney (Luighne), county Sligo; and that Luigh, from whom they took their name, was according to the genealogies, a first cousin of the father of Benignus. This would, no doubt, help to explain why the virgin Mathona founded her convent at Tawnagh, near her cousins, in the county Sligo, and would also help to explain the

[1] His father was son of Laei, son of Tadhg, son of Cian, son of Oilioll Olum. See *Book of Rights*, page 50, and page 103.

special preference which Benignus himself manifested in favour of the western province.

He had been commissioned, it is said, by St. Patrick to preach especially in those districts, which he himself had not visited. Accordingly we are told that Benen preached in Kerry, in Clare, and in South Connaught, the very localities which St. Patrick did not find time to visit. He blessed Connaught, too, with a special blessing from Bundrowes, near Bundoran, to Limerick, and the grateful natives paid to him and his successors a yearly tribute of milk and butter, calves and lambs, as well as first fruits of the rest of their produce.

Now Kilbannon,[1] in South Connaught, was Benen's principal church, and continued to be for many centuries a very important religious foundation, as its ruined round tower still proves. But Benen was above all things a scholar and a psalm-singer, so he founded a school for young ecclesiastics in his monastery, of the history of which unfortunately we know little or nothing.

He had at least one illustrious disciple, and that was St. Jarlath, afterwards Bishop of Tuam. It has been said that Jarlath could not have been a disciple of Benignus before A.D. 455, when the latter was transferred to Armagh. We answer that Jarlath was an old man in A.D. 512, when St. Brendan of Clonfert became his disciple at Cluainfois, near Tuam, and hence there is nothing to prevent Jarlath being a disciple of Benignus, if he were about the same age that Benignus himself was, when he became a disciple of St. Patrick.

St. Jarlath founded his own college at Cluanfois towards the end of the fifth century. Colgan fixes the date at A.D. 510; but there are passages in the *Life of St. Brendan*, which go to show that it must have been founded at an earlier date, probably about the year A.D. 500. Of this college at Cluainfois, and of St. Jarlath's School at Tuam, we shall have something more to say hereafter.

Lanigan, quoting the *Tripartite Life of St. Patrick*, says that there was an episcopal seminary at Elphin, in the County Roscommon, governed by St. Asicus, even at this early period. In truth all that we know of St. Asicus is derived from the *Tripartite*. The beautiful site on which the monastery was built got its name, *Ailfind*, from the white stone that was raised out of the well, which was made by

[1] Others think Kilbanon was the church of 'Benen, brother of Cethech,' who is distinguished in the Tripartite from 'Benen, successor of Patrick.' This is highly probable.

Patrick in the green, and "that stone stands on the brink of the well," says the author of the *Tripartite*, "and it is called from the water"—that is, Elphin means the stone of the clear stream. That clear and bountiful spring still flows through the street of Elphin before the site of the monastery of Asicus, literally in the green, and it is only a short time since the stone itself was carried off by some profane hands. It is now, we believe, somewhere at or near the Protestant Church in the town of Elphin.

Patrick blessed Ono the converted Druid, who gave him that beautiful site overlooking to the south, the fertile and far-reaching plain of Magh Aei, and added, moreover:—"Thy seed shall be blessed, and there shall be victory of laymen and clerics from thee for ever, and they shall have the inheritance of this place."

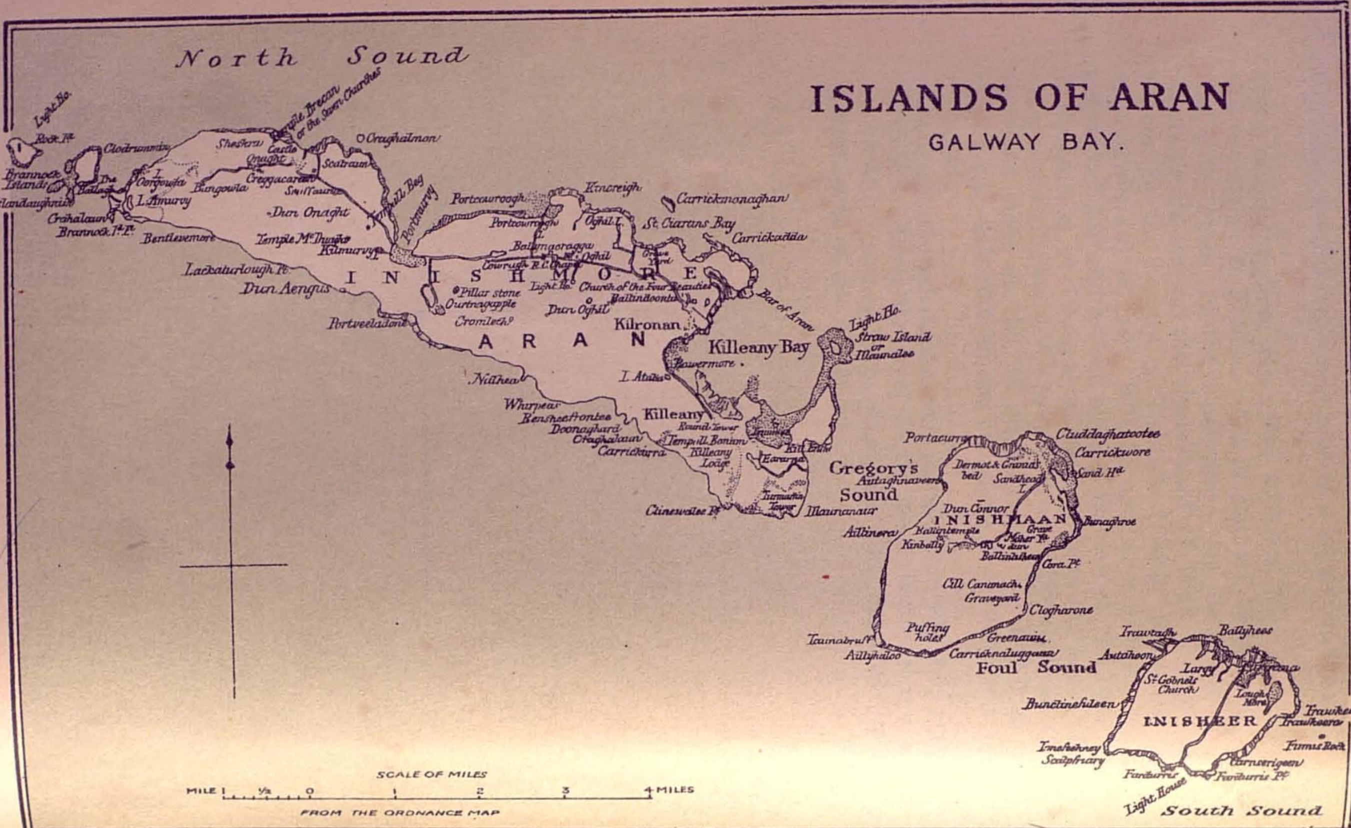
Then Patrick placed over the infant Church of Elphin Asicus, and Bite or Biteus, the son of Asicus, and Cipia, mother of Bite the Bishop. The family was, doubtless, of the race of Ono the Druid, and it seems they were held in high repute in the neighbourhood. Asicus himself must have been advanced in years, but he was an expert artificer in metal-work; and we are told that he made altars, patens or altar-stones (*miassa*), and square book-covers for Patrick, and these patens were so highly prized that one was taken to Armagh, another was kept in Elphin, and a third was taken far westward to the Church of Domnach Mor Maige Seolai, and placed on the altar of Bishop Felart. It is very probable that these square *miassa* were stone or metal altar-flags, and were used to place over the rude altars of the churches during the celebration of the Holy Mysteries, a practice still common in the country where duly consecrated altars are not to be had.

No doubt St. Asicus attended to these duties, whilst his son, Bishop Biteus, took care of his infant monastery and school. It was the very infancy of the Church in Ireland, for Elphin was one of St. Patrick's earliest foundations, dating from the year A.D. 434 or 435. It has always continued to hold a distinguished position amongst the episcopal sees of the West; and although the Bishop dwells there no longer, it still gives title to the most ancient of the Western Sees.

Asicus himself—in shame because of a lie told either by him, or as others say of him—fled into Donegal, and for seven years abode in the island of Rathlin O'Birne. Then his monks sought him out, and after much labour found him

in the mountain glens, and tried to bring him home to his own monastery at Elphin. But he fell sick by the way, and died with them in the wilderness. So they buried the venerable old man in the churchyard of Rath Cunga—now Racoon, in the barony of Tirhugh, County Donegal. The old churchyard is there still, though now disused, on the summit of a round hillock close to the left of the road from Ballyshannon to Donegal, about a mile to the south of the village of Ballintra. We sought in vain for any trace of an inscribed stone in the old churchyard. He fled from men during life, and, like Moses, his grave is hidden from them in death.

The artistic spirit, however, remained in Elphin; and, as we shall see hereafter, some of the most beautiful works of the twelfth century were designed and executed by the spiritual sons of St. Asicus.


ISLANDS OF ARAN
GALWAY BAY.
North Sound
Gregory's Sound
Foul Sound
South Sound
INISHMORE
ARAN
INISHMAAN
INISHEER
Killeany Bay
Kilronan
Killeany
Straw Island or Illaunalee
Light Ho.
Brannock Islands
Dun Aengus
Dun Onaght
Dun Oghil
Dun Connor
Bar of Aran
Carricknamonaghan
St. Ciarans Bay
Carrickadda
Portmurvy
Portcowrogh
Kincreigh
Church of the Four Beauties
Pillar stone
Cromlech
Round Tower
Killeany Lodge
Tempull Benian
Portveeladone
Lackaturlough Pt.
Bentlevemore
Temple Mc Dhugh
Kilmurvy
Craghalmon
Scatraun
Onaght
Sheskin
Temple Brecan or the Seven Churches
Cill Canannach Graveyard
Puffing hole
Clogharone
Cora Pt.
Sand Hd.
Carrickwore
Cluddaghatootee
Portacurra
Dermot & Granias bed
Kilbally
St. Gobnets Church
Lough More
Trawkeera Pt.
Finnis Rock
Light House
Foraurris Pt.
Ballyhees
Trawtaugh
Bunclinefuleen
SCALE OF MILES
MILE 1 ½ 0 1 2 3 4 MILES
FROM THE ORDNANCE MAP

CHAPTER VIII.

IRISH SCHOOLS OF THE SIXTH CENTURY.

THE MONASTIC SCHOOL OF ST. ENDA OF ARAN.

"You'll see the homes of holy men
Far west upon the shoreless main—
In sheltered vale, on cloudy Ben,
Where saints still pray, and scribes still pen
The sacred page, despising gain."

—M'Gee: *Iona to Irelana.*

I.—Life of St. Enda of Aran.

If we accept the authority of the Catalogue of the Three Orders of Irish Saints, those of the fifth century were mainly missionaries; those of the sixth century were cenobites; and the Third Order were for the most part anchorites, or Culdees as they afterwards came to be called. To a certain extent this is true. The Church of the sixth century partook very much of the monastic character; as Skene says, "There was episcopacy in the Church, but it was not diocesan episcopacy."[1] We should be inclined to accept this statement, if the learned writer had inserted one word, and said that it was not *always* diocesan episcopacy. In Iona, and doubtless in other great monasteries also, there was generally a resident prelate, subject in jurisdiction to the presbyter-abbot; but Venerable Bede says expressly[2] that it was an unusual arrangement—inusitato ordine—and his authority settles the question; it was unusual even in the Celtic Churches.

There is no doubt that monastic influence predominated in the Irish Church of the sixth century, and that the head of the monastery was not always, though he certainly was very frequently, a bishop. This arose partly from the ardour of the Celtic character in its efforts to reach perfection, partly from the unsettled state of the country, and to some extent from the influence and example of the great Columba himself. It was by accident he was not consecrated a bishop, and his successors would not pretend to be greater than their holy founder. But the system at least produced one excellent effect—it was under God the means of establishing those wonderful monastic schools so famed in every Christian land.

[1] *Celtic Scotland*, Book II., p. 44. [2] *Histor. Eccles.*, Liber III., c. 4.

It is certain, as we have seen, that there were in Ireland from the very first conversion of the people both monks and nuns, and therefore monasteries also. But the founders of these religious houses could give very little time to regulate their constitution and government, much less to undertake the management of such institutions themselves. St. Patrick and his fellow labourers were 'the founders of churches' rather than of monasteries—their work was to preach, to ordain, to baptize. It was the next generation of monks that undertook to found monasteries properly so called; men who themselves were trained in religious houses elsewhere, and thus becoming acquainted with religious life and discipline were fitted to found similar institutions at home. The earliest of these monasteries properly so called date from the beginning of the sixth century; and perhaps the two most celebrated fathers of Irish monastic life, in this sense of the word, were St. Enda of Aran, and St. Finnian of Clonard. We shall first speak of St. Enda.

Aran, under St. Enda, may be called the novitiate of the Irish saints of the Second Order, as Clonard may be considered their college; and hence we shall trace as carefully as we can the history of these two famous foundations of sanctity and learning, to which the ancient Church of Ireland owed so much.

St. Enda, or Endeus, was of royal blood—one of "the sons of the Kings of the Scots," who embraced the monastic state even during the lifetime of St. Patrick himself. His father, Conall Derg, was king of Oriel—a wide territory extending from Lough Erne to the sea at Dundalk, and nearly conterminous with the modern diocese of Clogher. His mother was Evin (Aebhfhinn) grand-daughter of Ronan, king of the Ards of Down. He had a sister called Fanchea, a devout maiden, who is said by some to have received the veil from the hands of St. Patrick, and to whom her brother owed his conversion to the religious life. The young prince succeeded his father as chieftain of the men of Oriel, and although high-minded and pure-hearted, he took a chieftain's share in the wild work of mutual pillage and slaughter to which these Irish chieftains were always too much prone. His pious sister had founded a convent of nuns at a place called Ross Oirthir, which is in all probability identical with the old church and cemetery of Rossory, in the parish of the same name by the shores of the River Erne, on its left bank near Enniskillen, and not far from the famous Franciscan Abbey of Lisgoole. The old church has disappeared with the pro-

gress of modern 'improvements;' but the home of the dead is still untouched. Here St. Fanchea had her oratory and nunnery, when it happened that her brother led the clansmen past the convent to attack their enemies. Shortly after a wild song of joy told the terrified maidens that they were returning home triumphant, having conquered their foes and slain the leader.

The young prince stopped to see his sister at the convent gate, but she forbade him to approach, stained as he was, with the blood of his fellow creatures. Enda said it was his duty to defend his people and conquer their enemies—"I have not killed any man," he said, "nor yet have I ever sinned with women"—and then it seems he asked his sister to allow him to take to be his wife one of the young ladies under her care who was remarkable for her beauty. Fanchea knew she was powerless to resist, if her warrior brother persisted in his purpose. So she bade him stay where he was, and going into the convent called the maiden before her, and said, "My sister, a choice is given you to-day—wouldst thou love the Spouse whom I love, or rather a carnal spouse?" "I will always love thy Spouse," said the maiden. Then Fanchea brought her to an inner chamber, and bade her lie down on the bed. She did so, and soon after fell quietly asleep in the Lord. Then Fanchea put a veil on the face of the dead, and bringing in her brother, she said, taking the veil suddenly off, "Come and see her whom thou lovest." He started at the sight, but not thinking her dead, he only said—"She is awfully pale and ghastly." "It is the paleness of death," said his sister; "and so shall you soon be if you repent not your sins." The young man retired conscience-stricken, and Fanchea so used the auspicious moment to remind him of the torments of hell and the joys of heaven, that he at once resolved to renounce his principality and become a monk.

Enda now gave striking proof of the sincerity of his conversion. The convent and oratory of his sister Fanchea were still unprotected by a rampart of any kind; and what had just taken place clearly showed the want of some enclosure in those turbulent days. Enda resolved to accomplish the work with his own hands, and doubtless with the aid of some of his tribesmen. He dug a deep fosse and raised a large '*mur*' or rampart of earth all round the sacred enclosure, so that in future one or two faithful attendants could defend the narrow entrance of the fort against sudden attack. It is interesting to know that a portion of this earthen rampart raised by Enda himself is still to be seen on the western

side of the rath levelled low by time, but still some thirteen yards in thickness and several feet in height.

From Rossory Enda went to Killany, in the co. Louth, and there within the bounds of his own principality he set about the construction of a monastery for himself and such religious men as might join him in the service of God. Here also he directed the workmen in the construction of the buildings, and it seems that his sister, too, had a second religious house not far distant, where she appears to have spent a portion of her time. A party of freebooters once passed by laden with booty where Enda and his men were working. The tribesmen siezed their weapons to attack the marauders, and Enda himself caught up one of the poles sunk in the soil for a rampart to join in the fray. Just then his sister, who happened to be present, told him to put his hand to his head and remember whose soldier he was. Enda did so, and feeling the tonsure that he wore, he remembered that he was the soldier of Christ, and cast aside at once both his weapon and the spirit of strife that was excited within him. So his sister Fanchea was, as it were, his good angel, and he was always obedient to her instructions.

Enda, however, was still only a novice in the religious life, and, therefore, not well qualified to be a guide for others. So his sister said to him, "Go thou to Britain, to the monastery of Rosnat, and there become the humble disciple of Mancenus, the head of that monastery."[1] This monastery of Rosnat is by some writers placed in the valley of Rosina, in Wales, where a certain St. Manchen is said to have founded a religious house. We are inclined to agree with Skene that it was rather the celebrated monastery known as Candida Casa, or Whithern, founded by St. Ninian at the extremity of the peninsula of Galloway. This religious house was also known as the Magnum Monasterium, and sometimes as the monastery of Rosnat. It was dedicated to St. Martin of Tours, and hence it is sometimes called the House of Martin. We are here on firm ground, for we have the express testimony of Bede that Ninian, or Ninias, "had been regularly instructed in Rome in the faith and the mysteries of the truth," that his episcopal see was named after St. Martin, that it was in the province of Bernicia, and that there Ninian had built a stately church, generally called Candida Casa, or the White House, because it was

[1] "Vade ad Brittaniam ad Rosnatum monasterium, et esto humilis discipulus Manceni, Magistri illius monasterii." *Vita S. Endei.*

built of stone, which was not usual amongst the Britons.[1] This is a most important statement of Bede, for, as we shall see, very many of the founders of the earliest and the greatest of our Irish monasteries were trained at Whithern, and the founder of Whithern himself was trained at Rome in the faith and mysteries of religion, thus directly connecting the fathers of Irish monasticism with the discipline and dogma of Rome.

It is said that St. Ninian, on his return from Rome, called to see the great St. Martin, and that he received from the latter masons to build him a church, as the Britons were not then skilled in stone-work. Ninian was actually building Candida Casa in A.D. 397, when he heard of the death of St. Martin; and, accordingly, when the building was finished he dedicated it to his deceased friend and patron, the great founder of monasticism in Gaul. This fixes the date of its foundation with sufficient accuracy. Candida Casa became, under St. Ninian and his successors, during the fifth century, a great seminary of sanctity and learning, and undoubtedly was one of the chief sources from which Irish monasticism was derived.

Usher quotes an ancient Irish life of St. Ninian,[2] in which it is stated that in his old age, Ninian, who is there said to have been an Irishman, deserted Candida Casa at the earnest request of his mother and of other relations also, and founded a monastery in a beautiful spot called Cluain Conor, where he died several years afterwards. Bede, however, distinctly says that his remains *are* in Candida Casa. St. Cairnech, to whom we have already referred as one of the co-operators of St. Patrick in the reform of the Brehon Laws, appears to have been a successor of Ninian at Candida Casa, for, in his Life, it is described as the monastery of Cairnech. Afterwards, it is said, he came to Erin, and singularly enough, is described as "the first Bishop of the Clan Niall, the first martyr, and the first monk of Erin, and the first Brehon (that is Christian Brehon), of the men of Erin also."[3] Cairnech was thus, even during the life of St. Patrick, a connecting link between Candida Casa and the North of Ireland; and hence we find that in subsequent years several of our earliest saints repaired to that great seminary to be trained in learning and the discipline of the monastic life. Amongst these may be mentioned Tighernac of Clones and Eugenius of Ardstraw. The former in his Life is said to have been trained in the

[1] Lib. III. c. 4. [2] *Primordia*, page 1058. [3] *Chron. Picts and Scots.*, page 55.

monastery of Rosnat, which by another name is called Alba (the White), under the guidance and discipline of Monennius; and in the Life of the latter, the same "wise and holy man, Nennio, who is also named Mancennus, of the Monastery of Rosnat," is stated to have been the master both of Tighernach and Eugenius; and it is added that with his blessing and advice, after some years spent there, they set sail for Ireland.

Here we have the same Nennio, or Mo-nennius, called also Mancennus, to whom Enda is directed to go by his sister, and become his humble disciple. Rosnat was then and long after the great seminary of the early Northern Saints, before regular monasteries were founded at home; and hence Enda, a Northern Prince of Oriel, whose mother came from the Ards of Down, would naturally cross the narrow sea to the same great school which his countrymen frequented. In the *Tripartite Life of St. Patrick*, Manchan the Master is said to have accompanied the apostle to Tyrawley, when the chiefs and people of that district were converted about the year A.D. 449. Colgan says,[1] "that this Manchan the Master was the same person who elsewhere is called Mancennus of the Monastery of Rosnat, and that he received the name of Master from his great learning, especially in Theology and Sacred Scripture." The only point at issue seems to be whether Rosnat, the "Great Monastery," was in Galloway or Glen Rosyn[2] in Wales.

It is difficult to fix the period when Enda went to study under the Master at Rosnat. It was probably about the year A.D. 475, for he was still a young man, and as he died very old, about A.D. 540, we may assume that he was born about A.D. 450, and would thus go to Britain between A.D. 470 and 480.

From Rosnat, Enda, like Ninian and several other saints at the time, is said to have gone to Rome, and even to have founded somewhere in Italy a monastery called Laetinum or Latinum. But his sister, Fanchea, who loved him dearly, courageously followed him thither, and induced him to make her a promise that he would return home within a year; and this promise he fulfilled. He landed at Drogheda, which was probably at the time a portion of his father's kingdom of Oriel, and there he founded some churches after his return.

But Oriel was not to be the place of his resurrection. He longed for solitude—to be away from the world, and to be

[1] *Trias Tham.*, page iii. note 67.

[2] The word Rosnat simply means a sea-girt promontory, and would be equally applicable to Whithern and St. David's Head.

alone with God—and he found it. One of his sisters, called Darenia, was married to Ængus (son of Nadfraich) the King of Munster, whom St. Patrick had baptized; and Enda, hearing that certain wild and lonely islands in the western sea belonged to the territory of the King of Munster, resolved to ask his brother-in-law to give him a grant of these islands that he might there establish his monastery, and live in solitude and security—for the times were lawless, and even God's servants were not always respected. Ængus tried to dissuade Enda from his project, telling him that the islands were inhabited by a race of infidels from Corcomroe, who hated God and His saints, and that his life would not be safe amongst them. Moreover, he offered him a fertile tract in the Golden Vale in which to found a monastery, if Enda so willed it. But he still persisted in his project, and Ængus then made a grant of the Aran Islands to him, and to any religious brethren who might accompany him thither. This must have taken place before the year A.D. 484, which is the date commonly assigned for the death of Ængus Mac Nadfraich.

Aran Mor, the largest and most westerly of the three Islands of Aran, is called in Irish Aran-na-naomh—Aran of the Saints, for it is the holiest spot on Irish soil. In days past it was the chosen home of the Saints of God where they loved to live, and where they longed to die. One hundred and twenty seven saints sleep in the little grave-yard around Killeany Church; and we are told elsewhere that it will never be known until the Day of Judgment, the countless host of saints, whose relics are mingled with the sacred soil of Aran. We propose, therefore, to give a fuller account of the Aran Islands, both in the present and the past, than might, perhaps, be expected from the scope of this work. The islands are filled with both Pagan and Christian antiquities; the inhabitants are a singularly amiable and interesting people; and the physical features of the islands are very bold and striking. We shall say something of them all.

II.—The Isles of Aran.

These Isles of Aran, with which the name of Enda is so intimately associated, stretch across the entrance to Galway Bay, forming a natural breakwater against the wild Atlantic billows. They are three in number—Aran Mor, Inismaan or Middle Island, and Inishere, or the Eastern Island, but frequently also called the Southern Island. A glance at the

map will show that the islands trend to the north-west, opposing a straight wall of lofty cliffs to the waves of the Atlantic Ocean. Geologically the islands are a continuation of the limestone formation of the Burren mountains—"a gray and bluish-gray splintery limestone," containing in some places quarries of marble, which even in the time of Roderick O'Flaherty, some two hundred years ago, were worked for tomb-stones, chimney-pieces, and high crosses. The same author says the soil was paved with stone; in some places nothing is to be seen but the naked rock, cropping up everywhere with wide openings between the joints, "where cattle frequently break their legs."

The surface falls to the north-east, and this lower shore line of Aran Mor is broken into two bays, which afford shelter from the prevailing winds. But on the south-west, or seaward line, the islands offer an almost unbroken wall of rock to the long swell of the ocean, rising in some places sheer from the sea to a height of nearly three hundred feet, and hidden beneath the waters to a depth of from twenty to thirty fathoms. Here and there the harder rock stands out in bold precipitous headlands, or completely isolated cliffs; while at other points the sea eats its way through caverns, where the waves roll in with hollow, thundering sound into the bowels of the rocks; and the compressed air within forcing its way upward forms 'puffing holes,' through which the spray is shot high in luminous columns into the air.

Aran Mor is about nine miles long and two at its greatest breadth; it is separated by Gregory Sound[1] from the Middle Island, which is rudely elliptical, and about eight miles in circumference. This latter island is separated from Inishere by a narrower passage, about one mile wide, called the "Foul Sound,"[2] which deserves the name, for it is a rather dangerous passage, containing a hidden shoal with only six feet of water over it. Gregory Sound is wider and deeper, being quite navigable from shore to shore. The tides blocked by the island barriers rush with great force through these narrow channels, rendering the navigation very difficult and dangerous. The passage between the north-western extremity of Aran Mor and Golam Head in Connemara is called the North Sound—in Irish *Bealach Locha Lurgain*. It is about eight miles across. The passage between Inishere and the co. Clare—the more usual one for sea-going ships—is called

[1] Called also *Bealagh-na-haite*, from the overhanging cliffs.
[2] In Irish *Bealagh-na-fearback*.

the South Sound, and is about five miles broad at its narrowest point. There is a lighthouse near a place called Finnis Rock[1] at the south-eastern extremity of Inishere, which marks the limit of a very dangerous shoal, that stretches out from the island into the Sound. This rock, says O'Flaherty, was remarkable for 'ship-wracks.'

Aran Mor contains 7,635 acres, with a population of nearly 2,000, the greater part of whom, in 1901, could neither read nor write. It has three considerable villages—Killeany on the east; Kilmurry in the middle; and Oonagh towards the north-western extremity of the island.

On the northern slopes of the island there is a sweet, juicy herbage, on which sheep and cattle thrive very well. The grasses are intermingled with various medicinal herbs, such as the wild garlic, which is said to give a delicate flavour to butter, and the *rineen*, or fairy flax, which is believed to have wonderful curative properties. R. O'Flaherty declares that in his own time "beef, veal, and mutton are better and earlier in season here than anywhere else." He could hardly say so now with truth; but there is no doubt that the veal and mutton are well flavoured. On the shore, in his time, "were samphire in plenty, ring root, and sea-holly, or sea cabbage." The samphire is there still—the *crithmum maritimum*, or cranagh. It is said to have been used for preserves, and when boiled is frequently eaten by the poorer classes.

The crops consist of patches of oats, rye, and potatoes—the latter is an uncertain crop, whose failure causes great hardships to the islanders. Kelp-making and fishing are the two staple industries of the place. The kelp, or burned sea-weed, is used in the manufacture of iodine, and pays very fairly in dry seasons.

All kinds of fish abound near the islands—cod, ling, haddock, turbot, gurnet, mackerel, glassin, bream, and herring; besides there are lobsters, crabs, and cockles; but the appliances for fishing are of a very primitive description, and the boats are unable to stand severe weather. Many coarse seals are shot on the rocks, and sun-fish used to be speared in April and May from which a considerable quantity of oil was extracted.

All manner of sea-birds frequent the cliffs:—plovers, gannets, pigeons, ducks, and anciently hawks in considerable numbers. Some of these birds, says O'Flaherty, "never fly but over the sea, and are therefore used to be eaten on fasting days, to catch which people go down with ropes tied about them into the caves of the clifts by night, and with a candle-

[1] The lighthouse throws a red sector over the rock and shoal, which are also marked by a red buoy.

light kill abundance of them." "Here, too," he adds, "are Cornish choughs with red legs and bills."

There are several small wells, many of them holy wells, but in very dry weather the supply of water is exhausted, and the cattle must be removed, or water carried from the mainland. Fuel is very scarce, and now, as well as two hundred years ago, they have to burn cow-dung dried in the sun, when they cannot get turf from Connemara.

Inismaan contains 2,252 acres—less than one-third the area of the Great Island—of an equally churlish soil and rugged surface, yet sustaining a population of about 430 persons. Inis-Airther or Eastern Island, though much the smallest in area, had, in 1901, about 490 inhabitants. The entire population of the three islands then amounted to 3,050, of whom 56 belonged to the Protestant Church. Of the entire population 504 could read and write, while 143 could read only. The Irish language is almost universally spoken by the islanders, who are very conservative of their traditions, and are especially remarkable for their attachment to their native island—they are happy nowhere else. In person they are a tall and handsome race, frank and courteous in their demeanour, with a free and graceful carriage, for their limbs are very lithe and active. They wear shoes of untanned leather, which contribute to this free and easy movement, enabling them to spring from rock to rock with the agility of goats. They are moreover full of faith and piety, considerate and obliging to strangers, strictly honest, truth-telling, and certainly not greedy of gain, as we can affirm from personal experience. They are remarkably industrious—bold fishermen in those wild seas, and on shore are ready to carry on their backs the soil necessary to cover the arid rock, and enable them to cultivate their patches of potatoes. In a wet season they have an excellent crop on these limestone platforms, so lightly covered with clay; but in seasons of drought the parched roots can find no nourishment, and the potato crop is a failure. The consequences are sometimes deplorable; the poor people are half starved—sea fish, when they can catch any, and sea-weed when they cannot, being then their principal nourishment. Such were the islands of Aran when Enda first landed on those stormy shores, and such they are to this day.

III.—Pagan Remains in the Isles of Aran.

These islands contain, perhaps, the earliest existing remains of pagan architecture in Western Europe. In every

part of the three islands one meets with some monument of a great pre-historic people, whose works even in their ruins will outlive the monuments of later and more civilized peoples. We can only refer to them very briefly, but they are too interesting to be passed over altogether in silence. Those who wish for fuller information would do well to consult Lord Dunraven's admirable *Notes on Irish Architecture.*[1]

In each of the three islands are found ancient forts or duns, which are traditionally attributed to the Firbolg or Belgic race. After their overthrow by the Tuatha de Danaans in the great battles of North and South Moytury, it is said that the survivors fled for refuge to the remotest shores and islands of the western coast, and there built on almost inaccessible sites those wondrous forts, whose ruins are still to be seen on the islands and sea-washed promontories from Tory Island to Valentia.

It is said that many of this subjugated and exiled race returned from their wanderings about the first century before the Christian era; that they were kindly received by Meave and Aillil, then rulers of the western province; and that they received from them a grant of Connemara, the Isles of Aran, and other uncultivated districts, in which they strongly entrenched themselves against any possibility of future attack.

Not without cause did they take these precautionary measures, for it is recorded that Conall Cearnach, and other heroes of Ulster, sought to dislodge them from their desolate homes on those remotest shores. It is highly probable that it was at this period the Firbolgic tribes sought to protect themselves by raising those wondrous stone forts that still excite the admiration of every traveller. Such is the Bardic narrative, and it furnishes a more satisfactory explanation of those ancient stone fortresses along the western coast than any other that has yet been devised.

According to another tradition it was not the heroes of the North, but the Dalcais of Thomond, who sought to expel the wanderers from their island homes; and then the Clann Umoir built in self-defence those marvellous fortresses whose remains still excite our admiration, as a further protection against their foes.

There are remains of seven forts in the three islands—the first is Dun Ængusa, the Fort of Ængus.

This fort gets its name from Ængus, one of the sons of Hua Môr, a famous chieftain in our pre-Christian history. It is situated at the very edge of the highest portion of the

[1] Admirably edited by Miss Stokes, to whom Irish scholars owe so much.

sea-wall on the southern shore of the Great Isle of Aran. Nothing finer can be imagined either for strength or grandeur than the site of this fort. At this point the cliff rises from the waves 300 feet in perpendicular height. To the north and west stretches out the ultimate ocean; on the south the bold promontories of Clare go out to meet the advancing waves; and further on can be discerned in the dim distance Cuchullin's Leap (now called Loop Head), and Brandon Mountain in Kerry, faintly traceable against the sky. All around there is the naked limestone rock, and scarcely discernible from the rock are the giant walls that once formed the last refuge of the ancient Belgic race in Ireland.

The plan of Dun Ængus can be much better understood since the recent restoration effected by the Board of Works. This wonderful fort occupies an angle of the cliff, and in outline is semi-elliptical, with the diameter resting on the edge of the cliff, which itself formed a natural and impregnable wall on the sea side. The fort consists of a triple line of defence, and thus included a triple area rudely concentric. The wall of the inmost area is eighteen feet high, and about eight feet thick. It was built without cement of any kind; but really consists of two separate walls built close together of stones moderate in size, but carefully laid in horizontal positions. This inner wall surrounds a bare rocky floor, now covered with green turf, 142 feet along the cliff's edge, and about 150 feet in depth from the cliff to the furthest extremity.

This inner wall had an entrance some 3 feet 4 ins. wide, and quite perfect when visited by John O'Donovan in 1839; but its lintel has since been thrown down, and the margins broken. It has, however, been lately restored by the Board of Works. The middle wall is at a considerable distance from the inner enclosure, in some places more than 200 feet, but on the north-western corner, where it approaches close to the cliff, it is not more than 22 feet from the inner wall. Outside of this second wall there is a very extraordinary *cheveaux de-frize*, consisting of large sharp stones set upright, so sharp and so closely set that even to this day it is impossible for man or beast to make their way through them, even with the greatest caution, without cut shins, if nothing worse should happen. We have ourselves tried the experiment, and we did not escape scathless. Nothing more efficacious to break the ranks of an advancing foe, whether horse or foot, could possibly have been devised.

Beyond this *cheveaux-de-frize* there are the remains of a third wall, which enclosed a very considerable space, and terminates, like the other two, on the very edge of the stupendous cliffs.

This fort of Dun Ængus, with its triple walls, and its *chevaux-de-frize*, defending it all round to the edge of the cliff, was a fortress so formidable that even still a hundred resolute men could hold it against an army, at least so long as artillery was not employed to dislodge them.

Dun Conchobhair, or Conor's Fort, on the Middle Island is a still more astonishing structure, if we have regard to the time when it was built. Tradition ascribes the building of this noble fort to Conor, another son of Hua Môr, and brother of Ængus. It is larger, and better built than the Fort of Ængus, and is finely situated in the centre of the island at its highest point about 250 feet above the sea. The innermost enclosure measures 227 feet in length by 115 feet in breadth, and is oval in form. The wall had two faces and a central core; it has besides a considerable batter, and varies in different parts to from five to eight feet in width. On the east side there was a triple wall nearly eighteen feet in breadth, and twenty feet high. Its summit seems to have been approached by a flight of lateral steps in the wall, of which the traces still remain.

In this, as well as in some of the other forts, are the remains of *cloghauns*, or small cells, of beehive shape, built of stone, which were evidently the habitations of the defenders of the fortress. This fact is highly important, because it goes to show, that the beehive cell of the early saints within the *caiseal* or sacred enclosure was not a new idea, but simply the practice, which the saints had themselves seen in those pagan forts, where stone abounded.

There is another fort called Mothar Dun, on the Middle Island, which is both in size and outline merely a reproduction of Dun Oonacht, to which we shall presently refer. Its largest diameter is 103 feet, and its smallest 93 feet. It was so situated on the slope of the hill, that the summit of the rocky cliff overlooks the area of the fort.

Dubh Cathair, the Black Fort, is in the townland of Killeany, on Aran Mor. It was situated on an isolated promontory rising high above the sea, and separated from the mainland by a wall and fosse about 220 feet in length. The fort takes its name from the black colour of the stones with which it was built.

Dun Oonacht is also on Aran Mor, at its northern

extremity, and commands a magnificent view of the coast line and mountains of Connemara. In shape it is nearly circular, with a diameter of 94 feet, and is built of large stones, laid horizontally, but not in courses. The fort wall was very much broken; it has, we believe, been repaired since our visit, but it is still quite 15 feet high on the southern side. There are no traces of a *chevaux-de-frize*, as at Dun Ængus, and at the Black Fort. Dun Oghil is also in Aran Mor, and crowns the summit of the highest hill on the island. It has two concentric enclosures, the inner of which is an oval 75 by 91 feet. The name meant the Fort of the Yew Wood.

There was another large fort on the Southern Island, but even tradition has forgotten its name. There are also other remains of a similar character in these islands, especially on Aran Mor, but even their names have vanished from the tenacious memory of the islanders. At least one of these ancient forts, the Dun of Muirbheach Mil, was utilized in Christian times as a monastic enclosure, within which the oratory and the cells of the monks were constructed. It is not unlikely that all the stone caiseals on the shores and islands of the West, were similarly of pagan origin, but were utilized by the monks to protect their own religious buildings.

It is quite evident to any one, who surveys these ruins on Aran Mor, that the islands were in ancient times the stronghold of a warrior race, who preferred the freedom of these barren crags to serfdom in the more fertile lands of the interior. They were men of might, who loved their freedom dearly and resolved to defend it to the last extremity. They could not have subsisted on the naked rocks around them, and were most likely toilers on the sea, if not freebooters as well, who seized with strong hand whatever they could grasp by land or water; and then fled for shelter to their insular fortresses, where they might laugh to scorn any force sent to punish them. Yet they must have been men of bold hearts, burning with an unconquerable love of liberty, to build their eyries on the topmost cliffs of those storm swept islands. So we thought, as we sat, on the lofty cliff of Dun Ængus, three hundred feet above the boiling sea, surrounded by the grand old walls, which their hands had reared at least 2,000 years ago. And if the spirits of the dead can ever revisit the haunts they loved during life, we can well fancy how the ghosts of the vanished sea-kings would still revel on those lone heights, when the storm swept in from the west, and the scream of the sea birds was mingled on some wild night with the roar of the white-breasted billows.

It is strange that history furnishes us with no account of the final extinction of these bold warriors. Were they swept into the sea by the advancing hosts of the Milesian tribes? or were they the "infidels from Corcomroe," who dwelt in the islands when Enda first dared to set his foot on their godless shores? We cannot tell; we only know that Enda changed these pagan isles into islands of the blest, that side by side with the pagan ruins of sea-kings are the churches and cells of himself and his followers, which taken together, make the Isles of Aran the most holy and most interesting spot within the wide bounds of Britain's insular empire.

IV.—Christian Aran of St. Enda.

Tradition tells us that Enda came first across the North Sound from Garomna Island on the coast of Connemara, and landed in the little bay under the village of Killeany, to which he has given his name. He came over too in a stone boat, which floated lightly on the tide. It is there still; we saw it ourselves on the sea shore. "Where is it," I said to my guide. "Yonder on the shore near the boat," he replied, and keeping my eyes fixed on the boat, which was before us, and towards which we directed our steps in the gloom as to a land-mark, I did not perceive until quite close that the 'boat' was in reality a large rock, so like a boat in shape that a stranger could not tell the difference at any distance in the fading light! This spot, in Enda's Life, is called Leamhchoill, but according to O'Flaherty it is more properly called Ocuill, and it is nigh, he says, to the great *Curragh Stone*, in which Enda sailed over the sea to the island.

Corban, the chief of the 'Gentiles,' who dwelt on the islands, was at first hostile to Enda, and plotted against his life. But frightened by the prodigies which he witnessed, and convinced that Enda was indeed a man of God, he appears to have quietly given up the Great Island to the saint and withdrawn with his people, who consented to become Christians, either to the neighbouring islands or to the mainland.

Enda founded his first monastery at Killeany, close to the present village of the same name, and the fame of his austere sanctity soon spread throughout all Erin, and attracted religious men from all parts of the country. Amongst the first who came to visit Enda's island sanctuary was the celebrated St. Brendan, the Navigator as he is called, who was then revolving in his mind his great projects of discover-

ing the Promised Land beyond the western main. He came to consult Enda and seek his blessing for the prosperous execution of his daring purpose.

"Hearing how blessed Enda lived apart,
Amid the sacred caves of Aran-Mor,
And how beneath his eye spread like a chart,
Lay all the isles of that remotest shore;
And how he had collected in his mind
All that was known to man of the Old Sea,
I left the Hill of Miracles behind,
And sailed from out the shallow sandy Lea.

"When I proclaimed the project that I nursed,
How 'twas for this that I his blessing sought,
An irrepressible cry of joy outburst
From his pure lips, that blessed me for the thought.
He said that he too had in visions strayed
Over the untracked ocean's billowy foam;
Bid me have hope, that God would give me aid,
And bring me safe back to my native home."

—*D. F. McCarthy.*

Thither too came Finnian of Clonard, himself the "Tutor of the Saints of Erin," to drink in heavenly wisdom from the lips of the blessed Enda; for Enda seems to have been the senior of all these saints of the Second Order, and he was loved and reverenced by them all as a father. Clonard was a great College; but Aran of St. Enda was the greatest sanctuary and nursery of holiness throughout all the land of Erin. Thither came, even from the farthest North, another venerable sage, Finnian of Moville, one of the teachers of the great Columcille. And thither too came Columcille himself, a scion of the royal race of Niall the Great, the ardent high-souled prince of Tirconnell, who had not yet quite schooled his fiery spirit to the patient endurance of injustice or insult. And therefore he came in his currach with the scholar's belt and book-satchel to learn divine wisdom in this remote school of the sea. Here he took his turn at grinding the corn, and herding the sheep; he studied the Scriptures and learned from Enda's lips the virtues of a true monk, as practised by the saints and fathers of the desert, and as daily exhibited in the godly life and conversation of the blessed Enda himself, and of the holy companions who shared his studies and his labours.

Most reluctantly he left the sacred isle, and we know from a poem which he has left how dearly he loved Aran, and how bitterly he sorrowed in his soul when "the Son of

God" called him away from that beloved island to other scenes and other labours.

> "Farewell to Aran Isle; farewell!
> I steer for Hy—my heart is sore;
> The breakers burst, the billows swell,
> Twixt Aran Isle and Alba's shore."[1]

He calls it Aran, "Sun of all the West," another Pilgrims' Rome, under whose pure earth he would as soon be buried, as nigh to the graves of St. Peter and St. Paul.

With Columcille at Aran was also the mild-eyed Ciaran, 'the Carpenter's son,' and the best beloved of all the disciples of Enda. And when Ciaran, too, was called away by God to found his own great monastery in the green meadows by the Shannon's side, we are told that Enda and his monks came with him down to the sea shore, whilst their eyes were moist and their hearts were sorrow-laden. Then the young and gentle Ciaran, whose own career was destined to be so bright and so brief, knelt down on the white sand and begged his holy father's blessing, while the tears streamed down his cheeks. It was too much for the holy old man to bear; in the pathetic language of the Scripture he lifted up his voice and wept aloud—"Oh! my brethren," he said, "why should I not weep? this day our island has lost its choicest flower and the strength of religious observance." So Ciaran got his Abbot's blessing, and entering his currach, sailed away for the mainland; but he often turned his streaming eyes to look back on Aran, the home of his heart, and on the little cells where his brethren dwelt, and the oratory of his beloved father, Enda, and the billowy cliffs of the holy island now fast fading from his view.

There is hardly a single one of the great saints of the Second Order who did not spend some time in Aran. It was, as we have said, the novitiate of their religious life. St. Jarlath of Tuam, nearly as old as Enda himself, St. Carthach the Elder of Lismore, the two St. Kevins of Glendalough—two brothers, St. Mac Creiche of Corcomroe, St. Lonan Kerr, St. Nechan, St. Guigneus, St. Papeus. St. Libeus, brother of St. Enda himself, all were there.

There is no other part of Ireland so interesting as these Aran Islands, not only from their past history, but from the great number of Christian remains that are still to be found on their shores. No where else do we find so many and so various specimens of early Christian architecture—churches.

[1] Aubrey de Vere's Translation—*Irish Odes and other Poems.*

cloghauns, duirteachs, crosses, and cashels. To these monuments, however interesting in themselves, we can make but very brief reference.

Enda divided Aran Mor into two parts; one-half he assigned to his own monastry of Killeany; the other or western half he assigned to such of his disciples as chose to erect permanent religious houses in the island. This, however, seems to have been a later arrangement, for at first it is said that he had 150 disciples under his own care; but when the establishment grew to be thus large in numbers, he divided the whole island into ten parts—each having its own religious house, and its own superior, while he himself retained a general superintendence over them all. The existing remains prove conclusively that there must have been several distinct establishments on the island, for we find separate groups of ruins at Killeany, at Killronan, at Kilmurvey, and further west at "The Seven Churches." The islanders still retain many vivid and interesting traditions of the saints and their churches. Fortunately, too, we have other aids also to confirm these traditions, and identify the founders or patrons of the existing ruins.

The life of Enda and his monks was simple and austere. The day was divided into periods for prayer, labour, and sacred study. Each community had its own church and its village of stone cells in which they slept either on the bare ground or on a bundle of straw covered with a rug, but always in the clothes worn by day. They assembled for their devotions in the church or oratory of the saint, under whose immediate care they were placed; they took their frugal meals in a common refectory, and cooked their food in a common kitchen —for they had no fires in the stone cells however cold—if cold could be felt by these hearts so glowing with the love of God. They invariably carried out the monastic rule of procuring their own food by labour. Some fished around the islands; others cultivated patches of oats or barley in sheltered spots between the rocks. Others ground it with the quern, like Ciaran, or kneaded the meal into bread, and baked it for the use of the brethren. They could have no fruit on these islands, nor wine or mead, nor flesh meat, except perhaps a little for the sick. Sometimes on the great festivals, or when guests of distinction came to the island, one of their tiny sheep was killed, and then the brethren were allowed to share, if they chose, in the good cheer provided for the visitors. Enda himself never tasted flesh meat, and we have reason to believe that many of his monks followed the saint's example.

Yet their lives were full of sunny hope and true happiness. That desert island was a paradise for those children of God; its arid rocks were to them as a garden of delights; the sunlight on its summer seas was a bright picture of heavenly joys; and the roar of its wintry billows reminded them of the power and of the wrath of God. So they passed their blameless lives living only for God, and waiting not in fear, but in hope, for the happy hour when their Heavenly Father would call them home. Their bodies were laid to rest beside the walls of the little churches—their graves may still be seen stretched side by side, and who can doubt that their sinless souls went up to God in heaven?

V.—Ancient Churches in Aran.

Colgan has fortunately preserved for us a description of the old churches of Aran, written about the year A.D. 1645, by the learned and accomplished Malachy O'Queely, Archbishop of Tuam. It is very doubtful if O'Queely's list, even in his own time, was quite accurate; with its help, however, and such information as we were able to collect from the traditions of the people, as well as from other sources, we shall give as full a list of the existing remains as we can at present obtain.

In the townland of Killeany, O'Queely enumerates the following churches:—(1) Killeany itself, that is, Kill-Enda, pronounced Killeany—for Enda is pronounced Enna by the islanders. It was the parish church, he tells us, and gave its name to the village, which is close at hand. (2) There is the oratory of St. Enda, a much smaller building, close to the sea shore, in which the saint himself was buried. It is called Teglach-Enda, which probably means the tumulus, or grave-mound of Enda. (3) There was another church called Tempull Mic Longa, doubtless founded by the saint, whose name it bears, but of whom nothing further is known. O'Queely says it was near the parish church, but the place cannot at present be identified with certainty. (4) Tempull Mic Canonn, of which, says O'Queely, nothing more is known. (5) Another church called Tempull Benain, which gives rise to a very interesting question as to whether it was dedicated to St. Benignus or founded by that saint. St Benignus, the elder, was dead before St. Enda first arrived in Aran; so it is more likely this church was founded by 'Benen, brother of Cethech,' who was also a disciple of St. Patrick. This Tempull Benain is one of the most interesting ruins in the island, and is a very beautiful example of our primitive

stone oratories. (6) Another church was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, as was indeed usually the case in our great monastic enclosures. (7) Then there was another church called Mainister Connachtach—the Connaughtman's monastery—which O'Queely holds to have been distinct from (8) Kill-na-manach, the latter being founded by, or dedicated to, St. Caradoc—a British 'monk,' who is probably the same as the celebrated St. Cadoc, the founder of Llancarvan in Wales.

Thus we have in the single townland of Killeany no less than seven or eight churches and oratories, grouped together around the oratories of St. Enda and of St. Benignus. It is remarkable that these two alone now survive—perhaps because the islanders would not allow the vandals, who carried off the stones of the other churches, and of the round tower, to build 'Cromwell's Fort,' to touch these two more ancient and more holy oratories. There was also a Franciscan monastery on the sea shore, and it may be some of the stones were carried off for its construction also.

The oratory of St. Enda, called Telagh-Enda, is of course the most interesting of all these ruins. It is still wonderfully well preserved, and, although some repairs took place at different times, there is no doubt that the greater part of the original building still remains. The grave-yard in which 127 saints are buried surrounds the church. The grave of the founder himself, according to O'Flaherty, was a few paces to the north-west from the door of the church. The holy spot is sometimes quite covered with the drifting sand; at other times Enda's grave, and the *leac* or flag covering it, can be pointed out by any of the islanders. There were other primitive churches founded by Enda which still bear his name both in Clare and Galway; and we find that even in Meath, Limerick, and Queen's County, there are parishes, as there were once, no doubt, old churches, dedicated to his name. Killeany of Arran, however, was the most celebrated of them all—there he lived for more than sixty years, 'in his prison of hard narrow stone,' and there he sleeps beside the sea, surrounded by the loved ones whom he taught and sanctified.

Of the group now called by the natives the 'Seven Churches,' O'Queely mentions only two—the parish church known as Tempull Brecain, and another church close at hand which, he says, is commonly called *Tempull a Phuill*. It is highly probable that there were other churches also around Tempull Brecain, although it is now quite impossible

to ascertain either the patrons or founders. Dr. Petrie, however, whose opinion is entitled to the greatest weight, thinks that the other buildings whose remains are still to be seen at the "Seven Churches" in Aran Mor, were monastic buildings annexed to the churches. Tempull Brecain was certainly the central building of this group, and was of considerable size, the nave measuring 32 feet by 18, and the chancel 20 feet by 18½ in breadth. The latter in its present state seems to be the work of a later period, although portions of the original wall still remain. The masonry in the earlier parts is more coarse and irregular, and is apparently coeval with that of Kill-Enda. There is in the north wall a very peculiar angular-headed window, which seems to have belonged to the primitive structure, and is characteristic of our most ancient churches. The western door has disappeared; but a chancel-arch of exquisite workmanship has been inserted in the eastern gable. It is so beautifully built, and so Roman in its style, that Dr. Petrie came to the conclusion that it must have been executed by foreign workmen. In the interior of the west wall of the nave is an inscribed stone having in uncial letters the words OR AR II CANOIN—"A prayer for the two canons"—but who they were is quite unknown. It will be recollected that there was at Killeany, according to O'Queely's list, a church called "Tempull Mic Canonn," perhaps the son of one of those here commemorated.

The tomb of the founder, St. Brecan, was discovered about forty years ago, says Petrie, when a grave was being opened to receive the remains of a priest who, at his death, expressed a wish to be buried in that grave. On the flagstone was a cross within a circle with the words (s)CI BRECANI, which Petrie translates "for the Head (Capiti) of Brecan." It is obvious, however, that the first word is an abbreviation for 'Sancti,' and that the meaning is—"(the stone) of holy Brecan," which was doubtless placed over the saint by his beloved disciples. On the same occasion another stone was discovered within the grave with the simple legend in the rudest Irish characters ✝ OR AR BRAN N'ALITHER—a prayer for Bran the pilgrim. This seems an abbreviation of Brecan, and points to the identity of the pilgrim of Aran with the founder of Ardbraccan in Meath. He was of the Dalcassian race in Munster, and is said to have been great-grand-son of Eochaidh Balldearg, Prince of Thomond, who was baptized by St. Patrick. He came to Aran, which had belonged to his relatives, during the life-

time of Enda, who divided the island, as it seems, between their respective followers. An amu ing story is told by the islanders of this division. It was agreed that the two saints should commence Mass at the same hour, and then, after Mass, set out with their followers to meet each other. Th point of meeting was to be the boundary. Now Brecan took advantage of Enda, and began Mass before him, so that he was able to gain the start first. When Enda reached the high ground he saw that the other saint had not dealt fairly with him ; and, praying to God, "he fastened him and his monks, your reverence, near the sea at Kilmurvey, so that he could not stir an inch until the blessed Enda came leisurely up to him, and fixed the line of division at that spot."

In the church-yard of St. Brecan's Church are five graves covered with flags lying side by side, but only recently exposed to view. On one of the headstones is the following curious inscription engraved by Petrie (who did not see the graves), and still distinctly visible and legible, $\frac{\text{VII} \| \text{RO}}{\text{MA} \| \text{NI}}$ around the arms of the cross. The Septem Romani, or Seven Romans, here commemorated, doubtless, sleep together in these five graves, for two of the graves are much larger than the others, and are supposed to contain two bodies each.

At first sight it might appear strange to have 'seven Romans' buried together in this far off island ; but it must be borne in mind that Gauls, or Britons, who enjoyed the Imperial citizenship in the fifth century would be called 'Romans,' and we know from the Lives of our early Saints, and from the Calendar of Ængus, that many Britons, Franks and 'Romans' of the provinces came to Ireland in the time of St. Patrick, as well as in the following century, when the Anglo-Saxons drove them out of England, as the Franks had driven these 'Romans' out of Gaul. It is a touching sight to see their graves side by side in this remote Isle of the West—those citizens of Imperial Rome forced to seek an asylum in this quiet home of sanctity and learning, which was beyond the limits even of their world-wide empire. Their simple headstone has outlived the Forum and the Colosseum ; it is still standing on the spot where it was placed by pious hands thirteen hundred years ago. Even now the islanders point to it with veneration as the resting-place of pilgrim saints, but who they were, or whence they came, they have no notion whatsoever.

There are many other interesting monuments at the

"Seven Churches," which we cannot now describe in detail, such as sculptured stones and crosses with the characteristic Celtic ornamentation of the most elaborate style, including on one stone a rude figure of the Crucifixion. There are also the ruins of a curious building called the "Church of the Hollow," of mediæval date, which was probably the oratory and cell of one of the enclosed saints, who flourished in Ireland during the ninth and tenth centuries. There was also an ancient baptistry supplied by a perennial fountain from the living rock—one of the few in Aran—which points to the early custom of baptism by immersion, as then practised in Ireland.

The group of ruins at Kilmurvey was situated within one of those ancient *caiseals* probably of pagan origin, but utilized by the monks for the protection of their own ecclesiastical buildings. The ancient dun of Muirbheach Mil—a stout Firbolgic warrior of Aran—was thus utilized by Colman Mac Duagh, and then the place changed its name, and came to be called Kilmurvey, as if the savage old pagan had changed his nature, and having become a monk had founded the church within his stronghold. It was, however, founded, not by him, but by St. Colman Mac Duagh, from whom the Diocese of Kilmacduagh takes its name. There is another church close at hand known as Tempull Beg-na-Naomh—the Little Church of the Saints. It was a small oratory without nave or chancel, 15½ feet long by 9½ feet in breadth.

The Great Church, however, founded by St. Colman, was a very beautiful building, and was regarded by Lord Dunraven as the most interesting in Aran Mor. The nave was 18 feet 8 inches long, by 14⅓ feet broad; the chancel was 15 feet 4 inches in length by 11 feet 2 inches in breadth. The lintel of the western door is a single granite block, borne by a glacier from the mountains of Connemara, 5 feet in length by 2½ feet in depth.

Around the churches were discovered the remains of several cloghauns, or beehive cells, and a great number of ornamental brass pins, used to fasten the mantles of the ancient warriors. As these were found within the cells it would go to prove that they were originally built and tenanted by the warriors of Muirbheach Mil, that the monks of St. Colman simply took possession of the deserted stronghold with its cells, and then built their churches within its walls. The pins were of various forms and sizes, and of tasteful workmanship. No coins were discovered, which

would go to show that these pins did not belong to Danish warriors, and the monks certainly never used such articles. Inscribed stones were also found in the neighbourhood of these churches, but they have all unfortunately disappeared. This ancient church is near the residence of Mr. Johnstone, and some of the stones were probably used in building the house or garden walls. As St. Colman flourished about the year A.D. 620, this group of buildings must be regarded as of nearly 100 years later date than the oratories of St. Benen and St. Enda.

One of the most beautiful and interesting of the old churches in Aran Mor is that which is called in Irish, Tempull-na-Cheathair-Aluinn, the Church of the Four Beauties; that is, according to O'Queely, of St. Fursey, St. Brendan of Birr, St. Conall, and St. Berchan. It is, says Petrie, a small but beautiful edifice of cut stone, and was lighted by three small round-headed windows, so placed as to illuminate the altar, two being in the side wall, and one in the east gable over the altar. In Petrie's time this broken window was over-arched with ivy, woodbine, and thorny brambles. The late restorations by the Board of Works have removed these tangled growths, and revealed the little church in something of its primitive beauty. The simple stone altar is still standing at which the four beautiful saints officiated, and a small chamber, 6 feet long by 3 feet 10 inches in breadth, can still be seen within the wall on the west side. It may have been used as a sacristy, or, perhaps, as the dwelling-place of a recluse. There are cloghauns close at hand, which were, doubtless, the cells of the four saints. Most interesting of all are the four graves lately revealed, stretched side by side, within a small enclosure under the wall of the church. It is truly a touching sight, which few can see unmoved, when they think of the simple and holy lives of these four beautiful saints; how they lived and loved together; how calmly and how sweetly they rest under the shadow of those holy walls, where they worshipped God; and how tenderly their memory is still cherished by islanders after a lapse of more than twelve hundred years. Close at hand is the holy well, whose crystal waters were their only drink; and near it a large cloghaun about 20 feet in length, which seems to have been the refectory, where they took their frugal meals together.

O'Queely's conjecture as to their identity is highly improbable, for the four saints whom he names could not have lived together, and certainly were not buried together

in Aran Mor; whereas everything connected with the Four Beauties would seem to show that they lived together around this little church, and are buried without doubt in the four graves, that are still to be seen side by side within their own enclosure. Such, too, is the continuous living tradition of the islanders. There was, doubtless, another group of churches at Kilronan, but all traces of them have disappeared. About a mile north-west of Kilronan are the ruins of Monasterkieran; close at hand is St. Kieran's Well, and the little harbour itself is still known as St. Kieran's Bay; which show that the gentle saint of Clonmacnoise founded a monastery in the holy island before he finally left its rugged shores.

It will be seen that Aran Mor is pre-eminently a holy island, and well deserves its name, Aran of the Saints. It had four distinct groups of churches, the ruins of most of which are still visible, and from every point of view it is well worthy of a visit. In ancient times the holy island was a favourite place of pilgrimage, where the saints loved to live and die, for its soil was deemed to be holy ground. And it should still be a place of pilgrimage for every Irishman, who loves the ancient glories of his native land. He will during his visit see many things to instruct and edify him, and teach him to love the ruins of holy Ireland 'with a love far brought from out the storied past,' but elevated and purified by the contemplation of holiness and self-denial.

There are numerous and interesting ruins of a similar character, both pagan and Christian on the Middle and on the Eastern Island also. We cannot, however, describe them at present; let us hope that we have said enough to awaken a more general interest in those ancient sanctuaries. The history of the Holy Islands of the West is yet to be written, and it will be a story full of sacred and romantic interest.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE SCHOOL OF ST. FINNIAN OF CLONARD.

"I would the great world grew like thee,
Who grewest not alone in power
And knowledge, but by year and hour
In reverence and in charity."

—*Tennyson.*

I.—Preliminary Sketch of Christian Schools.

We have said that as Aran was the novitiate, so Clonard was the great college of the Irish Saints of the Second Order. Before, however, we proceed to give an account of this great seminary and its founder, it will be useful to give a short sketch of the Christian Schools up to that period.

Of Christian Schools, in the modern sense of the word, there were none, and there could be none, during the firs three centuries of the Church's history. She had then to struggle for a bare existence against the most powerful enemies; neither her worship nor her schools would be sanctioned, or even tolerated by the Roman Empire. Yet it was even then essential to train the clergy in sacred learning, and to instruct the people in the saving truths of faith. But, as a rule, this was done privately and unostentatiously in the catacombs; in the houses of the bishops when they had any fixed residence; and very frequently in the private grounds or private houses of wealthy and influential Christians.

The first Christian School, really worthy of the name, so far as we can judge, was established at Alexandria about the year A.D. 180. It became famous as a catechetical school, or school of dogma, and was conducted by several illustrious men—Pantaenus, Origen, Dionysius, and others—whose learning was celebrated throughout the whole Church, and whose lectures and writings exercised a very wide and enduring influence on their own, as well as on later generations. But this was rather a school of theology than of general literature, and designed more for adult inquirers, both male and female, than for the systematic instruction of the young. Similar schools were afterwards founded at Antioch, at Caesarea, at Edessa, and subsequently at Nisibis in Armenia.

Even during the centuries when those schools of dogma were most flourishing, young Christians found it necessary to frequent the schools of the pagans for the purpose of obtaining a professional or general education. The masters were pagan; the books were the ancient classics of Greek and Rome; and the majority of the pupils in most cases belonged to the old pagan religion. But it was a case of absolute necessity, as St. Jerome says; and they should either forfeit the culture, or face the danger. The most celebrated of those schools was at Athens, and there we find together under a pagan professor of Rhetoric, St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nazianzen and Julian, afterwards the Apostate, on the same benches with sons of pagan senators and scoffing rhetors.

Christians might not be teachers in such schools, for they would have to explain the mythology, and observe the festivals, and in other respects honour the gods of Greece and Rome. But Christians were sometimes allowed to attend the lectures of distinguished teachers, guarding themselves against the dangers that might arise from the influence of the teachers, of their companions, and of the pagan authors. It is true, indeed, the more rigid Christians denounced the whole system as not only dangerous, but essentially wrong and immoral. They preferred to do without this mental culture, rather than obtain it at so much peril to their own souls. They censured even the study of the pagan authors under the guidance of Christian teachers. The false maxims of their philosophers would make some impression, they alleged, on the retentive and plastic minds of the young; the stories of the loves of their gods and goddesses would sully the purity of innocent hearts; and the coarseness of the thoughts could not be effectually screened by eloquence of language and mere beauty of literary form. The study of the Sacred Scriptures ought to be enough for all true Christians, whose sole aim should be to purify the heart and elevate their thoughts to God and heavenly things.

Fortunately these strict principles were not generally followed in practice. Most of the Greek and Latin Fathers not only studied the classics, but availed themselves of the lectures of the most celebrated professors of their own time, whether Christian or pagan; and so they were enabled to meet their opponents on equal terms—to refute the philosophers by philosophy, and the rhetoricians by rhetoric, to point out the turpitude of the gods of Greece and Rome, and to contrast in glowing language of the most fervid and lofty eloquence, the nobility of Christian doctrine, and the purity

of Christian morals with the false ethics and unclean practices of the pagan religion.

In the fifth century, however, of the Christian era a change gradually took place. With the decline of paganism the great schools in the various cities of the empire began to decay, and were finally closed during the reign of Justinian. Meanwhile episcopal schools for the education of the clergy were further developed and enlarged. St. Augustine at Hippo, St. Ambrose at Milan, St. Eusebius at Arles, had founded establishments of this kind, and the fame of those great and learned prelates soon attracted large numbers of pupils to their episcopal seminaries. The Churches of Africa eagerly sought for pupils of St. Augustine's school to fill the vacancies occurring in their sees, and many other pupils from the more celebrated of these seminaries were raised to the highest dignities in the Church.

But with the spread of monasteries in the West during the fourth and fifth centuries a new and vigorous impulse was given not only to all branches of sacred learning, but indirectly to profane literature also. Sacred reading and sacred study was deemed an essential portion of monastic work. Legere, orare, laborare—study, prayer, and labour—was the daily work of the monk; and if it was not always the task of the individual it certainly was of the community. Of course the sacred volume was the primary object of their study; but almost all branches of human learning are aids to the study and right understanding of Scripture, and were cultivated for that purpose.

Then again, monasticism was, as we have seen, intended to be self-sufficing. It was a world of its own, a city of God, producing for itself all that is needed in the physical and moral order. So the monks found it necessary to cultivate the ornamental as well as the useful arts of life. They delved and sowed and reaped; but they also built their churches, and decorated their altars, and wrote their books, and sang in choir, and computed their festivals, and healed the sick. There must be amongst them physicians, astronomers, geometers, and musicians, as well as moralists, preachers, scribes, and illuminators. Every branch of human knowledge was useful, if not necessary, for a great monastery, and they all came to be cultivated in the great monastic schools.

One of the earliest and most celebrated of these schools in the West was that founded by the illustrious John Cassian near Marseilles, between the years A.D. 415-420. No man was

better qualified than Cassian to introduce the monasticism of Egypt into Europe. He spent the earlier years of his life at a monastery in Bethlehem, then he retired to the Thebaid for seven years, conversing with the Fathers of the Desert, whilst closely observing their religious exercises, and the daily routine of their lives. Afterwards he visited Constantinople, Rome, and even the far distant Churches of Mesopotamia. At length about A.D. 415 he settled down in the neighbourhood of Marseilles, then as in Cicero's time famous for intellectual pursuits, and there founded the celebrated monastery of St. Victor, which was the nursery of many of the greatest prelates of the fifth century. He gave himself up with all zeal to the propagation of monasticism in the West; and with this view wrote twelve books of Monastic Institutes, in which he deals at great length with the nature of the monastic life, its aids, and its hindrances. In the twenty-four books of his 'Conferences'—Collationes—he deals with the eremitical life as he saw it in Egypt, and purports to give the discourses of the Egyptian Fathers, whom he had himself seen and heard. These works have been always highly prized in the Church, although the author in one or two of his 'Conferences' is supposed to have touched too closely on the errors of Semi-Pelagianism.

The most celebrated disciple of John Cassian was St. Honoratus of Arles, the founder of the famous monastery of Lerins. There he put in practice the divine maxims of Cassian, and changed that barren island, which he found covered with brushwood and filled with serpents, into a garden of Eden, where man once more walked in innocence with God; and bounteous nature rewarded the incessant labour of the monks with fruits of choicest flavour and flowers of richest hues. He was taken away much against his will from his beloved island and made Bishop of Arles; but he survived only two years, dying in the year A.D. 429, just at the time that St. Patrick, his disciple, was preparing to come to Ireland. A similar monastery and monastic school was about the same time, and under the same influence, founded by St. Germanus at Auxerre, as we have already seen, when speaking of St. Patrick's training for the Irish mission.

It is in these cradles of western monasticism that we must try to find the true character of the monasticism, as well as of the discipline and ritual, which St. Patrick introduced into Ireland. If, as the *Tripartite* asserts, St. Patrick spent some thirty years in France and Italy, and the islands of the Tyrrhene Sea, preparing for the work for which Providence

destined him in Ireland, he had ample time to visit all their celebrated monasteries, and doubtless spent some of these years not only at Marmoutier of St. Martin, and with St. German at Auxerre, but also with Cassian at St. Victor's, and with Honoratus in Lerins, and probably also at Arles. The *Tripartite* states distinctly that first of all he resolved to go to Rome, the citadel and mistress of Christian faith and doctrine, in order that he might draw from these fountains of true wisdom and orthodox doctrine; that he went to France and even beyond the Alps to the southern region of Italy where he found Germanus, then a most famous bishop, with whom he read, like another Paul at the feet of Gamaliel, the ecclesiastical canons, serving God in labour, in fasting, in chastity, in compunction, and in love of God and his neighbour. The same writer adds that he went to St. Martin's of Tours to receive tonsure, and that he studied at Arles—or what he calls *insula Aralanensis*—which he seems to confound with the city of St. Germanus.

We are also told that when he was in the Tyrrhene Sea[1] he met three other Patricks, which is not at all unlikely, for Patrick was a common name, and the great monastery of Lerins had attracted strangers from every part of the Christian world, who had established themselves in some of the neighbouring islets. These three Patricks lived together in a rocky cave between the cliff and the sea, and our Patrick wished to live with them in the solitary service of God. But it was only for a time, for God had destined him for another and loftier purpose. It is quite evident, however, that Patrick was trained under the greatest masters of the spiritual life, and in the greatest monastic schools of the Western Church. These considerations will also serve to explain why the Irish Church of the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries was so monastic in its character and tendencies, why the religious houses rather than the cathedrals were the centres of its spiritual life, and also why its greatest schools were in the halls of the cloister, and its greatest scholars wore the frontal tonsure and the monk's cowl.

Yet St. Patrick did not himself establish monasteries or monastic schools in Ireland. His work was to preach, to baptize, to ordain, to found churches. Monasteries are the outcome of an existing Church. The nation must become Christian before the Church could in any wide sense become monastic. It was always so, even in the time of the Apostles.

[1] "In the Islands of the Tyrrhene Sea."—*Fiacc's Hymn.*

They did not found monasteries or monastic schools, or colleges of any kind. They had other and more urgent work on hand. It was only after Christianity took hold of men's minds that the nobler and more grateful hearts amongst them sought to realize the Gospel ideal of Christian perfection.

Even in the time of St. Patrick, however, there were monks and nuns in Ireland, as we have already seen. He himself expressly declares it. "The sons of the Scots," he says, "and the daughters of the princes became monks and virgins of Christ." And he tells a touching story of an Irish maiden of noble birth and of great beauty—pulcherrima—whom he himself baptized: "A few days afterwards the maiden came to me and told me that she got an intimation from God to become a virgin of Christ, and thus become nigh to God. Thanks be to Him—on the sixth day after, she perfectly and ardently embraced that vocation; and so do all the virgins of Christ, even against the will of their parents, from whom they patiently endure reproaches." [1]

With such ardour did the noble sons and daughters of the Scottic race advance in the paths of perfection. And therefore Patrick loved them so dearly that he would not leave them, as he tells us, even to pay a visit to his own country and his own friends. He sowed the seed, and after ages reaped the crop. The great monasteries and monastic schools of the sixth century, though not founded by him, were the outcome of that spirit of faith and love which he had planted so deeply, especially in the hearts of the young.

II.—St. Finnian of Clonard.

St. Finnian of Clonard is set down first in the Catalogue of the Saints of the Second Order; and his School of Clonard was certainly the most celebrated, if not the earliest, of the great schools of the sixth century. It was the nursery of so many learned and holy men that its founder came to be known as the "Tutor of the Saints of Erin." Twelve of his most distinguished disciples were called the "Twelve Apostles of Erin," because, after St. Patrick, they were recognised as the Fathers and Founders of the Irish Church; and the monasteries and schools which they established became, in their turn, the greatest centres of piety and learning throughout the entire island.

It must not, however, be supposed that all these holy men

[1] *Confession*, page 396, Vol. II., Rolls Series.

were themselves younger than Finnian of Clonard, or remained for a very long period at his monastic school. It sometimes happened that the disciple was quite as old, if not older than the master; for it was by no means unusual at this period for holy men to visit the monasteries of younger men who had become remarkable for sanctity and learning, and, placing themselves under their spiritual guidance, take rank in their humility as disciples of their juniors. Lanigan, keen and learned as he was, allows himself sometimes to be led into error by forgetting this custom, which is more than once explicitly referred to in the lives of those saints themselves.

Clonard—in Irish Cluain Eraird, and sometimes Cluain Iraird, that is, Erard's meadow—was very favourably situated for a great national college. Although within the territory of Meath, it was situated on the Boyne close to the Esker Riada, which formed the ancient and famous boundary between the northern and southern half of Ireland. It was thus a kind of neutral territory, open to the North and South alike; and both North and South availed themselves of its advantages.

Its founder, St. Finnian, was by birth a Leinster man. His father, Finloch, was descended from Ailill Telduib, of the Clanna Rory, hence his own patronymic, Ui Telduib. His mother's name, according to all the authorities, was Talech, and she belonged to the family of a Leinster chieftain. He was born at Myshall, in the Barony of Forth, county Carlow. The date of his birth cannot be ascertained; but if we are to accept the statements in his life, it cannot have been later than A.D. 470. When the child was born, his parents sent him to be baptized by the holy Bishop Fortchern, in the church of Roscur—*Roscurensem ecclesiam.* This Bishop Fortchern was son of Fedlimidh, and grandson of King Laeghaire. He was converted by Loman of Trim,[1] shortly after the year A.D. 432, the date of St. Patrick's arrival, and being a skilful artisan in metal work, he made chalices and patens for the use of the new churches founded by St. Patrick. At the earnest entreaty of St. Loman, he consented to become Bishop of Trim after that saint's death, but he retained, it is said, that onerous office only for three days. After his resignation, he retired into Leinster, where many churches are said to have been founded by him in a district

[1] Loman was a Briton, and Scotha, mother of Fortchern, was also a Briton, perhaps a connection.

up to that time only partially evangelized. The Church of Killoughternan, parish of Slyguff, in the ancient Ui Drona, still bears his name; it is a corruption of Cill Fortchern. The town of Tullow, in the county Carlow, was anciently called Tullagh Fortchern,[1] and it is said that the saint had a school there, in which young Finnian studied for many years.

When the women were carrying the child to be baptized by Fortchern at Roscur, it chanced that the holy priest Abban met them, and inquired whither they were going. They replied that they were carrying the child to be baptized by Fortchern. Thereupon Abban, moved by a divine inspiration, took the child and baptized him, giving him the name of Finluch, or Finloch, because he was baptized at the place where two streams meeting formed a pool of clean water. But the name Finnian was afterwards given to him as a more appropriate one—retaining the first, but omitting the second part of the compound. A cross afterwards marked the spot where the saint was baptized, and it was called the Cross of Finnian.

When the child grew up he was placed under the care of St. Fortchern, most probably at Tullow, and remained, it is said, under his care until he reached the age of thirty years. We thus see that St. Finnian was brought under British influence from his boyhood, for the mother of Fortchern was of British birth, and it was probably at the suggestion of his holy teacher that Finnian resolved to visit the saints of Wales, and perfect his education in the schools of that country. On his way, however, he stopped to visit a holy elder named Coemhan, who dwelt in the Island of Dairinis, in Wexford Harbour, and there he remained some time in the further pursuit of knowledge. Then taking voyage with some merchants, who were going to Britain, he set sail from Wexford, and arrived at Kilmuine, since called St. David's, in South Wales. [2]

Here he had the good fortune to meet three celebrated saints, who seem to have exercised great influence over the mind of Finnian, and through him over the destinies of the Irish Church—St. David, St. Gildas, and St. Cathmael, or Cadoc, or Docus. As Finnian was trained, at least to some extent, by these holy men, and as they are all more or less intimately connected in many other respects also with the early monastic Church of Ireland, it is well to know something about their history.

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[1] *Loca Patriciana*, page 152.

[2] The Life in the *Book of Lismore* says that he was then thirty years of age, and that he had previously founded three churches in his native territory—Ross Cuire, Drumfiaid, and Magh Glass.

Dubricius (A.D. 421-522), Bishop of Landaff, who was a contemporary of St. Patrick, and was consecrated by St. Germanus of Auxerre, perhaps at the time of his second visit to Wales, A.D. 449, or some years later, is exhibited in the doubtful chronicles of this early period as the first Archbishop of South Wales, and the great father of monasticism in Wales. His monastery at Llancarvan was the nursery of those great saints, whose names are still familiar both in Ireland and in Wales. Dubricius himself was, it is said, a grandson of that Brychan, who has given his name to Brecknockshire, and who was by birth an Irish chieftain, though settled in Wales. It is certain that the Irish monks, like Finnian, found a warm welcome in Llancarvan, both during the life of Dubricius, as well as after his death; and in that celebrated college were trained many Irish saints, who afterwards carried its learning and its discipline to their native land.

St. David, Archbishop of Menevia, is the most striking figure amongst the Cambro-British saints, and his memory is still venerated by all true Welshmen of every religious sect. Ricemarch, his successor in the See of St. David's towards the close of the tenth century, has written his life, which was afterwards dressed up in more elegant language by the celebrated Gerald Barry. St. David was born about the middle of the fifth century, and lived, it seems, till the middle of the sixth. His father was Sanctus or Xantus, Prince of Ceretica, and his mother was Nonna, a religious, forcibly carried off by this rude prince, who was captivated by her beauty. The child was born at Old Menevia, near the place where he afterwards founded his cathedral city at the extremity of that bare and bold promontory which overlooks St. George's Channel. St. Ailbe of Emly just then happened to arrive by divine guidance at Menevia, and he baptized the child. The young David was at first a pupil of St. Iltutus, and afterwards of Paulinus, who were both, it seems, disciples of St. Germanus of Auxerre.

In course of time David founded a great college of his own at a place called by Gerald Barry, 'Vallis Rosina,' which may mean either the 'Marshy Valley,' or the 'Valley of Roses,' for *rhos* is a swamp, and *rhosyn* means a rose.[1] It was, we are told, to this seminary that Finnian came on his first arrival in Wales. St. David afterwards became so celebrated that he succeeded Dubricius as Archbishop of

[1] Gerald Barry seems to think the name meant the Valley of Roses, of which he says there were none · it should rather be called the Marble Valley.

Caerleon-upon-Usk; but with the permission of King Arthur, who was his near relative, he changed the seat of his Episcopal Chair from the City of the Legions to Menevia, which was at once his birthplace and monastic home, during what he doubtless regarded as the happiest and holiest years of his life.

It is said that Finnian also met Cathmael, as well as David and Gildas, at the city of Killmuine in Britain. Killmuine of the Irish Lives is the exact equivalent of the Latin *Ecclesia Menevensis*, called in Welsh *Mynyw* or *Miniu*. The old monastic buildings still surround the cathedral, but are now much dilapidated. Gerald Barry, himself a Welshman, describes in his odd incisive way, "this remote angle overlooking the Irish Sea, as a stony, barren, and unfruitful soil, neither clothed with woods, nor diversified by streams, nor adorned with meadows, but exposed to perpetual storms and whirlwinds—the storms of nature and the storms of war."[1]

Cathmael is commonly identified with Cadoc or Docus, one of the most celebrated fathers of the Welsh Church. It is said there were two saints who bore that name; if so, Finnian's tutor must have been Cadoc the Elder. His mother was Gladys, the daughter or grand-daughter of the Irish chieftain, Brychan, who gave his name to Brecknock—so Cadoc "who has made a deep impression on the Celtic race," was not only of Irish blood, but was baptized, and trained up from his youth for many years, by an Irish anchorite named Meuthi, whose cell was in the neighbourhood of his father's castle. Afterwards he went to Givent in Monmouthshire, where he studied under another Irish master, St. Tathai. There he made great progress in learning and holiness—especially in the knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures, so that he was called Cadoc or Cattwy, the Wise. He was under Dubricius the founder and chief professor of the celebrated College of Llancarvan, near Cowbridge in Glamorgan. This became the most famous centre both of secular and sacred learning in Wales. A great number of young Irishmen crowded its lecture rooms, who afterwards became very famous in their own country, so that if Cadoc received much from Irishmen himself, he gave them even more in return. There can be no doubt that, as we shall see further on, he visited Ireland afterwards, and spent some time with those who were once his own pupils in Wales.

[1] See *Itinerarium Cambriæ*, page 102.

The influence exercised over the Celtic Church in Ireland by David, Gildas, and Cadoc may be estimated from the fact already referred to, that they are said to have given a Mass to the Second Order of the Irish Saints. This would seem to imply that these saints, most of whom spent some time in Wales, adopted the liturgy of the Welsh Church, which may have in some respects differed from the older liturgy established by St. Patrick. Finnian was the great means of diffusing the learning and practices of Llancarvan in Ireland. He taught at Clonard, what he had himself learned or seen at St. David's and at Llancarvan ; and thus became the means of diffusing the monasticism of the Welsh Church through most of Erin, especially in its southern parts.

The Life of Finnian given in the *Salamanca MS.* records many miracles which he performed in Wales. By his prayers and his great faith in God he dried a lake to get a site for a monastery ; he caused mountains to overwhelm the invading Saxons ; he drove away the serpents, wasps, and birds that afflicted the religious men in the island called Echin, whom he visited in order to derive consolation from their life and doctrine. It is evident, however, from the narrative that he spent most of the thirty years of his sojourn in Britain under the spiritual guidance of Cathmael, and most probably in his great school at Llancarvan. The years being expressed in the manuscript *Lives of the Saints* by Roman numerals, are always liable to error—the addition of an X will make thirty out of twenty, and a double XX added by the fault of the copyist would make thirty out of ten. It is, however, stated expressly that Finnian having completed the XXXth year of his pilgrimage returned to his native country with Biteus and Genocus and some other religious men of the Britains, who followed the saint on account of the great holiness of his life and conservation. By God's help they landed at Magh Itha in the south of Wexford,[1] at a port called *Dubglais*, whence they proceeded to visit his ancient preceptor, the holy Coemhan, who still dwelt in Dairinis. There was a Dairinis or Oak island in the Blackwater, which was known as Dairinis Molana ; but the island here referred to is "Dairinis of Coemhan," as it is called in the *Four Masters*, A.D. 820. It was in Wexford Harbour ; and, as we have already seen, Finnian when going to Wales spent some time with Coemhan in that island, so it is only natural that he should return to the scenes of his early years. From Dairinis

[1] See *Tripartite*, vol. ii., page, 632.

Finnian went to visit Muiredach Melbrugh, King of Hy Kinselagh at that time, and sought permission to build a church in his territory. The king received Finnian with all honour and reverence, and sent him effective aid in building a church at a place called Achadh Abhail, now Aghold, a parish church in the barony of Shillelagh, county of Wicklow.

Leaving some of his monks to continue his work at Aghold, he went himself into the neighbouring district of Hy Bairrche, and spent seven years teaching and preaching at a place called Maonaigh in the saint's Life. It takes its name from the Hy Maonaigh, an influential tribe who possessed that territory, some of whom having migrated to the North settled near the river Erne and gave their name to the co. Monaghan. The are now known as Mooneys.[1]

As we are told that Finnian, during his residence in this neighbourhood, sometimes preached before St. Brigid and her nuns, his sojourn there must be fixed before the death of that saint, A.D. 523 or 525. In his great love for holy poverty the saint refused to accept even from St. Brigid a gold ring which she presented to him as a token of her esteem.

Going still further north he founded another church at a place called Esker Brenain, which in the Irish fashion he fenced in with a circular mound and trench, dug with his own hands. One day he found beside his church a poor boy, who had been carried off as a captive by some robbers, and was abandoned by them near the church. Finnian took charge of the poor child, and finding him a youth of good parts, diligently instructed him both in virtue and learning, gave him the tonsure, and made him it seems, his assistant, either there or at Clonard. After the departure of Finnian he became his master's successor in Esker Brenain.

Then an angel appeared to Finnian and told him that he was to seek elsewhere the place of his resurrection. Finnian promptly obeyed, and rising up, under the guidance of the angel, he came to the place called Cluain Eraird.

III.—The School of Clonard.

St. Finnian seems to have founded his school at Clonard about the year A.D. 520, when he himself was in all probability not less than forty-five years of age. The place was

[1] See *Loca Patriciana*, page 204.

previously a wilderness inhabited by wild beasts, which seem to have made their lairs in the dense shrubberies that covered the marshy banks of the Boyne and Kinnegad rivers. We are told expressly in Finnian's Life, that a huge wild boar, which had frequented the spot where the saint resolved to remain, abandoned the place for ever. The saint threw himself on his knees in prayer, crying out in the words of the Psalmist—"This shall be my resting-place for ever; here will I dwell for I have chosen it." So he built his hut in Erard's Meadow, where the wild boar had previously kept his lair.

An Irish school and monastery of the sixth century was, as we have seen, very different from the monastic establishments of modern times. Finnian began alone without, it seems, a single disciple. He built his little cell of wattles and clay, for stones are scarce at Clonard, and with such help as he could procure he also built his church quite near his cell, and in all probability of similar materials. We know, indeed, that afterwards there was a *daimhlaig* or large stone church at Clonard—for we are told that it was burnt down in A.D. 1045 no less than three times in one week, which is to be understood, however, of the furniture and the perishable materials of the roof. This stone church, however, was not built until the place had become famous by the life and labours of the saint. When the little church was built, he fenced around both the cell and the church with a deep trench or fosse which formed the monastic enclosure, and, heedless of the world, began to live for God alone in labour and watching, fasting and perpetual prayer. We are told that he slept on the bare ground, that he had a chain around his naked body which sank into his flesh, and that he wore the same old clothes until they fell to pieces from his back.

His ordinary food was a little bread with herbs and salt and water.[1] On festival days he allowed himself some fish, or whey and porridge; but flesh meat he never tasted. It was not difficult to procure these luxuries; and what time he could spare from labour he devoted to prayer and sacred study, especially to the study of the Sacred Scriptures, for deep knowledge of which he became pre-eminently remarkable.

The fame of a life so austere and self-denying very soon spread abroad, and great numbers came to visit him. He performed many wondrous miracles; and, moreover, gave his visitors such heavenly instruction as showed that he was a man not only of great holiness but of great learning. He

[1] "His daily meal was a bit of barley bread and a drink of water. On Sundays and holidays it was wheaten bread and a piece of broiled salmon."—*Irish Life*

had all the science of the saints, for he had been in the great monastic schools of Britain; some said he had been to Tours,[1] others added that he had gone all the way to Rome—and these statements have come down even to our time, but unsupported by any satisfactory evidence. Then a great crowd of scholars began to gather round him; they were of all ages and came from all parts. Abbots left their own monasteries; even great bishops, some of them older than Finnian himself, left their cathedrals to profit by his bright example, and learn the lessons of divine wisdom that fell from his lips. To Clonard came all the men who were afterwards famous as "The Twelve Apostles of Erin." Thither came the venerable Ciaran of Saigher, a companion of St. Patrick, to bow his hoary head in reverence to the wisdom of the younger sage; and that other Ciaran, the Son of the Carpenter, who in after years founded the famous monastic school of Clonmacnoise in the fair meadows by the Shannon's shore. Thither, too, came Brendan of Birr, "the prophet," as he was called, and his still more famous namesake, Brendan of Clonfert, St. Ita's foster son, the daring navigator, who first tried to cross the Atlantic to preach the Gospel, and revealed to Europe the mysteries of the far off Western Isles. There, too, was young Columba, who learned at the feet of Finnian those lessons of wisdom and discipline that he carried with him to Iona, which in its turn became for many centuries a torch to irradiate the spiritual gloom of Picts, and Scots, and Saxons. And there was that other Columba of Tir-da-glass, and Mobhi-Clairenach of Glasnevin, and Rodan, the founder of Lorrha near Lough Derg, and Lasserian, the son of Nadfraech, and Canice of Aghaboe, and Senanus from Inniscathy, and Ninnidh the Pious from the far off shores of Lough Erne. It is said, too, that St. Enda of the Aran Islands and Sinellus of Cleenish, and many other distinguished saints spent some time at Clonard, but they are not, like those mentioned above, reckoned amongst "the Twelve Apostles of Erin."

We are told in the office of St. Finnian that he had no less than 3,000 scholars under his instruction, and that, too, not meaning those merely who were there at different times, but that there were so many as 3,000 together in his school. It might seem at first sight that this was a rather extravagant number, and that it would be impossible to find suitable accommodation for so many persons in this wild spot. We must remember, however, not to judge things

[1] See the Irish Life in the *Book of Lismore*.

according to modern notions. There were no school buildings necessary in our sense,—no libraries, lecture halls, or museums.

The instruction was altogether oral. There were no books except a few manuscripts, and they were very highly prized. The instruction was generally given in the open air, and no more suitable place could be selected for the purpose than the green fields around the moat of Clonard. If the preceptor took his stand on its summit, or seated his pupils around its slopes, he could be conveniently heard, not only by hundreds, but even by thousands. They were easily accommodated, too, with food and lodging. They built their own little huts through the meadows, where several of them sometimes lived together like soldiers in a tent. They sowed their own grain; they ground their own corn with the quern, or hand-mill; they fished in the neighbouring rivers, and had room within the termon lands to graze cattle to give them milk in abundance. When supplies ran short they put wallets on their backs and went out on their turn to seek for the necessaries of life, and were never refused abundant supplies by the people. They wore little clothing, had no books to buy, and generally, but not always, received their education gratuitously.[1]

The routine of daily life in St. Finnian's monastic school we can easily gather from his own Life, and from what we know of the monasteries in which he was trained. We are told in the Life that on a certain occasion he said to his beloved disciple Senachus, who succeeded him in the abbacy of Clonard: "Go and see what each of my disciples is doing at this moment." Senachus bowed his head and went; and lo! he found them all intently engaged at their various occupations. "Some were engaged in manual labour, some were studying the sacred Scripture, and others, especially Columba of Tir-da-Glas, the son of Crimthann, he found engaged in prayer with his hands stretched out to heaven, and the birds came and alighted on his head and shoulders." "He it is," said Finnian, "who will offer the Holy Sacrifice for me at the hour of my death," for his, it seems, was pre-eminently the spirit of holy prayer and meekness.

The study of sacred Scripture, as this reference shows, was especially cultivated at Clonard. It is the most sublime, and in one sense the most difficult of all branches of sacred knowledge. Moreover it is a study in which prayer and

[1] See Colgan's *Life of St. Columba of Tir-da-glas.*

meditation can do more for the student than mere human wisdom. It can be best acquired at the foot of the crucifix, and its best teacher is the Holy Spirit of God. But human wisdom, too, is necessary, and all the aids which it supplies; and Finnian made use of that, also, for his own advancement and for the instruction of his pupils. From his youth, under the guidance of St. Fortchern, he had been a diligent student of the sacred Volume; he pursued the same studies in foreign schools under many teachers; God's Holy Word was food for his mind and a lamp to his feet through all his days, and in all his wanderings.

It was this knowledge of the sacred Scriptures, in which, it seems, he excelled all others, that attracted so many holy and venerable men to the banks of the Boyne at Clonard, and made his name so famous in the early Church of Ireland.[1] For the Irish, though a newly converted people, had an insatiable thirst for sacred knowledge, and hung on the lips of every teacher who could expound with clearness and with power the mysteries and beauties of God's revelation to man. And we know of our own knowledge that it is so still. There is not a congregation in the wildest part of Ireland that will not listen with the most intense interest to a preacher who can clearly and literally explain the Gospel or Epistle for any Sunday. They will be more attentive then than at any other time; they will catch up his smallest word; they will take it home with them and tell it to their children; and the children sometimes will take it home to the parents. And they are right; for the words of God are far beyond any words of men.

It seems to have been this power of expounding the sacred Scriptures to his scholars that secured for Finnian such prominence in sacred learning beyond all his contemporaries, and filled the school of Clonard not only with scholars but with masters in Israel, who came with the rest to acquire divine wisdom at his feet. Hence he enjoys in history the glorious title of "Tutor of the Saints of Ireland." Of the Second Order of Saints, the men who shone like the moon in the firmament of our early Irish Church, Finnian has been always recognized as the teacher and the chief. He has been compared to the rose tree to which the bees

[1] Regressus in Clonardiam
Ad cathedram lecturae,
Apponit diligentiam
Ad studium Scripturae.
— *Hymn from St. Finnian's Office.*

from every quarter gather in order to extract the honey. His seminary at Clonard has been described by others as a wonderful treasure-house, where illustrious men from all parts of Ireland assembled together in order to enrich themselves with the wealth of ecclesiastical discipline and Scriptural knowledge. The hymn for the Lauds of his office has a stanza which may be imperfectly rendered in English—

> "Before three thousand scholars he,
> Their humble master, meekly stood;
> His mind a mighty stream that poured
> For all its fertilizing flood." [1]

The Four Masters record his death under date of A.D. 548, but it may with more probability be fixed about A.D. 552; Colgan, however, thinks he lived until A.D. 563. The Four Masters frequently antedate by four or five years, so that the date of his death as fixed by them is really equivalent to A.D. 552 of the common era, which date is, we think, nearest the truth. In O'Clery's calendar he is described as "St. Finnian, abbot of Clonard, son of Finlogh, son of Fintan, of the Clanna Rudhraighe (Clan Rory). Sir James Ware calls him Finnian, or Finan, son of Fintan [2] placing the grandfather in place of the father.

"He was a philosopher and an eminent divine, who first founded the College of Clonard in Meath, near the Boyne, where there were one hundred bishops, and where with great care and labour he instructed many celebrated saints, among whom were the two Brendans, the two Columbs, viz., Columkille and Columb mac Crimthainn, Lasserian, son of Nadfraech, Canice, Mobheus, Rodanus, and many others not here enumerated. His school was in quality a holy city, full of wisdom and virtue, according to the writer of his life, and he himself obtained the name of Finnian the Wise. He died on the 12th of December, A.D. 552; or according to others A.D. 563, and was buried in his own church at Clonard."

We could find no trace of his tomb, because in truth there is now no trace of his church. The hand of the spoiler has devastated Clonard perhaps more completely than any other of our ancient shrines. There was, we know, a round tower there, which is said to have partially fallen in A.D. 1039. "The Cloichtheach of Clonard fell," according to the Four

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[1] Trium virorum millium
Sorte fit doctor humilis;
Verbi his fudit fluvium
Ut fons emanans rivulis.

[2] The Irish Life also makes him son of Fintan.

Masters, in that year. But the stump remained down to the close of the last century. Sir W. Wild says nobody knows what has become of it; we believe it was used for the purpose of building or repairing the present Protestant church, which is a plainer and uglier building than even such edifices usually are in Ireland. There are only two relics of antiquity now remaining at Clonard, and it needs a close inspection to find them out. The first and principal is an octagonal baptismal font of dark gray limestone about 3 feet high (with its pedestal), 2 feet in diameter, and some 20 inches deep, with an opening in the bottom to permit the water to flow away, after use, into the sacrarium. The eight panels of the basin are beautifully sculptured with various figures in bold relief, supposed to represent St. Finnian himself in his episcopal robes, St. Peter, St. John the Baptist, the Baptism in the Jordan, and other kindred and appropriate subjects. The faces of the pedestal on which the basin rests are in like manner appropriately ornamented with various floral decorations. No date is marked, nor can it be exactly fixed; the work, however, is in the highest style of Celtic art, and though it cannot by any means be referred to so early a date as the time of St. Finnian himself, it is of very great antiquity, at least dating back to the eleventh century. Some persons fancy that on one of the panels there is a representation of Augustinian monks, and hence they say this font cannot be older than A.D. 1175, when Walter de Lacy rebuilt the abbey for monks of that order. But as far as we could judge, the assumption that the figures represent Augustinian monks is somewhat gratuitous. This interesting monument of ancient monastic Clonard now stands before the Communion table of the Protestant church. It is quite evident that the worthies who placed it there knew little of ancient Christian usages.

The other relic is a curious stone trough now placed within a few paces of the entrance to the church. It is 2 feet 2 inches long, 21 inches wide, and 15 deep. It may have been a *piscina* to receive the water that flowed from the font referred to. My Catholic guide told many marvellous things of the efficacy of its waters for curing various diseases, how it never runs dry, and how fowl and other animals that profanely drink of it perish. But the unbelieving sexton of the church promptly contradicted him, at least on two points. He himself had seen it dry, and he saw the hens that drank of the water live to lay many excellent eggs. There is also a curious head-shaped stone which was once a corbel in the old abbey, but is now inserted in the church tower over the door.

Like everything else of the olden time it is not only out of date, but out of place in its present position.

From the time of St. Finnian to Stephen Rochfort, the Norman Bishop of Meath, who transferred his episcopal residence from Clonard to Newtown, near Trim, we have a chronicle of the bishops and abbots who sat in the chair of St. Finnian. It is not certain that he was himself a bishop, although he is spoken of in his office as Praesul and Pontifex.

It is much more probable, however, that he was a bishop, and his successors, though frequently styled abbots, seem to have been in episcopal orders; and all of them certainly exercised episcopal jurisdiction. The school of Clonard, too, for many centuries retained its ancient fame, and from time to time produced distinguished saints and scholars. St. Aileran the Wise, who, like many other Irish saints, died of the fatal yellow plague that devastated the country in A.D. 664, is described as chief professor of the schools of Clonard. He was also, in Colgan's opinion, the author of what is known as the *Fourth Life of St. Patrick*, as well as of *Lives of St. Brigid, and St. Fechin* of Fore, in Westmeath. Moreover, he composed a Litany partly in Latin and partly in Irish, which O'Curry discovered in the *Yellow Book of Lecain* in Trinity College. Fleming, too, has published a fragment of a Latin treatise by St. Aileran on the "*Mystical Interpretation of the Ancestry of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" This fragment was found in the Irish monastery of St. Gall in Switzerland. It was first published by Fleming in A.D. 1667, and reprinted in the famous Benedictine edition of the Fathers in A.D. 1677. It may, perhaps, with greater readiness be referred to in *Migne's Patrology* (vol. 80, page 328). We make special reference to this fragment because we have no other writings of the Clonard school remaining, either of St. Finnian himself or of his immediate successors; and secondly because of itself it furnishes ample proof of the high culture attained at that early age in this great Irish seminary. The Benedictine editors say that although the writer did not belong to their order, they publish it because Aileran "unfolded the meaning of Sacred Scripture with so much learning and ingenuity that every student of the sacred volume, and especially preachers of the Divine Word, will regard the publication as most acceptable (acceptissima)."

This is high praise from perfectly impartial and competent judges, and in that opinion we cordially agree. We read over both fragments carefully, that mentioned above, and also a "Short Moral Explanation of the Sacred Names,"

by the same author, and we have no hesitation in saying that whether we consider the style of the latinity, the learning, or the ingenuity of the writer, it is equally marvellous and equally honourable to the School of Clonard. The writer cites not only St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and the author of the "Imperfect Work," but what is more wonderful still, he quotes Origen repeatedly, as well as Philo, the Alexandrine Jew. We cannot undertake to say that he was familiar with these two authors in the original Greek, but even a knowledge of the Latin versions in that rude age is highly honourable to our Irish schools. This fragment shows, too, that a century after the death of the holy founder scriptural studies of the most profound character were still cultivated with eagerness and success in the great school of Clonard. But evil days came upon this sanctuary of the holy and the learned, especially after the advent of the Danes.

It was plundered and partially destroyed some twelve times in all. But the Danes had half that work of sacrilege to their own exclusive credit—they plundered it on five or six recorded occasions. It was burned no less than fourteen times, sometimes partially, but on other occasions almost wholly, as for instance in A.D. 1045, "when the town of Clonard, together with its churches, was wholly consumed, being thrice set on fire within one week." On another occasion, in A.D. 1136, the men of Breifney, led even then by O'Rorke of the One-Eye, the husband of the faithless Dervorgilla, "plundered and sacked Clonard, and behaved in so shameless a manner as to strip O'Daly, then chief poet of Ireland. Amongst other outrages they sacrilegiously took from the vestry of this abbey a sword which had belonged to St. Finnian the Founder."—(*Four Masters.*)

Even in that century of nameless outrage and bloodshed, Clonard was still the home of poetry and learning, and to their shame be it spoken, it was an Irish chieftain and his followers who destroyed what the Danes had spared—the very men who claimed to have on their side "virtue and Erin," forsooth, while on the other was the "Saxon and guilt." But any one who has ever read the bloody annals of the long reign of Tiernan O'Rorke in Breifney will have some difficulty in accepting him as the representative of virtue and Erin. His rival, Dermod McMurrough, who was not outdone in villany by any other Irishman of the time, plundered and burned Clonard in A.D. 1170, and was aided in his foul work by Earl Strongbow and his friends from England; but next year he paid the penalty of his crimes, dying of a loathsome disease,

without the sacraments, accursed of God and man, for the *Four Masters* tell us that "he became putrid whilst living, by the miracle of God, and Columkille, and *Finnian*, and the other saints of Ireland, whose churches he had profaned and burned"—truly a fitting end for such a life as his. In A.D. 1175 Walter de Lacy founded the monastery of Clonard for the Canons Regular of St. Augustine, but in A.D. 1206, as we observed above, Simon de Rochford transferred the See of Meath from Clonard to Trim[1]; and so the ancient glory of the place faded away until now it is merely a name known only to scholars, without even a broken arch or ruined wall to speak with saddening eloquence of its glorious past.

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[1] The modern diocese of Meath is an aggregate of seven or eight ancient dioceses; hence it has no cathedral church, but takes its name from the ancient principality (Midhe) with which it is almost conterminous.

CHAPTER X.

THE SCHOOL OF CLONFERT.

"I grew to manhood by the western wave,
Among the mighty mountains on the shore;
My bed the rock within some natural cave,
My food whate'er the seas and seasons bore;
My occupation morn and noon and night,
The only dream my hasty slumbers gave
Was time's unheeding, unreturning flight,
And the great world that lies beyond the grave."

—*The Voyage of St. Brendan.*

The School of Clonfert was for many centuries the most celebrated and most frequented in the West of Ireland. From the earliest times the fame of its great founder, St Brendan, did much to attract students to its halls from al parts of Ireland. He was succeeded in the Monastery and See of Clonfert by several other distinguished scholars, some of whose writings still remain to show the extent and variety of their learning. In spite of the incursions of the Danes a continuous succession of prelates and abbots, whose names have been all handed down to us, continued in Clonfert to cultivate and encourage the pursuit of sacred studies. Even in more recent times its prelates were generous patrons of learning and learned men, and many important works connected with Celtic Ireland still remaining for us, are due in great measure to their munificence.

I.—St. Brendan of Clonfert.

St. Brendan, the founder of the see of Clonfert, and the patron of the dioceses of Ardfert and Clonfert, is in many respects the most interesting figure amongst the saints of ancient Erin. His travels by land, and still more his voyages by sea, have made him famous from the earliest times. Manuscript copies of his Seven Years' Voyage in the Atlantic Ocean, some of them dating from the ninth and tenth centuries, are to be found in every great library, and almost in every language of Europe. In our own times, poets and

literary men, both in these countries and in France, have been attracted to celebrate his romantic career, and their genius has helped to lend a new immortality and more attractive grace to his strange adventures. We can, however, at present only give the reader a very brief sketch of his holy but adventurous career.

St. Brendan the Navigator, as he is frequently called, to distinguish him from Brendan of Birr, was born on the sea-coast a little to the west of Tralee, in the County Kerry, about the year A.D. 484. The time, place, and circumstances of his birth can be fixed with greater accuracy than is usual in the case of most of our Irish saints. He was the son of Findlug, who was grandson of Alta, of the race of the celebrated Fergus Mac Roy; and hence he is frequently called Brendan Mac Hy Alta. His family belonged to the tribe called the Ciarri Luachra, and they dwelt, we are told, in Altraighe Chaille, at Rand Bera.[1] This place, still called Barra, retains its ancient name, and is close to the little promontory of Fenid, north of the Bay of Tralee.[2] It is said that the ruins of an old church, still traceable at Fenid Point, mark the exact spot where the saint was born. Findlug was a Christian, and, with his wife, lived under the spiritual direction of the holy Bishop Erc, who then dwelt at a place about three miles north of Ardfert, still called by the peasantry Termon Eirc. Brendan's mother had a vision foreshadowing his birth, in which she thought she saw her bosom filled with purest gold and radiant with heavenly light. This the holy bishop explained to signify the fulness of the Holy Spirit which would adorn the offspring then in her womb. A prophet of God called Bec Mac De also announced the future sanctity of Brendan, and the fact of his birth, to a rich man called Mac Airde, who dwelt at a place still called Cahir-Airde close to Rand-Bera. This rich man made an offering of thirty cows, with their calves, to the infant, and from his very birth took him to be the patron of his home and family.

The child was baptized shortly after his birth by Bishop Erc at Tubber na Molt, or the Wedder's Well, which has given its name to the townland of Tubrid, near Ardfert, and is still regarded as a holy well by the people, who hold a station there on the festival of Brendan. Numerous votive offerings of every kind, hung around the well, attest the faith of the people in the healing virtue of its waters.

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[1] *Leabhar Breac.*

[2] See Father D. O'Donoghue's interesting Paper in the *Journal* of the R. S. A. I. for 1891, page 706.

For one year the child was nursed in the house of his parents, and was then taken away by Bishop Erc to be placed under saintly fosterage. St. Ita had just then founded her convent of Ceall Ita, now known as Killeedy, in the great plain south of Newcastle West, in the county Limerick, and close to the northern limits of that Slieve Lougher range, which bounded the native territory of St. Brendan. The ruins of her ancient church are still to be seen, as well as the bountiful stream from which young Brendan must have often drunk, and also the lofty fragment of an ancient castle, doubtless built there to defend the church, like a round tower, during the stormy centuries of the Danish incursions.

The young Brendan remained under the care of St. Ita for five years, and no doubt during these years acquired much of that spirit of confiding and fervent piety in which he walked all the days of his life. He always looked upon St. Ita as a mother; in his temptations and trials he had recourse to her holy counsels; "for she was prudent in word and work, sweet and winning in her address, but constant of mind and firm of purpose."[1]

St. Erc, the tutor of Brendan, then took the boy under his own charge. He was a learned as well as a holy man, and is most probably to be identified with Erc of Slane, 'the sweet spoken judge of Patrick,' who was one of the high officials of the king, when St. Patrick visited Tara, and whose death is recorded A.D. 512.

Young Brendan made great progress in learning under the care of St. Erc. We are told that he read day and night under the holy bishop, and being still very young he had many privations to endure in the hermitage of the austere prelate. Once, it is said that in his thirst he cried for a little milk, such as he used to get from St. Ita's dairy; but there was none to be had from St. Erc, until a doe from the mountains came of her own accord to be milked to satisfy the cravings of the child. His young sister, Briga, came at this time to visit the holy youth, and was so much impressed by what she saw and heard, that she too resolved to renounce the world and devote her life to the service of God in perpetual virginity.

We are told that Brendan studied the Latin language from his 'infancy,' and it is most likely that the Psaltery and the New Testament were his principal books at this period. We may be sure, however, that the old Brehon of King Laeghaire did not leave him in ignorance of his country's

[1] *Life of St. Ita.*

language and history, nor of the sweet songs of her ancient bards.

St. Brendan remained under the tuition of the blessed Erc until he grew up to be a young man able to take care of himself, and fully instructed in all the learning that St. Erc could teach him. Then Brendan, with the permission of his master, and the blessing both of his master and foster mother, St. Ita, resolved to go, "and see the lives of some of the holy fathers of Erin." "But come back," said Erc, "that you may receive priestly orders from my hands before I die." "Go, my child," said Ita, "and study carefully the rules of the perfect fathers of the Irish Church, but do not visit often the holy virgins, lest evil tongues defame thee."

Fortified with God's blessing and this sage advice, Brendan travelled northwards to visit the already celebrated school of St. Jarlath, near Tuam. On his way he met Colman Mac Lenin, whom he induced to give up his worldly life and accompany him, it seems, on his journey. This Colman afterwards founded the see of Cloyne, and became its first bishop.

At this time St. Jarlath had a seminary for sacred learning at Cluainfois (Cloonfush), about two miles to the west of Tuam. He himself had been the pupil of St. Benignus, the sweet psalm-singer, and favourite disciple of St. Patrick. The Church of Kilbannon, with its old round tower, may still be seen in ruins a little to the north of Cluainfois. There is also a vivid local tradition that St. Benignus, St. Jarlath, and other saints used to hold spiritual conferences there together. St. Benignus, however, was dead at least thirty years before young Brendan came to this seminary. This "School of the Saints" is still vivid in the traditional memory of the people. St. Jarlath was particularly skilled in the exposition of the Sacred Scripture; and we are told that it was love for that branch of knowledge especially that induced young Brendan to come to this remote seminary of the West. St. Brendan remained some years at Cluainfois in the acquisition of knowledge, and the practice of all virtue. Before his departure he told St. Jarlath that Providence wished him to remove to Tuam, which was destined by God to be the place of his resurrection, and then getting his master's blessing he left the seminary of Cluainfois.

St. Brendan next travelled northward to the plain of An.[1] It is more commonly called by our Irish writers, Magh

[1] See *Latin Life of St. Brendan*, edited by Cardinal Moran.

Enna, which is the Celtic form of the 'Campus An.' It includes the wide undulating plain that extends from Manulla Junction to Castlebar. This district was colonized then or shortly afterwards by the tribesmen of Brendan, and from them got the name of Upper Kerry (Ciarraige Uachthair). There the Angel of the Lord appeared to him saying:—"Write the Rule that I shall dictate, and live thou in accordance with that Rule." Then Brendan wrote his Rule according to the dictation of the Angel; and it was the Rule by which Brendan himself, and the monastic families founded by him, have lived 'up to this day,' says the writer of the *Latin Life of Brendan*.

Unfortunately this Rule is no longer extant, or at least has not yet been discovered. It was in this plain called Magh Enna that Brendan performed a very striking miracle in presence of a great crowd of people. A young man was being carried to the grave, when Brendan met the corpse, and calling on the mourning relatives to have confidence in God, he approached the bearers, and with words of power bade the cold corpse rise up from the bier. At once the dead man arose; and Brendan gave him to his friends. Then they brought Brendan to the king, and told him all that had happened. Whereupon the king offered to Brendan lands to found a monastery, if he would consent to remain amongst them. But Brendan replied that he could not found a monastery any where without the permission of his master, Bishop Erc; and that he had promised to return and receive orders from him before he died. The King of Connaught at that time was probably the gallant warrior, Eoghan Beul, whose palace was on an island in Lough Mask. He seems to have reigned from A.D. 510 to 542.

So Brendan returned home to Tralee, and received the priesthood from his beloved master, the holy Bishop Erc. The death of St. Erc of Slane is noticed in our Annals, A.D. 512 or 513; and it was therefore a little before this time that Brendan was elevated to the priesthood, when he was about twenty-six years of age.

At this period we are told that Brendan built cells in his native territory for the accommodation of the disciples, who gathered round him, attracted by the fame of his sanctity. But at that time he founded only a few cells, and had comparatively few disciples; for he was yet young and almost unknown outside his own country. However, when he returned from his Atlantic voyages, his fame extended far

and wide; and he founded many monasteries both at home and in various parts of Ireland.

It was probably at this period that St. Brendan built his oratory on the summit of Brandon Hill, and there conceived the bold idea of seeking the Promised Land beyond the billows of the Atlantic. Brandon Hill rises over the ocean to the height of 3,127 feet at the north-western corner of the barony of Corcaguiny to the south of the Bay of Tralee. The entire promontory of Corcaguiny is one range of bare and lofty hills, at the extremity of which Mount Brandon rises as a huge detached cone overlooking the western ocean. It was a daring thought to build his cell and oratory on the bare summit of this lone mountain, which is frequently covered with clouds, and nearly always rudely swept by the breezes that rise from the Atlantic Ocean. But on a clear day the spectacle from its summit is one of sublime and unapproachable grandeur. All the bold hills and headlands from Aran to Kenmare, that go out to meet the waves, are visible from its summit. The rocky islets of the Skelligs and the Maherees are the sentinels that guard its base. Inland the spectator can cast his gaze over half the South of Ireland—mountain and valley, lake and stream and plain and town, stretching far away to the east and south. But the eye ever turns seaward to the grand panorama presented by the ultimate ocean. No such view can be had elsewhere in the British Islands; and Brendan while dwelling on the mountain summit saw it in all its varying moods—at early morning when the glory of the sun was first diffused over its wide reaches; at midnight when the stars swept round the pole that feared to dip themselves in the baths of ocean; at even—above all at even—when the setting sun went home to his caverns beneath the sea, and the line of light along the glowing west seemed a road of living gold to the Fortunate Islands, where the sorrows of earth never enter, and peace and beauty for ever dwell. It was a dim tradition of man's lost Paradise floating down the stream of time, for with curious unanimity the poets and sages both of Greece and Rome spoke of these Islands of the Blessed as located somewhere in the Western Ocean. The same idea from the earliest times has taken strong hold of the Celtic imagination, and reveals itself in many strange tales, which were extremely popular especially with the peasantry on the western coast. To this day the existence of O'Brazil, an enchanted land of joy and beauty, which is seen sometimes on the blue rim of the ocean, is very confidently believed in by the fishermen of our western

coasts. It is seen from Aran once every seven years, as Brendan saw it in olden times, like a fairy city on the far horizon's verge :—

"And often now amid the purple haze
That evening breathed on the horizon's rim—
Methought, as there I sought my wished for home,
I could descry amid the waters green,
Full many a diamond shrine and golden dome,
And crystal palaces of dazzling sheen."

Brendan was confirmed in his resolution to seek the Blessed Islands by a strange tale told by Barinthus, a monk from the neighbourhood, whose church of Kilbarron is not far from Tralee. One of the monks of Barinthus, Mernoc by name, had fled from his monastery in search of a desert in the ocean. Barinthus followed after him, and at length found him in the island called the 'Delicious,' from which they sailed further west, and came to the Land of Promise of the Saints—a beauteous land of light beyond the clouds and mists of the western sea, covered with verdant glades and flowery fields. But an angel told them to return home again, that this land of light and beauty was not yet to be revealed to men.

Then Brendan's heart was filled with only one thought to find out for himself this 'Land of Promise,' if haply it were God's high will. So with his monks he fasted forty days, and then choosing fourteen of their number he made ready for the adventurous voyage. Even the great St. Enda of Aran commended Brendan's purpose, and foretold that God would bring his enterprise to a happy issue. So they built themselves a large currach with ribs and frame of willow, but covered with hides, and taking with them oars and sails, and provisions for forty days they set out upon the trackless sea steering for the "Summer solstice."

It is not our intention at present to follow Brendan and his monks in their wanderings through the Atlantic. For seven years they sailed from island unto island in the Atlantic main, seeing many marvels by land and sea, following God's guidance, fed by His Providence, and protected by His power. At length, it is said, they reached the Continent of America, and found the place where they landed to be indeed a delicious country abounding in everything to gratify the palate and please the eye—

"The wind had died upon the ocean's breast,
When like a silvery vein through the dark ore,
A smooth bright current gliding to the west,
Bore our light bark to that enchanted shore.

It was a lovely plain—spacious and fair,
And blessed with all delights that earth can hold,
Celestial odours filled the fragrant air,
That breathed around that green and pleasant wold.

"There may not rage of frost, nor snow, nor rain
Injure the smallest and most delicate flower;
Nor fall of hail wound the fair healthful plain,
Nor the warm weather, nor the winter's shower.
That noble land is all with blossoms flowered,
Shed by the summer breezes as they pass;
Less leaves than blossoms on the trees are showered,
And flowers grow thicker in the fields than grass.

"We were about to cross its placid tide
When lo! an angel on our vision broke,
Clothed in white upon the further side;
He stood majestic, and thus sweetly spoke—
'Father, return, thy mission now is o'er,
God who did bring thee here, now bids thee go,
Return in peace unto thy native shore,
And tell the mighty secrets thou dost know.'"

Therefore Brendan, in obedience to the voice of God's angel, would not cross the mighty river that watered this all-beauteous land; so they embarked once more, and guided by Providence, they all returned in safety to their native homes.

After this voyage, which was soon noised abroad, Brendan became very famous, and crowds of holy men from all parts of the country came to place themselves under his spiritual direction. There can hardly be any doubt that it was then these villages of beehive cells and stone oratories at Kilmalkedar and Gallerus, as well as on the Blasquet Islands, were built for the accommodation of the disciples of St. Brendan.

But like Ulysses, Brendan had become a name, and had a hungry heart for much roaming, that he might preach the Gospel to the half-instructed natives, whom he had met in his journey through Connaught. So he left his native place, having founded the See of Ardfert, and crossing over the estuary of the Shannon, then called Luimnech, he founded a monastery in the island called anciently Inis-da-druim, or the Island of the Two Ridges, in that great expanse of water which flows up to Clare, near the town of Ennis. The island is at present called Coney Island, and some remains of ancient churches are still to be seen there, but probably of later date than the time of Brendan

About this time, too, he went to Wales, where he met the great St. Gildas, and journeyed still further north to Iona, as we know from Adamnan's *Life of St. Columcille*. It is said that this pilgrimage to Britain was imposed on Brendan by St. Ita, as a penance for a rash command given by him in Inis-da-druim, which caused the death by drowning of a too obedient monk. It is probable that in the first instance he went to the Scottish Dalriada, visiting Iona and the neighbouring islands; for it is only after three years spent in 'Britain' (which included Scotland) that we find him in Wales with St. Gildas.

During this journey he preached the Gospel everywhere, and founded many churches. He visited the Island of Heth, or Tiree, which is about twenty miles north-west of Iona. Kilbrandon in the Island of Seil, a little to the south of Oban, still bears his name, and Cuilbrandon shows where he made his temporary residence. He visited a place called Ailech in the Latin Life, which is probably Alyth in Perthshire, and the Sound between Aran and Kintyre is still called Kilbrennan Sound.[1]

We gather from an incidental reference during his Welsh journey, that Gildas had a missal written in Greek characters, which he himself had probably got during his sojourn at the Greek monasteries of Marseilles, and he invited Brendan to offer up the Body of Christ on the altar, and make use of this missal. When Brendan saw the strange characters he prayed to God for help, and "sang the Mass from this missal with the Greek characters, even as if they were the Latin letters, which he had known from his infancy." This seems to have taken place at Gildas' monastery of Llancarvan, in South Wales, and it is remarkable that Gildas, David, and Docus, or Cadoc of Llancarvan, are said to have given a new Mass, or Liturgy, to the saints of the Second Order in Ireland.

It was perhaps after his return from Britain that Brendan spent some time at the great College of Clonard, and visited the King of Tara. All accounts agree in making the two Brendans—the one of Clonfert and the other of Birr—

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[1] "Bute (Scotland) is said to derive its name from *bothe*, a cell, St Branden having once made it the place of his retreat, and for the same reason, the natives of this isle, and also of Arran, have been sometimes styled Brandani."—Pennant's *Tour in Scotland*, vol. ii., 4th edition, Dublin, 1775, p. 164.

[This note was sent to us by the late lamented Mr. Hennessy.]

disciples of St. Finnian of Clonard, who was known as the tutor of the Saints of Erin. This does not imply that Brendan might not himself be quite as old as his tutor, and he probably was so at the time. The saints were not ashamed to become pupils even of younger men than themselves, if they had anything to learn either of knowledge or holiness. It is more likely, however, that he spent his time at Clonard before his sojourn in Britain, and that it was after his return that he visited King Diarmaid at Tara.

On this occasion it seems he came to Tara on an errand of mercy, which was destined to have very important consequences.

King Diarmaid Mac Cerbhaill reigned from A.D. 514 to A.D. 564 or 565. His high steward, when going round the country to enforce the ancient laws of hospitality, was slain by Aedh Guaire at his Dun in Hy-Many. Guaire fled to escape the vengeance of the king, and took refuge with his uncle, St. Ruadhan of Lorrha, on the other side of the Shannon. But the king discovered his retreat, and dragged off the criminal to Tara to be punished for his crime. Ruadhan closely followed, and begged his neighbour, St. Brendan, who had by this time founded Clonfert on the Shannon in Hy-Many, to accompany him. Brendan did so; and thus both saints, with their clerics, and their bells, and their croziers, came to Tara to intercede for the criminal. But the king was obdurate, and refused to release his prisoner. All the courtiers joined the bishops in asking his pardon, but Diarmaid still refused. Then Ruadhan of Lorrha and "another bishop who was with him," incensed with the king for his obduracy, "took their bells that they had, which they rung hardly, and cursed the king and the place, and prayed God that no King or Queen would or could ever dwell in Tara, and that it should be waste for ever, without court or palace, and so it fell out accordingly."[1] Next year the king was slain, and after him no king or queen ever reigned again in Tara. The spot where Ruadhan and Brendan stood, when pronouncing this dreadful excommunication, was on the Rath of the Synods, which is still shown on Tara Hill.

St. Brendan founded one church at least in Leinster at a place called Cluain Imaire, now Clonamery, in the co. Kilkenny. It stands on the left bank of the river Nore, about two miles below Inistiogue. Brandon Hill rises a little to the

[1] *Annals of Clonmacnoise.*

east of the old church, whose ruins are still to be seen, and show it to have been of the most primitive type of church architecture.

Brendan, also, probably at an earlier date, founded two still more celebrated establishments in the West of Ireland even before founding Clonfert, which has always borne his name.

The first of these was the celebrated monastery of Annaghdown, on the shore of Lough Corrib, which he founded for his sister, St. Briga, and where he himself died on Sunday, the 16th of May, A.D. 577.

It seems that after Brendan's return from Britain, he paid a second visit to Connaught. During his first sojourn there he became familiar with the great plain stretching westward from Tuam to Lough Corrib, and doubtless also saw the beautiful islands that stud that noble sheet of water. In one of these islands, called Inchiquin, which is separated by a narrow rocky channel from the eastern shore of the lake near Headford, he founded his first monastery in the province of Connaught. It seems to have been founded about the year A.D. 550 or 552. He was accompanied to the island by his nephew, the Bishop Moennu, or Moinenn, whom he afterwards appointed to preside over Clonfert. With their own hands they carried the stones and built their cells and little oratory. Here, too, St. Fursey, who was a near relation of St. Brendan, received his early training, as we shall see further on.

When Brendan had established himself on Inchiquin, his sister, St. Briga, came from Kerry; for she loved her brother dearly, and was anxious to be near him for spiritual advice and instruction. Then Brendan built for his sister the convent of Annaghdown, on the shore of the lake a few miles to the south, and there she governed under Brendan's guidance a convent of holy nuns. The place afterwards became very celebrated and was greatly enlarged. A parish church, and later on a cathedral were established there, which flourished for many centuries as the chief church of O'Flaherty's territory, until it was finally appropriated somewhat harshly by the Archbishops of Tuam.

It was probably whilst Brendan lived at Lough Corrib that seeking after solitude, which has always had such a charm for pious souls, he went further north to the extreme west of Erris, and there founded an oratory and a cell that still remain, though in ruins, and still bear his name. The island of Inis-gluair, or Inishgloria, lies off the extreme west of

Erris, and is about one mile distant from the mainland at Cross in the Mullet. We have, not without difficulty, visited this remote and lonely island, and we found the place still teeming with recollections of Brendan and his few disciples, but we found only three cells on the island. It is a long, low-lying rocky island, containing only about twenty acres of fair pasture land for sheep. It is at present without inhabitants, for it is bare and barren of itself, and besides is separated from the shore by a shallow stormy sea, which can be navigated only in currachs with safety, and even then only in very mild weather. In broken weather, as there is no landing place on the island, it is absolutely unapproachable. Brendan's oratory is still to be seen, and the remains of two churches—one the Church of the Men, and the other the Church of the Women—the latter without the monastic enclosure. The cells have almost disappeared, and doubtless, in a few years nothing but a heap of stones will be left to mark the spot where these men of God slept, and prayed, and fasted, surrounded by the billows of that angry and desolate sea. A few paces to the east of the doorway of Brendan's oratory are two flags which mark the spot where the Children of Lir, whose fate is so pathetically told in Celtic legend, sleep in peace awaiting their resurrection. "After this," says the tale, "the Children of Lir were baptized; and they died and were buried; and Fiachra and Conn were placed at either side of Fionnghuala, and Aedh before her face; and their tombstone was raised over their tomb, and their Ogham names were written and their lamentation rites performed; and heaven was obtained for their souls." Inishgloria is one of the least known but most interesting of the many holy islands around Ireland.

According to an ancient tradition, no flesh can corrupt in this island of purity; even the bodies of the dead remain for ages free from putrefaction; their nails and hair continue to grow, so that people may there recognise the features of their ancestors, who left the world centuries before. This strange story is not corroborated by modern experience; but it is as old as the time of the veracious and legend-loving Gerald Barry, who, however, in his account mistakes Aran for Inishgloria.

It was in A.D. 556 or 557 that St. Brendan founded his great monastery of Clonfert. It was regarded as a very important event; and hence its date is expressly recorded in all our Annals. "Brendinus ecclesiam in Cluain fertha fundavit."—(*Annals of Ulster*, ANNO 557). The celebrity of

the founder soon attracted a vast number of students and religious men to this great monastic school, so that Brendan in his life is said to have been the father of 3,000 monks. Probably this refers to the number of monks and scholars in the various monasteries governed by him, who lived under his rule and obedience. But making the allowance even for this sub-division, there still must have been a vast number of students in that monastery on the banks of the Shannon. Its name implies that it was a retired and sheltered meadow, surrounded on one side by what was then a vast forest, and is now an equally vast bog. To the north and east it was bounded by fertile meadows stretching away towards the river, which at the nearest point is two miles distant; but in rainy weather the river overflowed its low and sedgy banks, converting all these meadows into one vast lake, so that the Cluain itself became an island. It is so called in some ancient references, which have been misunderstood even by Dr. Lanigan, who could not understand why it was called the "Island of Clonfert."

For twenty years Brendan presided over this great establishment; but occasionally left it for a time in order to visit his other monasteries. Hence he placed Moinenn over Clonfert as permanent prior, or Head of the House, so that his own frequent absences might not interfere with the permanent efficiency of the monastic and scholastic work.

Brendan died at his sister's monastery of Annaghdown in the year A.D. 577, as already stated, in the ninety-fourth year of his age. His remains had to be carried away by stealth from his western people around Lough Corrib, who loved him much, and by his own directions were brought to his Church of Clonfert, where they were interred with all honour by the myriads of his spiritual children, who crowded to his obsequies.

We find no reference to any writings of St. Brendan except the Rule already referred to, which he wrote at the dictation of the Angel. The great influence which he exercised in his own time was due to the zeal and sanctity of his life; and was felt for many centuries after his death. He has even now more—far more—than 3,000 spiritual children in Kerry and Galway who revere his memory as a precious inheritance and a bright example. The ancient cathedrals of Clonfert and Ardfert have been seized by the stranger, and are desolate or decaying. Inishgloria and Inchiquin are waste and silent solitudes. Annaghdown and Inish-da-druim are in

ruins; yet the tree of Christian faith and virtue, which Brendan planted, flourishes like the palm-tree by the waters, producing each year richer and more abundant fruit.[1]

II.—St. Moinenn.

This name is spelled in a great variety of ways. Here we shall adopt the form given in the Felire of Ængus, our oldest and best authority. The nominative there is Moinen, the genitive is Moinend or Moinenn.[2] His festival day, as we know from the same authority, and from all our martyrologies, was the first day of March.

As Colgan observes in the sketch which he has given us of this saint, there are some things concerning him which are certain, and some which are doubtful—we should say very doubtful. First of all it is certain that he was the intimate friend and associate of St. Brendan for many years, both during his Atlantic voyages, and when he was founding his monasteries on Lough Corrib's shores and islands. Secondly, he was chosen by St. Brendan from amongst his three thousand disciples to rule over Clonfert, and if he outlived his master, to succeed him in the See and Abbacy. He was in fact a Coadjutor to St. Brendan, chosen by that saint himself on account of his great learning and holiness. Thirdly, it is certain that St. Moinenn after governing Clonfert with great prudence and success, died in the year A.D. 570 or 571, that is six or seven years before the death of Brendan himself. In the scholiast's annotations to the *Felire* of Ængus, Moinenn is described as "bishop and comarb of Brendan;" and the *Martyrology of Donegal* calls him at the same date, like all our other Martyrologies—Bishop of Cluain-fearta-Brenainn. The scholiast on Ængus, from the fact that he and St. Senan of Iniscathy are mentioned on the same day, the eighth of March, which is Senan's

[1] From the late W. M. Hennessy we received shortly before his lamented death the following note:—

"In an Irish MS. in Trinity College, Dublin (Class H. 1, 7), in a tract beginning on fol. 84, two poems are copied, the composition of which is ascribed to St. Brendan (obviously of Clonfert). The first, No. 7, begins—

An da Aodh mo dha Charaid
(The two Hughs, my two friends).

The second begins—

Beannacht an Choimhdhe chomachtaigh
(The blessing of the Almighty Lord).

This," adds Mr. Hennessy, "is stated to be in praise of Aedh, King of Cashel; but there is no record of such a King of Cashel in the time of St. Brendan." It is much more likely it refers to Aedh, King of Connaught, who gave Inchiquin to Brendan.

[2] There are families near Clonfert, who bear this name at the present day.

proper festival, infers that the latter was Bishop Moinenn's psalmist.

Now as to what is uncertain, Colgan is inclined to think that this Bishop Moinenn of Clonfert is identical with Monennius, the founder of the great Monastery of Rosnat in Britain, and the master of several of our most distinguished Irish saints, including St. Tighernach of Clones, St. Eugenius of Ardstraw, St. Enda of Aran, and St. Cairbre of Coleraine. It is well known that the prefix *mo* is merely a term of endearment, and hence the name Moinenn or Mo-nenn, is really the same as Nennio or Mo-nennius, the great and celebrated saint who was undoubtedly the tutor of the saints of Northern Erin, as St. Finnian of Clonard was the tutor of the Saints of the South and West—the celebrated Twelve Apostles of Erin.

Colgan's opinion is always entitled to the highest respect, and the more deeply one is versed in the ecclesiastical history of ancient Ireland, the more one is likely to set a high value on the opinion of Colgan. Still we cannot assent to this conjecture of his, especially for reasons of chronology.

We agree with the learned and judicious Skene that the monastery of Rosnat, the *magnum monasterium*, which was[2] also called *Alba*[1] and *Candida*, can be no other than Whiterne in Galloway, or as it is sometimes called, Futerna. There is no doubt that St. Nennio, Nennius or Ninian, was the founder of that great monastery, and he may have been the teacher of some of the great saints from the north of Ireland, whose names are mentioned above. Furthermore it was through him and his great monastery that monastic life and discipline were introduced into those parts of Ireland, where these early saints, his disciples, founded their own establishments. St. Nennio or Ninian of Candida Casa was building his new stone church—the White House—in Galloway when he heard of the death of St. Martin of Tours, whose disciple he had been. Now, Martin died the 11th of November, A.D. 397; and it is manifestly out of the question to suppose that this Ninian, or Nennio, could have lived on to the year A.D. 570, when he would be at least 200 years of age. This assumes, however, the identity of Rosnat with Candida Casa. But if Rosnat were a Welsh monastery, and that Moinenn is merely another name for St. Manchan, or Manchenus, the Master, as some think; then Moinenn, Bishop of Clonfert, was very likely that person, and derived his training and

[1] *Life of St. Tighernach.*

[2] Whiterne in sound for Irish ears is nearly the same as Futerne, the Latin being Futerna.

knowledge of monastic discipline, at least to some extent, from that source. We have seen that St. Brendan spent some time in Wales, and that he belonged to the Second Order of Saints, which got a Mass from the three great Saints of Wales. As St. Moinenn had accompanied him in his voyages in the Atlantic, nothing in more likely than that he would also accompany him to Wales, and remain there until such time as Brendan founded Clonfert, when he was called home by the latter to take charge of this new and important foundation. It is evident, moreover, that he was a man of large culture, and that during his presidency over Clonfert he laid the foundations of that celebrity which the school subsequently attained.

There is no satisfactory evidence that St. Brendan himself ever received episcopal orders, but rather that in his humility he, like the great St. Columba of Iona, continued all his life a presbyter-abbot. Of course the necessary episcopal functions would be preformed by St. Moinenn; and no doubt that was one of the reasons why he was chosen to preside over the monastery and school of Clonfert. A similar arrangement existed for a long period in Iona. The head of the community was a presbyter-abbot; but there was nearly always a bishop belonging to that great House, who conferred the necessary orders on the various members of the Community. All, or nearly all, Brendan's successors, however, appear to have been bishops, as well as abbots, down to a comparatively recent period, when the offices and mensal estates of the bishop and abbot became quite distinct. The monastery as such was nominally suppressed in the reign of Henry VIII., but the incumbents contrived to hold their ground until A.D. 1571, when the bishop, Roland de Burgo, came into possession of the monastic as well as of the See lands. They afterwards passed to the Protestant prelates whose representatives hold them still.

St. Fintan, surnamed Corach, seems to have been the immediate successor of St. Brendan, for, as we have seen, St. Moinenn was really coadjutor to Brendan, and died before the coadjutus.

We are told in the *Felire* of Ængus that Fintan's feast was the 21st of February, *i.e.*, Fintan Coragh or the Melodious, because he was famed as a psalm-singer and choir-master. The scholiast after giving other explanations of the term, adds that he was Brendan's successor, and came of the Corco-Duibne race, and that Brendan's mother belonged to the same tribe. That tribe has given its name to the present

barony of Corcaguiny, and we know that Brendan spent many years of his life in that district, in which the famous Mount Brandon is situated. He had only to cross the Bay of Tralee to reach it from the place where his father's family lived at Fenid. Fintan's father, according to the same authority, was Gaibrene, son of Cocran. The names of his two immediate successors in Clonfert are also given:—

> "Fintan the melodious, Senach the rough,
> Colman, son of Comgall, the guileless,
> Three great (spiritual) kings with warfare of valour,
> One after the other in the abbey (of Clonfert)."

The *Martyrology of Donegal* describes Fintan Corach as "Bishop of Cluain-ferta-Brenainn, and he is in Cluain-eidhnech also." But it is uncertain if Fintan ever went to Clonenagh, and it seems highly probable that he was confounded with one of the other Fintans, who founded and ruled that Church. The fact that he was a connection of St. Brendan by the mother's side, will explain why he was chosen to succeed that saint in the government of the Church of Clonfert. It was an established rule to select the comarb from the kin, or failing that, from the tribe of the founder, when a suitable candidate so recommended was forthcoming.

No doubt St. Fintan, whilst he governed Clonfert, did much to encourage the study and practice of sacred psalmody in the abbey choir. He could hardly be false to his name, or allow discords to prevail, where harmony—heavenly harmony—should help to raise the mind to God and His Angelic Choirs. He seems to have died towards the end of the sixth century. Archdall gives the date as A.D. 590, but nothing is known for certain on the point.

The Abbot Seanach Garbh appears to have been the successor of St. Fintan, but beyond the record of his death, which the *Ulster Annals* give A.D. 620, we know nothing. St. Colman, son of Comgall, is mentioned by the scholiast of Ængus as the next of the three 'kings' who ruled the abbey in succession to Brendan, but of him in like manner we know nothing more.

The next Abbot-Bishop of Clonfert was the celebrated Cummian Fada, or Cummian the Tall, perhaps the most distinguished scholar of his time in Ireland. Before, however, we give an account of his life and writings, it is necessary to refer briefly to another famous disciple of St. Brendan, that is, the celebrated St. Fursey.

After Brendan himself, St. Fursey is the most remarkable saint of the times in which he lived, and it is fortunate that

we have a Life of this saint still extant which at least in substance must be accepted as authentic. This Life is referred to by Bede, who himself gives a long and most interesting account of the saint. It is evident that the Life quoted by Bede was the work of an almost contemporary writer; for he speaks of the plague and the great eclipse of the sun, which happened *last* year, that is, as we know from Bede himself, on the 3rd of May, A.D. 664. The Life was therefore written within ten or fifteen years of the death of St. Fursey; and although additions were probably made to it afterwards, it must be accepted even in its present shape as authentic and truthful, at least in substance. It is, moreover, confirmed in many particulars by the evidence of our native annals.

According to this Life, which has been published by Colgan at January 16th, St. Fursey was the son of a Munster prince named Fintan,[1] son of Finloga; and this Fintan, either by his father's or mother's side was a nephew of St. Brendan. The history of the birth of the saint is not without an element of romance, and hence we shall refer to it more in detail than our purpose would otherwise require.

Young Fintan from some cause or other left the home of his father, who is described as king of Western Munster, and came as a soldier of fortune to the court of Brudin, or as he is sometimes called, Brendinus, King of North Connaught. In some of the versions of the Life of Fursey he is made to come to the court of Brandubh, King of Leinster; but this error arose from confounding the latter with Brendinus, or Brudinus, King of North Connaught.

The Hy-Briuin race of Connaught derived their descent from Duach Galach, youngest son of Brian, son of Eochaidh Muighmheadhoin (Eochy Moyvane). Feargus, great grandson of Duach "the Victorious" (galach), was king, or prince of Connaught about the year A.D. 517, whilst St. Brendan was still a young man. He had three sons, who became the ancestors of the three great branches of the Hy-Briuin race —namely, Eochaidh Tirmcharna, the ancestor of the O'Conors, Duach Teangumha, the head of the great clan of the O'Flahertys of West Connaught, and Feargna the common ancestor of the O'Rorkes and O'Reillys of Breifney. Now Aedh, son of Eochaidh, was King of Connaught—at least of South Connaught—when St. Brendan founded his monastery on Inchiquin, about A.D. 550. His uncle Feargna

[1] Some confound this St. Fursey with another Fursey, son of Lochan of the Dal-araidhe.

had three sons, who at the same time ruled in North Connaught—Brendin or Brudin, Aedh Finn, and Fearadach. It was to Brudin, the eldest, it seems, of these three brothers, that young Fintan came from Kerry as a soldier of fortune. It must be borne in mind, too, that there was a great emigration at this period from Kerry to North Connaught. So that probably Fintan did not come alone, but accompanied by some of his tribesmen.

Now Aedh Finn, the Prince of North Connaught, had a beautiful daughter called Gelges, and she fixed her affections on the young prince from Kerry. The father would not allow her to marry a penniless exile, but love ignores such obstacles; they were secretly married, and the fact was first disclosed to the king by the visible pregnancy of his daughter. In his wrath he condemned the daughter and her unborn child to be burned alive. But Providence extinguished the fire; and it seems, too, that the king's sub-chieftains would not tolerate the commission of this great crime. So Fintan and Gelges were allowed to escape death, but were ordered to return no more to Breifney.

In this great difficulty Fintan bethought himself of his uncle, St. Brendan, just then established in Inchiquin; and to him he fled for refuge. The saint received his kinsman kindly, and as he and his wife were in danger of their lives, he allowed them to lodge for the time in the hospice of Inchiquin. There within a few days the unhappy Gelges gave birth to a boy, the future Fursey, the renowned saint of Ireland, and England, and France. He was baptized by St. Brendan, and we are told that so long as Brendan lived[1] he instructed the youth in all knowledge, sacred and profane, and that the work was afterwards continued by his disciple, St. Meldan, of Inchiquin. It is nō wonder that Brendan, remembering his own youth spent under the care of St. Ita and St. Erc, now in his turn sought to give to this princely boy the same tender care, and the same religious training which he had himself received. We can even trace the vivid imagination of Brendan himself in the wonderful visions of Fursey; and that same restless longing, *peregrinari pro Christo*, to preach Christ in strange lands, which caused Brendan to sail the Atlantic seas, caused Fursey to preach at first in Ireland, then in England, and afterwards in France.

It is said in his life that Fursey founded a monastery of his own in the Island of Rathmat, or Ramath, in Lough

[1] Fursey must have been very young, certainly not more than ten years of age, when Brendan died in A.D. 577

Corrib. This island cannot now be identified, but on the shore of Lough Corrib, not far from Inchiquin, is the old church and parish of Killursa, which bears his name, and of which Fursey was undoubtedly the founder and the patron.

There is also a place near Inchiquin on the mainland called Ard-fintain—Fintan's Height—near Headfort, which still gives its name to the townland; and there are traces of an ancient rath in the place.[1] It seems almost certain that Fintan, leaving Inchiquin, took up his residence with his wife at Ard-fintain, that there his children, St. Ultan and St. Foillan, brothers of St. Fursey, were born, and like him, were educated on the neighbouring island of Inchiquin by the good monks of St. Brendan. It is likely, too, though not mentioned in Fursey's Life, that the brothers were sent, when they grew up, to the great School of Clonfert, which had been founded by their grand uncle, and which was still governed by their own kinsmen.

Of the subsequent career of the great St. Fursey we cannot now speak at length. His celebrated visions were known to all mediæval Europe; and it is said they furnished Dante with the groundwork of the plot of the best scenes in the *Divina Commedia*. His influence has been felt according to certain writers in shaping the entire course of mediæval theology with regard to the state of the souls in the world to come. This of course is an exaggeration; but it shows how widely the influence of his life and actions is supposed to have extended. Bede evidently believed in the reality of these visions of the saint, and was very far indeed from regarding them as the purely subjective visions of a disordered imagination. Of Fursey's subsequent career, both in England and France, we shall, let us hope, learn more hereafter.

III.—St. Cummian the Tall, Bishop of Clonfert.

St. Cummian, surnamed the Tall (fada), to distinguish him from Cummian the Fair (finn), Abbot of Hy, was the most learned Irish scholar of the seventh century. He took a leading part in the famous Paschal controversy, and his letter on that question, which is fortunately extant, proves that he was perfectly familiar with Church history, and deeply versed in Sacred Scripture. He was well skilled, too, in the moral theology of the times, as the *Liber de Mensura Poenitentiarum* clearly shows. He tried his hand at poetry also, but we cannot say as much for his verses as for his theology: it is rarely, indeed, that theologians are good poets—they have too much sobriety of mind. His contem-

[1] We have made a minute examination of all this locality with the help of the Very Rev. J. Barrett, P.P., V.F.

poraries likened Cummian in morals and life to St. Gregory the Great, and one of his admirers, in an old *rann* preserved by the Four Masters, says he was the only Irishman of his time fit to succeed that illustrious Pontiff in the chair of St. Peter.

Yet, the birth of this holy and learned man was the fruit of an unspeakable crime, to which it is unnecessary here to make further reference. His father was Fiachna, son of Fiachra Gairine, King of West Munster. The clan were known as the Eoghanach of Lough Lein, because they were sprung from the great Eoghan More, son of Ollioll Olum, and dwelt in the woods and mountains round the beautiful lakes of Killarney. His unhappy mother was, it seems, in early youth called Flann, but she was also called Mughain or Mugania, and was sometimes known as Rim, or, as Colgan latinises it, Rima. Her identity, however, under these various names is sufficiently established by the great misfortune of her life, for which, perhaps, she may not have been responsible.

The child was born in A.D. 589, or 590, for he died in A.D. 661, at the age of seventy-two. Drumdaliter—Marianus O'Gorman tells us—was "the name of his town," and Aedh or Hugh was his "proper name" at first. Shortly after his birth the infant was exposed by his parents, and left at the head of the cross in a small *Cummian* or basket near St. Ita's Convent of Killeedy, and the holy sisterhood finding the child thus abandoned took charge of the foundling, and called him Cummian, because he was found in the basket.

The history of the lady Flann, the mother of Cummian, is very singular. The great misfortune of her life seems to have happened when she was very young, and it may have been greatly, if not entirely, against her own will. It seems, too, that she was very beautiful—in a stanza composed by Cummian himself, she is called Flann the Fair—it is said also that she was four times married, and became the mother of no less than six kings and six bishops.

After the death of her fourth husband, Flann, whether tired of the cares of married life, or anxious to do penance for the sin of her youth, consulted her son Cummian as to her future; and he advised her to retire from the world, and spend the rest of her days in prayer and penance. She did so, and died a holy nun at an advanced age.

From Killeedy, or perhaps from Killarney, young Cummian was sent to the great school of Cork, founded by St. Finnbarr about the beginning of the seventh century, when Cummian would be twelve or fifteen years of age.

Among the teachers in Cork, either then, or a little later on, was Colman Mac O'Cluasaigh, who is called the "tutor" of young Cummian, to whom he became greatly attached. Colman O'Cluasaigh was, it seems, a most accomplished scholar, and had, moreover, an Irishman's love for poetry and song. Dr. Todd[1] has published, in the first volume of the *Liber Hymnorum*, a very beautiful Irish hymn composed by Colman to invoke for himself and his pupils the protection of God and His Saints against the yellow plague, which devastated Ireland between the years A.D. 660-664. He is described in the preface to that hymn as a reader of Cork (*fer-legind*), and is said to have composed it when he was fleeing, with his pupils, from the plague, to take refuge in some island of the sea, because it was thought the contagion could not extend beyond nine waves from the land, which, even from a sanitary point of view, was likely enough. He also composed, about the same time, an elegy on the death of Cummian.

Colman inspired his pupil with his own love for poetry; and fortunately we have, in the same Book of Hymns, a Latin poem written by Cummian, which we should reprint if the space at our disposal were not so limited.

From St. Finnbarr's school Cummian seems to have gone to visit his half brother Guaire, who was King of South Connaught at this period, or a little later on. As Cummian was already famous for sanctity and learning, and belonged to an influential family, who would now be ready enough to acknowledge the relationship, we can easily conceive how his own merits and Guaire's influence, would have procured his selection for the bishopric of Clonfert. "All the Martyrologies and Annals," says Cardinal Moran,[2] "agree in styling St. Cummian Fada, Bishop and Abbot of Clonfert."

But it is not easy to fix the exact date of his appointment. We find the death of Senach Garbh, Abbot of Clonfert, marked by the Four Masters under the date of A.D. 620, and his successor Colman died, according to Archdall, in the same year which he gives as A.D. 621. As there is no other obituary of a Bishop or Abbot of Clonfert noticed in our Annals until the death of Cummian himself in A.D. 661, we may, perhaps, fairly assume that he succeeded the Abbot Colman and governed the See for forty years. Colman, King of Connaught, the uncle of Cummian and father of Guaire, was slain in A.D. 617, and Guaire, if not actually king at this

[1] To whom we are indebted for much information about Cummian.
[2] Note to Archdall, *sub voce*, "Clonfert."

date, was an influential chief, and his defeat with others at the battle of Carn Fearadhaigh in Limerick is noted by the annalists in A.D. 622, and his death in A.D. 662, so that the two brothers, the Bishop and Chieftain, were contemporaries ruling in South Connaught during a long and chequered career. This fact will help to explain the great influence which Cummian possessed, and the leading position which he occupied in the Irish Church at that period.[1] His fame as a saint and scholar spread throughout all Ireland, and attracted crowds of students to his great school at Clonfert. He appears, as we shall see further on, to have taken a leading part in the Synod of Magh Lene, held about A.D. 630, and no doubt it was at the request of the Fathers of that Synod, that he wrote his famous epistle on the Paschal Question to the Abbot Segienus of Hy, about the year A.D. 634. There is every reason to believe that Segienus and Cummian were, if not personal friends, at least well known to each other, for the Columbian Abbey of Durrow in King's County, was not far from Clonfert, and the uncle of Segienus had been Abbot of that house until he was transferred to Hy in the year A.D. 600. Segienus himself was very likely educated there under his uncle's care, and perhaps succeeded him later on in the government of the Abbey. It is at all events certain that frequent intercourse existed between Hy and Durrow; and that Cummian must have been well known at Durrow is manifest.

About a mile and a-half from Shinrone, to the west of Roscrea, there is an old ruin, perhaps originally built by St. Cummian, which gives its name—Kilcommin—to the parish. This was *Disert Chuimin in regione Roscreensi*, to which Cummian probably retired before the Synod of Magh Lene, to devote himself to a year's study of the Paschal question. It is about twenty-five miles from Durrow, and fifteen from Clonfert. The old church was built under the shadow of

[1] There is a characteristic story of Cummian, Guaire, and Caimin, told by the scholiast on the Felire of Ængus. The three half brothers were at one time in Caimin's Church of Inis Cealtra in Lough Derg. "What would you wish to have this Church filled with?" said Caimin to Guaire. "With silver and gold," he replied, "that I might give it for my soul's sake to saints and to churches, and to the poor." "And you, Cummian, what would you have it filled with?" "I would have it full of books to instruct studious men, to enable them to preach the Gospel, and save souls," said Cummian. Then they said, "But thou, Caimin, what would you wish to have in it?" "I would wish to have the full of it of diseases and sicknesses to afflict my body," replied Caimin. And all three got their wish, "the earth to Guaire, wisdom to Cummian, and sickness and disease to Caimin;" and they all went to heaven in the way they wished.

Knockshigowna, the beautiful hill on which the Tipperary fairies hold their revels.

The knowledge of these facts will help to explain Cummian's relations with King Domhnall a few years later.

When Domhnall, King of Ireland from A.D. 628 to 642, was a mere boy, he accompanied his father to the great Synod of Drumceat. On that occasion his relative Columcille put his hands on the boy's head and blessed him, foretelling at the same time that he would survive his brothers, and become a great king, and, moreover, that he would expire peaceably and happily on his bed surrounded by his family—quite an unusual occurrence for an Irish king in those days. King Domhnall reigned and sinned, like most other kings; so that towards the end of his life he did not feel himself well disposed to die, because, says the scholiast, he had not the gift of penance to bewail his sins. However, he had confidence in Columcille's prediction, so he sent a message to the Abbot of Hy to ask whether he should go there in person to do penance, or, if not, what soul's-friend the Abbot would recommend him. Segienus, then Abbot of Hy, sent back word to the king, that his confessor would come to him from the south, and he very likely asked, at the same time, Cummian to visit the monarch. This message was attributed, in accordance with the custom of the times, to Columcille himself. It is preserved by the scholiast on Cummian's hymn, and is to the following effect:—

> "A Doctor who shall come from the south,
> It is with him (Domhnall) shall find what he wants;
> He will bring *Communion* to his house,
> To the excellent grandson of Ainmire."

There is a play on the word *Communion* which in Irish is the same, or almost the same, as *Cummian*, the man's name.

Thus, it came to pass, whether by accident or design, that Cummian, the great *Saoi* or Doctor of the south, came all the way to Derry to visit the king, and administer spiritual consolation to him. But it seems the heart of the king still continued dry and impenitent. Then Cummian had recourse to prayer, and in order to obtain the gift of tears for his royal penitent, he composed, in honour of the Apostles, the very striking hymn in the *Liber Hymnorum*. It seems that this poetic prayer was efficacious; Domhnall became a sincere penitent, bewailing his sins with floods of tears. The prediction of Columcille was completely verified, and the Four

Masters tell us that Domhnall died at Ard-folhadh, near Ballymacgrorty, in the Barony of Tirhugh, "after the victory of penance, for he was a year in mortal-sickness, and he used to receive the body of Christ every Sunday." As King Domhnall died in A.D. 642, we may fix this visit of Cummian at A.D. 640 or 641; the scholiast in the poem that caused the conversion of the king, tells us expressly, that it was "written in Derry," nigh to the ancient Aileach, the royal residence of the northern kings.

By far the most important and interesting event in the life of Cummian was the part he played in the great Paschal controversy. We can at present give only the merest sketch of the history of this great discussion, so as to enable our readers to understand Cummian's share in the controversy.

Of course the system of computing the date of Easter in use both in Ireland and England at the beginning of the seventh century was that which was introduced by St. Patrick himself, and which he acquired in the schools of France and Italy. From the very beginning, however, much diversity of practice existed between the Churches of the East and West, and even between some Churches in the West itself, in reference to the date of Easter Day. With a view to secure uniformity as far as possible, the Synod of Arles, to which Cummian refers, held in A.D. 314, prescribes in its first canon that the whole world should celebrate the Easter festival on one and the same day, and that the Pope, *according to custom*, should notify that day to all the Churches.[1] There were three British bishops present at that Synod. But the diversity of practice still continued, to the joy of the pagans and to the scandal of the faithful.

Then the Nicene Synod intervened in A.D. 325, and commanded all the Eastern Churches "which heretofore used to celebrate the Pasch with the Jews,"[2] to celebrate it in future at the same time with the Romans and with us—so say the prelates of the Synod in their circular letter to the Egyptian Churches. Constantine, the Emperor, in his own circular says that the Synod agrees that all should celebrate the Pasch on the same day, but that it should never be on the same day with the Jews; and Cyril of Alexandria states, and Leo the Great confirms the statement, that the Alexandrian Church was to calculate the dates, and then notify them to the Roman

[1] Primo loco de observatione Paschae Domini, et uno die et uno tempore per omnem orbem a nobis observetur et juxta consuetudinem litteras ad omnes tu dirigas.

[2] See Hefele. *Councils*, vol i., page 314. French Edition, 1869.

Church, which was to convey the information to the other Churches. This was virtually adopting the Alexandrian cycle of nineteen years—which was very different from the Roman cycle. Then at Alexandria the equinox was rightly fixed on the 21st March, at Rome it was the 18th; at Alexandria they celebrated Easter on the 15th day of the moon, *when the 14th was a Saturday;* at Rome they did not celebrate Easter in any circumstances before the 16th day of the moon—assuming that as the 14th day represented Good Friday, the Pasch of the Passion, Easter Sunday, the Pasch of the Resurrection, could not rightly take place before the 16th. It is curious that Cummian in his Epistle supports this opinion, although Bede makes the 15th of the moon a possible Easter Sunday, and such is still the usage. A diversity of practice, therefore, between Rome and Alexandria still continued for many years. However, the Alexandrian usage ultimately prevailed, but was finally accepted in the Western World only about A.D. 530, when explained and developed by Dionysius Exiguus.

This, the correct system, therefore, lays down three principles. First, Easter Day must be always a Sunday, never on, but *next after* the 14th day of the moon. Secondly, that 14th day, or the full moon, should be that on or next after the vernal equinox; and thirdly, the equinox itself was invariably assigned to the 21st of March.

Whilst, however, the Continental Churches aimed at uniformity after a troublesome experience of their own errors, the Irish and British Churches, practically isolated from their neighbours, tenaciously clung to the system introduced by St. Patrick. It was the system of their sainted fathers, and that was enough for them. So when Augustine and his companions, having partially converted the Saxons, came into contact with the Christians of the north of England, they were much scandalized at their celebrating Easter at a different time from the rest of the world. They remonstrated, but in vain; the Scots of England and Ireland would not change their ways; some of them would not even eat with the newcomers; the Britons of Wales refused to aid them in converting the Saxons. Colman, after his discussion with Wilfred at Whitby, refuted but not convinced, left England with his monks and sailed away to a lonely island in his native Mayo, rather than give up his Irish tonsure and his Irish Easter. Columbanus was equally obdurate in France, and the Abbots of Hy for a hundred years more tenaciously adhered to the traditions of their own great founder. But

all Ireland was not equally stubborn, and the Southerns yielded first.

The English Prelates, Laurence of Canterbury, Millitus of London, and Justus of Rochester, shortly after the death of Augustine, addressed a letter to "their most dear brothers the Lords, Bishops, and Abbots throughout all Ireland (Scotia)," admonishing them to give up their "errors" in reference to Easter, and celebrate it in conformity with the Universal Church. But the Irishmen appear to have taken no notice of this document, for it looked like an attempt to assert a spiritual supremacy over the "Scots" which they always vigorously repudiated.

Millitus afterwards went to Rome, and others, too, going there after him spoke of the errors and contumacy of the Scots in this matter of Easter as well as in some other things also. So Pope Honorius, about the year A.D. 629, addressed an admonition to the pastors of the Irish Church, sharply rebuking them for their pertinacity in their erroneous practices, especially in reference to Easter, and calling upon them to act thenceforward in conformity with the Universal Church.

The main charge brought against the Irish, so far as we can gather from Bede and Cummian, was that they celebrated Easter from the 14th to the 20th day of the moon, thus celebrating it on the same day with the Jews, viz., the 14th, *if that should happen to be Sunday*, which was contrary to the express prohibition of the Council of Nice. Most certainly they did not celebrate it with the heretical Quartodecimans on the 14th day of the moon, no matter what day of the week it might happen to be—they never celebrated Easter on any day but a Sunday, as both Bede and Cummian expressly admit. Cummian says that St. Patrick assigned the equinox to the 21st of March, but their cycle was the older Roman cycle of eighty-four years, not the new and more correct cycle of nineteen years adopted first at Alexandria and afterwards at Rome. The main charge, however, was opposition to the Universal Church in celebrating Easter from the 14th to the 20th of the moon, because the 14th of Nisan being the Jewish festival was, by the Council of Nice, declared unlawful for the Christian festival.

How, then, could St. Patrick have come to admit the 14th of the moon in any circumstances as a lawful date for Easter Day? This is a difficult point not yet clearly determined. We rather think that this usage of celebrating Easter on the 14th of Nisan, if it fell on Sunday, was retained in several

of the Gallican Churches even after the Council of Nice. The Council itself expressly tells us that it was retained up to its own time in the Eastern Churches. Now, Eastern influence and Eastern customs prevailed to a considerable extent in Southern Gaul during the fifth century. The great monastery of Lerins was founded about A.D. 410, and from its cloisters issued the greatest prelates of Southern France. John Cassian came from the East, and, as we know, was imbued with Eastern ideas—Cassian, the greatest man of his time, so holy, so learned, and so amiable, was a monk of Lerins, and in A.D. 415 founded the great monastery of St. Victor, where Eastern ideas were also prevalent. It is not unlikely that St. Patrick derived his Paschal computation from these monasteries, or from some of the great scholars who issued from their cloisters.

Be that as it may, when the Irish clergy received the admonition of Pope Honorius, they convened a National Synod, which met at a place called Magh Lene, or Campus Lene, in the ancient Feara-Ceall, close to Rahan, in the King's County. Cummian, in his epistle, incidentally tells us almost all we know of this important Synod. The successors of Ailbe, of Ciaran of Clonmacnoise, of Brendan, of Nessan, of Molua, were there assembled about the year A.D. 630. The result of their deliberations was "to receive humbly and without hesitation" the doctrines and practices brought to them from the Holy See as their forefathers had commanded them, and therefore they resolved to celebrate Easter next year, and thenceforward with the Universal Church. But shortly after a "whitened wall" rising up amongst them caused disunion, under pretext of urging them to preserve the traditions of the elders. At last a compromise was adopted, and it was resolved to send messengers to Rome to see with their own eyes what was the custom of the Holy City in reference to the celebration of Easter. The messengers returned in the third year, and told them how they saw strangers from the whole world keeping the Roman Easter in the Church of Peter. Many wondrous cures were also wrought by the relics of the martyrs which they had brought with them from Rome, so it was resolved thenceforward to celebrate Easter on the same day with "their mother the Church of Rome;" and that resolution was faithfully carried out in the southern and midland parts of the kingdom, which were principally represented at the Synod. The north still held out, mainly through the influence and example of the great monastery of Iona and its dependent houses in Ireland.

It was to try and induce Segienus, Abbot of Hy, to give up the ancient usage, and like the rest of the world, to adopt the Roman practice, that Cummian, probably at the request of the Synod, wrote this Paschal Epistle. He was favourably known in Iona, as we have already seen; his learning and sanctity were greatly respected there, and having given special study to the question, he not unnaturally thought he might be able to persuade the abbot to give up the old Columbian usage. Though he failed in the attempt, his letter was carefully preserved, and either the original, or a copy, was carried by refugees from Iona to St. Gall, where it was fortunately secured for posterity.

The epistle begins with the motto or inscription: "I confide in the Divine Name of the Supreme God"—and is addressed by its author, who calls himself a suppliant sinner, to the Abbot Segienus, successor of St. Columba, and of other saints, and to the Solitary Beccan,[1] "my brother in the flesh and in the spirit." The following is a brief analysis of this most interesting monument of our early Irish Church.

First of all the writer humbly apologises for presuming to address these holy men, and he calls God to witness that in celebrating the Paschal solemnity with the learned generally he does so in no spirit of pride or contempt for others. For when the new (Dionysian) cycle of 532 years was first introduced into Ireland, he did not at once accept it, but held his peace, not presuming to praise or censure either party.

For he did not think himself wiser than the Hebrews, Greeks, and Latins, nor did he venture to disdain the food he had not yet tasted; he rather retired for a whole year into the sanctuary of sacred study,[2] to examine as best he could the testimonies of Scripture, the facts of history, and the nature of the various cycles in use. The results of this year's study he sums up in this epistle. He first proceeds to explain from Scripture the proper date of the Jewish Pasch, which, including the days of unleavened bread, began on the 14th day of the moon, and ended on the 21st; and he quotes St. Jerome, who declares that as Christ is our Pasch, we must celebrate *that festival* from the 14th to the 21st day of the moon (the date with us necessarily varying with the day of the week). But the Pasch, he says, means the day on which *the lamb was slain*, for our Saviour himself said, "With

[1] Was this Breacan of Dairinis, near Waterford, half-brother to Cummian? He might have been then at Hy.

[2] Perhaps to Disert Chuimin, where he wrote: "Ut me ut nycticoracem in domicilio latitantem defenderem." Epistola.

longing I have longed to eat this Pasch with you before I suffer." Hence, the day of Passion in the Christian Festival can never begin before the 14th day of the moon; then the day of burial will be the 15th of the moon, and therefore the day of the Resurrection can never be earlier than the 16th day of the moon; and being always a Sunday, must be on some day between the 16th and 22nd day of the moon, inclusive. "For if, he says, as you do, the Resurrection were celebrated on the 14th of the moon, then the day of burial will be the 13th, and the day of Passion the 12th, which is preposterous and opposed to the clear testimony of Scripture."

Then he appeals to the authority of the Ecclesiastical Synods against the Irish usage. There was, he admits, in the beginning a diversity of practice even in the Apostolic churches founded by Peter the Key-bearer, and John the Eagle-pinioned, for the Apostles themselves, driven hither and thither by persecution, had no time to fix a uniform cycle for all the Churches. But afterwards "I find it was ordered that all those were to be excommunicated who dared to act against the statutes of the four Apostolic Sees of Rome, Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria." The Nicene Synod, he adds, composed of three hundred and eighteen bishops, ordained that the same rule should be followed in all the Churches of the East and West. The Synod of Arles also, where six hundred bishops were present, insisted on uniformity throughout the whole world in the observance of the Pasch, lest, as St. Jerome observes, we should run the risk of eating the Pasch contrary to the law, *extra unam domum*, that is, outside the communion of the Universal Church. "Consider you well, therefore, whether it is the Hebrews, Greeks, Latins, and Egyptians, united together, that are the *extra domum*, or a fragment of the Scots and Britains, living at the end of the world, that form a conventicle separated from the communion of the Church. You are the leaders of the people; beware how you act, leading others into error by your obstinacy. Not so our Fathers, whom you pretend to follow, for they were blameless in their own days, seeing that they faithfully followed what they thought in their simplicity to be best; but you can scarcely excuse yourselves for knowingly rejecting the observances of the Universal Church." The writer then proceeds to insist at great length on this argument from the practice and authority of the Church; and recites various passages from St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Cyprian, and St. Gregory, on the unity of the Church, and the guilt and danger of schisma-

tical practices. "Non alia Romanae urbis ecclesia, alia totius orbis aestimanda est," he says, quoting St. Augustine; and then he adds from St. Jerome, "Si quis Cathedrae S. Petri jungatur meus est ille,"—communion with Rome was in Cummian's estimation, as in Jerome's, the test of orthodoxy both in doctrine and discipline. "Can anything," he says, "be more absurd than to say of our mother the Church—Rome errs, Jerusalem errs, Antioch errs, and the whole world errs, the Irish (Scoti) and Britons alone are in the right?" In this part of his letter Cummian certainly displays not only great learning, but also great vigour and eloquence of style.

Lastly, he discusses the various cycles in use at different periods, and although he found much diversity with various nations, "you," he says, "have one of your own quite different from them all. First, there is the Paschal cycle introduced by St. Patrick,[1] our spiritual Father (Papa nostra), according to which the Æquinox was assigned to the 21st of March, and Easter day ranged from the 14th to the 21st day of the moon." He then refers to the cycles of Anatolius, Theophilus, Dionysius, Cyril, Morinus, Augustine, Victorius, and lastly he mentions the cycle of Pachomius to whom an angel revealed the proper way to calculate Easter—cycle meaning, it would seem, the special manner of calculating Easter peculiar to each. He then refers to the cycle of nineteen years adopted by the Nicene Fathers, calling it by its Greek name—ἐννεά-καιδεκατήριδα—which, he adds, might enable them to ascertain the date of Easter with sufficient accuracy. "It is, as I find, quite different from yours in its kalends, its bissextile, in its epact, in its fourteenth moon, in its first month, and in its equinox." This is an important passage, because it shows that the Irish cycle was in every respect different from the cycle of nineteen years as adopted by the Church of Alexandria. He then refers to St. Cyril, and the cycle of Victoricius, clearly showing that he was familiar with the entire subject, and probably had in his hands some works which we no longer possess.

After referring to the Synod of the Campus Lene, as explained above, and the appeal to Rome in accordance with the ancient statute (mandatum) of the Irish Church, he goes on to say that according to the synodical decree[2] all such

[1] Skene says this "is the oldest authentic notice of St. Patrick."—*Celtic Scot.*, vol. ii., p. 17.

[2] This is the synodical decree quoted in the *Book of Armagh*, and already referred to in this work at page 60. Its citation by Cummian so early as A.D. 640 is a clear proof that the Synodical decrees are authentic.

"causae majores ad caput urbium sunt referenda." This refers to the decree of the Synod of Patrick, Auxilius, and Iserninus, bidding the Irish prelates if any cause of disunion arose, to go to the 'place which the Lord hath chosen' (to Rome, the 'caput urbium') for the decision of these more important causes, "so we sent there certain wise and humble men, whom we knew, as children to their mother." And they returned in the third year, and told us what they had seen and heard, and how in the Church of St. Peter, the common hospice of all the faithful, Greeks and Hebrews, Scythians and Egyptians—"all celebrated Easter on the same day, which differed an entire month from our own, and we saw with our own eyes many miracles wrought by the relics of the saints and martyrs which they had carried home with them from the holy city." In conclusion, he adds that he had not written to attack them but to defend the truth; he apologises for any wrong or harsh words that might have fallen from him, and in the last sentence implores on them all the strong blessing of the Holy Trinity to guard them from all evil.

This remarkable epistle affords a striking proof, not only of Cummian's own learning, but of the high efficiency of the schools of his native land, in which he studied. He gives the Hebrew, Greek and Egyptian names of the first lunar month. He refers to almost every cycle, and emendation of a cycle, of which we have any account, briefly, indeed, but sufficiently to show that he was acquainted with them, and with the decrees of synods, and with the passages of the Fathers that make reference to them. Above all things, he insists upon the unity of the Church, and incontestably establishes the Irish tradition in his own time, that the Irish Church was founded from Rome, that Rome is the Source of Unity, the final Court of Appeal, and the Mother of the Irish, as of all other Churches. The text is unfortunately somewhat corrupt, and the style wants polish; but, though in this respect Cummian is inferior to several Irish writers of the seventeenth century, his Latin is much superior to that of several ecclesiastical documents that we have seen in our own nineteenth century.

The *Liber de Mensura Poenitentiarum*, cannot with certainty be ascribed to Cummian Fada; but it is highly probable that he was the author. It was preserved like so many other invaluable Irish MSS., in the Monastery of St. Gall, and has been published in the *Bibliotheca Patrum*, and, together with the Paschal Epistle, has been republished by Migne.[1]

[1] Tome 87, *Patr. Latina.*

We have seen that Cummian was regarded by the Abbot of Hy as a great moralist, and it may be that the same Segienus was the "faithful friend," whom the author addresses—mi fidelissime—in the prologue. The treatise consists of fourteen chapters, giving the canonical penances assigned to sins of various kinds. It treats of these sins in the most minute detail, but contains little original matter; for the penances are, in most cases, taken from the works of the Fathers and the penitential canons of various early Councils. But it shows how carefully these matters were attended to in our early Irish Church, and is another striking monument of its ecclesiastical learning.

Cummian Fada has not unfrequently been confounded with Cummian Finn, the nephew of Segienus, Abbot of Hy. The latter wrote a life of St. Columba, to which Adamnan refers, and most of which he, Adamnan, inserted in the Third Book of his own Life of St. Columba. The Paschal Epistle has also been attributed to him, but without any grounds. The intrinsic evidence of the letter itself shows that it was written by a prelate of the southern half of Ireland; he speaks of Ailbe, Brendan, and the rest as "our fathers and predecessors;" he had accepted the Roman usage which Hy and its family refused to accept for many years after; and he uses in reference to St. Peter the very peculiar expression, "clavicularis," which is also used by the author of the poem in honour of the Apostles, which was undoubtedly the work of Cummian Fada, the Bishop of Clonfert.

The Four Masters say that "St. Cummian Fada, son of Fiachna, Bishop of Cluainfearta Brennain, died on the 12th of November, 661," which is his festival day. The entry of the death of his beloved tutor, St. Colman O'Cluasaigh, is marked a little later on as happening in the same year, and therefore towards its close. Colman, however, lived long enough after Cummian to compose an elegy on his death. The Four Masters have preserved a few lines, which may be thus translated:—

"No bark o'er Luimneach's bosom bore,
From Munster to the Northern shore,
A prize so rich in battle won,
As Cummian's corpse, great Fiachna's son.
Of Erin's priests, it were not meet
That one should sit in Gregory's Seat,
Except that Cummian crossed the sea,
For he Rome's ruler well might be.
Ah! woe is me, at Cummian's bier
My eyelids drop the ceaseless tear;
The pain, of hopeless anguish bred,
Will burst my heart since Cummian's dead."

The poet's verse was true—Colman died within a month of his pupil to whom he was so deeply and tenderly attached. We may infer, too, from these verses that Cummian died at home in his native Kerry, but that his remains were carried up the Shannon in a boat to his own Cathedral of Clonfert, where he was interred. The Four Masters tell us that in A.D. 1162 the "relics of Maeinenn and of Cummian Fada[1] were removed from the earth by the clergy of Brenainn (that is, of Clonfert), and they were enclosed in a protecting shrine." So far as we know there is no account to be had now of the existence of this shrine.

IV.—Subsequent History of Clonfert.

Frequent reference is subsequently made in our Annals to the monastery and See of Clonfert, but it is oftentimes a saddening record. Its buildings were four times plundered, and six times burnt. Nor was this the work of the Danes alone. The degenerate chieftains of Ireland too frequently followed their bad example, and provoked Divine vengeance by unspeakable acts of sacrilege, especially during the tenth and eleventh centuries.

In A.D. 838, Turgesius brought a great fleet to Lough Ree, which he stationed there for the express purpose of harrying the banks and islands of the Shannon. He plundered and burnt Clonfert, Clonmacnoise, and indeed all the monasteries and churches from Lanesborough to Limerick, which were within reach of his marauders; and not once but frequently between the years A.D. 838 and 845. Yet strange to say it is stated in the old *Annals of Innisfallen*, that Feidhlimidh, son of Crimthann, King of Munster, had a friendly conference with Niall, son of Hugh, King of Ulster, in the year A.D. 840, at Clonfert, and there received Niall's homage as High King, and sat in the seat of the abbots of Clonfert.

Still the schools were not entirely destroyed, for in A.D. 868 is recorded the death of Cormac—Steward, Scribe, and Doctor of Clonfert-Brenainn. It was well that God then called him away, for next year, in A.D. 869, came Earl Tomrar with his warriors from Limerick to Clonfert. "He was a fierce, cruel, rough man of the Lochlans;" and hoped to obtain a great prey in the church and monastery. But he was disappointed, for the brethren heard of his approach, and fled expertly before him, as the Annals tell us, some in boats, and some

[1] In some ancient MSS. Fada is written Fota, but it is the same word, meaning 'Tall.'

into the surrounding morasses. Others took refuge in the church, but the disappointed freebooter killed them all, both those whom he found in the church and in the cemetery Tomrar, however, died of madness three days afterwards, "for Brendan wrought a miracle upon him for plundering his monastery and killing his monks." In A.D. 949, Ceallachan, King of Cashel, plundered the monastery of Clonfert. But the men of Munster were not without rivals in their deeds of sacrilege. In A.D. 1031 Art O'Rorke, surnamed the 'Cock,' plundered the monastery once more, but providentially when returning laden with his pillage, he fell in with Doncha, son of Brian, who defeated him and his followers with great slaughter.

Some thirty years later in A.D. 1065, Aedh O'Rorke and Diarmaid O'Kelly plundered Clonfert and Clonmacnoise, and once more speedy vengeance overtook the robbers; for Aedh O'Connor came against them and defeated them through the miracles of Ciaran and Brenainn, whose churches they had plundered. A bloody slaughter was made by Aedh, and, moreover, he captured or sunk their boats, and drove great numbers of the plunderers into the river. Yet the monastery and School of Clonfert still lived on down to the advent of the Anglo-Normans, for in the year A.D. 1170, is recorded the death of Cormac O'Lumluini, whom the Four Masters in pathetic language describe as the remnant of the Sages of Erin. The subsequent history of the School and See of Clonfert is foreign to our present purpose.

The old Cathedral of Clonfert still survives, and is one of the few of our ancient buildings now used for religious worship. It has passed, however, from Catholic hands, and will, doubtless, soon be abandoned by the Protestants too, for the few persons who attend divine worship in the old Cathedral of St. Brendan can hardly be called a congregation.

The church consisted of a nave with a western tower in the centre, and a chancel with two transepts branching nearly at the centre of the nave. The building is small, the nave being 54 feet by 27 in the clear, but very beautiful. The western doorway is described with great fulness of detail by Brash (p. 43), who declares that in point of design and execution, it is not excelled by any similar work that he has seen in these islands. There is not, he says, a square inch of any portion of this beautiful doorway, with its six orders of shafts and arches, that is without the mark of the sculptor's tool, every bit of the work being finished with the

greatest accuracy. Romanesque and Norman porches and doorways, he adds, exist of grander proportions, but none exhibiting the fertility of invention and beauty of design which this one does.

The altar window of the chancel is also greatly praised by the same competent authority. "The design of this window is exceedingly chaste and beautiful, the mouldings simple and effective, and the workmanship superior to anything I have seen either of ancient or modern times. The mouldings are finely wrought, and the pointing of the stone work so close, that I cannot believe they were ever worked by tools."[1]

He says the work is, in his opinion, of the twelfth century, and he is inclined to attribute its building to the celebrated Peter O'Mordha, a Cistercian monk, who was first Abbot of Boyle, and afterwards became Bishop of Clonfert. He was unfortunately drowned in the Shannon two days after Christmas Day, in the year A.D. 1171. With him we may fitly close the history of the School of Clonfert.

[1] *Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland*, page 44

CHAPTER XI.

THE SCHOOL OF MOVILLE.

——"Transfigured Life!
This was the glory, that, without a sigh,
Who loved thee, yet could leave thee."

I.—St. Finnian of Moville.

There are two saints of the same name whom it is absolutely necessary to keep distinct in dealing with the literary history of the early Irish Church—St. Finnian of Clonard, and St. Finnian of Moville. We have already spoken of the former; we now propose to speak of the latter, and of the great school of which he was the founder.

Moville, or Movilla, is at present the name of a townland less than a mile to the north-east of Newtownards, at the head of Strangford Lough, in the county Down. This district was in ancient times famous for its great religious establishments. Bangor, to which we shall refer presently, is not quite five miles due north of Moville. Newtownards, as its name implies, is a much more modern place, but it was the seat of a great Dominican Priory almost since the first advent of the Friar Preachers to Ireland. Comber, a few miles to the west at the head of Strangford Lough, contained both a Cistercian and an Augustinian Monastery. Abbey Grey, on the opposite or eastern shore of the Lough, had another great Cistercian house, founded by John de Courcy, the conqueror, and, we must add, the plunderer of Ulster. Further south, but on the western shore of the same Lough, anciently called Lough Cuan, were the Abbey of Inch, the famous Church of Saul, in which St. Patrick died, and the Church of Downpatrick, in which he was buried with SS. Brigid and Columcille. And in one of the islands in the same Strangford Lough, now called Island Mahee, quite close to the western shore, was that ancient monastery and school of Noendrum, of which we have already spoken. Religious men from the beginning loved to build their houses and churches in view of this beautiful sheet of water, with its myriad islands and fertile shores, bounded in the distance by swelling uplands, that lend a charming variety to this rich and populous and highly cultivated county.

Of the boyhood and education of St. Finnian little is known with certainty. He belonged to the noble family of the Dalfiatach, who seem to have been dynasts of the district to the north of this great inlet of the sea, which they called Lough Cuan. He was probably born some years before the beginning of the sixth century. His first teacher was St. Colman, afterwards Bishop of Dromore, who at that time seems to have been himself under the guidance and instruction of St. Mochae in the Island of Noendrum, but known at present as Island Mahee, in Strangford Lough. Colman became a favourite pupil of Mochae, who, when he himself was growing old, seems to have entrusted him with the care of the younger boys who had come to the island seminary to be trained up by these great masters in learning and piety. It is said that on one occasion St. Colman was going to chastise the young Finnian for some real or imaginary fault, when he felt his hand invisibly restrained by an angel, and he thereupon declared that he was unworthy to be entrusted with the care of so holy a youth, and that henceforward he would resign that office, so far as Finnian was concerned, to St. Mochae himself. This story at least shows that the young boy made great progress in virtue and wisdom under the guidance of both these holy men on the Island of Noendrum.

Now it came to pass whilst Finnian was at Noendrum, under the care of St. Mochae, that "ships" came from Britain into Strangford Lough, and cast anchor in front of the island. On board these vessels was a certain bishop called Nennio, who, with several of his disciples, had come from the famous monastery called Candida Casa, on the opposite shores of Galloway, to pay a visit to the religious family of Noendrum. We know from the lives of our early saints that this was no unusual occurrence. In those early days religious men were inspired with a spirit of spiritual enterprise, and several of them made it a point to visit the most renowned saints both in Ireland and Britain, in order to benefit by their instruction and example.

As we have seen, Candida Casa, or the White House was a stone church built on the extremity of a promontory in Galloway, about the year A.D. 397, by the great St. Ninian, the first apostle of the Northern Britons, at least after the departure of the Romans. It is true Christianity had been previously known in the district, for St. Patrick himself was in all probability a native of the valley of the Clyde, and was a captive in Ireland about the very time that

St. Ninian first came to Galloway. But after the withdrawal of the Roman troops from the northern province the district was overrun by the Picts and Scots, so that the remnants of the faithful were almost all driven out from the Lowlands of Scotland.

Ninian, who was a native of the district, had been educated in Rome during the pontificate of Pope Damasus, and later on returned to preach the Gospel anew in his native land. On his way he stopped for a short time at Tours, to pay a visit to St. Martin, the most prominent figure at the time in Christendom. It was from St. Martin, as Bede informs us, that he got the masons through whose means he was able to build the first stone church in Britain. The people had never before seen anything of the kind—they had no stone houses and no masons able to build them—hence in their admiration they called the new building the White House, to signify, just as the Americans do, that it was the grandest building in the kingdom. We are enabled to fix the date of its erection, because it is distinctly stated that during the progress of the work Ninian heard of the death of St. Martin of Tours, and dedicated the new church to him, which could only be done after his death, that is, about the year A.D. 397—some thirty-five years before St. Patrick began to preach in Ireland.

It cannot have been St. Ninian himself under whom St. Finnian studied at the Candida Casa, which was founded at least a hundred years before the date of this visit. In some of the lives his teacher is called Nennio,[1] in others Mugentius (see Colgan, page 633). It seems, certain, however, that young Finnian, thirsty for sacred knowledge, begged permission from St. Mochae to accompany the visitors on their return to the White House. The permission was readily granted; so, gliding southward in their boats between the multitudinous islands of Lough Cuan, they were carried out to sea through its narrow mouth by the swiftly receding tide, and then spreading every sail to catch the western breeze a few hours would bring them across the narrow channel that separates the Ards of Down from the Mull of Galloway. At the southern extremity of the inner promontory of Wigtown, there is a very small island which still bears the name of the Isle of Whithern. On this island are the ruins of an old church, which is probably all that now remains of the Candida Casa—a spot like Aran, Glastonbury, and Iona, to be ever venerated as one of the cradles of Celtic Christianity.

[1] And sometimes Ninian, because he was confounded with the original founder.

How long Finnian remained at Candida Casa cannot be exactly ascertained; but it was at least long enough to acquire the learning and discipline of the place in which, according to some accounts, he succeeded so well as to incur the bitter jealousy of his master.

The original founder of the Candida Casa had been educated at Rome, and no doubt the thoughts of its inmates were from time to time turned to the school of their great founder. Finnian, at least, resolved to go to the fountain head, and so, putting on his wallet and grasping his pilgrim staff, he set out upon his long journey. It was much more difficult and dangerous then to go to Rome than it is now, but these heroic Christian men despised dangers and hardships. Their life was a warfare for Christ; so they cared little when or where they fell in their Master's cause. Besides, they were never refused hospitality at the religious houses where they called, and even the rude mariners welcomed on board their vessels a holy man whose prayers were strong to calm the wrath of tempestuous seas. Finnian spent three months at Rome "learning the Apostolical customs and the Ecclesiastical Laws," and then resolved to return to his native land. But he bore with him from Rome a priceless treasure, or, as the *Martyrology of Ængus* calls it "yellow gold from over the sea;" not, however, yellow gold from the mine, but what our Celtic fathers valued more, the pure red gold of the Gospel corrected by the great St. Jerome and formally sanctioned by the Pope as the authentic text. The Vulgate, as we now have it, is substantially the work of St. Jerome to this extent, that he corrected the New Testament of the Old Vulgate; he translated from the Hebrew the proto-canonical books of the Old Testament; and moreover corrected the deutero-canonical books of the Old Testament according to the best MSS. of the Septuagint. It is, however, his correction, and not his own translation from the Hebrew, which under the name of the Gallican Psaltery, is still retained in our Latin Vulgate. But although this great work had been performed with the sanction of the Popes between the years A.D. 383 and 403, yet two hundred years elapsed before this version came into general use; and though it was commonly, it was not yet exclusively used even when St. Finnian was in Rome, between, A.D. 530 and 540. It was, however, a great improvement on the previous version, and as such highly valued by all scholars. It seems, however, that the new version had not been hitherto introduced into Ireland, and so special mention is made of Finnian's copy in the

Calendar of Cashel quoted by Colgan—"Finnian the White, of Maghbile (Moville); it was he who first carried into Ireland the Mosaic Law and the whole Gospel"—meaning thereby that it was he who first brought the first *integral* copy of St. Jerome's Vulgate, which afterwards came into exclusive use in the Irish as in the other churches.

Colgan identifies St. Finnian of Moville with St. Fridian, or Frigidian, who became bishop of Lucca in Italy about the middle of the sixth century. There are undoubtedly several facts narrated in the lives of both that go to establish this identity; but there is one great difficulty. According to the life of Fridian he died at Lucca, where it is said his blessed body is still preserved and reverenced; but according to the ancient *Life of St. Comgall* of Bangor and the local traditions, Finnian the bishop, or Finbarr, as he is often called, "sleeps amid many miracles in his own city of Maghbile."

Finnian is said to have returned to Ireland and founded his school at Moville about the year A.D. 540, that is some twenty years after his namesake of Clonard had opened his own great school on the banks of the Boyne. The name *Maghbile* means the *plain of the old tree*, probably referring to some venerable oak reverenced by the Druids before the advent of St. Patrick. At present there is nothing of the ancient abbey-school except a few venerable yews to mark the city of the dead, and an old ruined church on the line of the high road from Newtownards to Donaghadee. This old church, which was one hundred and seven feet in length, in all probability did not date back to the original foundation of the place, although it undoubtedly stands on the site of St. Finnian's original church. The spot was aptly chosen, sheltered by an amphitheatre of hills from the winds of the north and east, and commanding far away to the south a noble prospect of Lough Cuan's verdant islets and glancing waters.

The most famous pupil of this infant seminary was St. Columba, the light of all the Celtic west. If the incident to which Adamnan refers[1] in his *Life of St. Columba* be understood of Moville rather than Clonard, it seems that at this period Columba was studying Sacred Scripture under Finnian, that he was then a deacon, and on one occasion when the wine failed for the Holy Sacrifice, he went with the cruet to the neighbouring well (since closed up, but within living memory), and blessing the water, it was changed into wine, with which the Holy Sacrifice was duly offered up on that Festival Day.

There is another very celebrated incident recorded of

[1] Book ii. c. i.

SS. Finnian and Columcille, which seems to have really happened, and produced consequences of great import in the designs of Providence.

As we have seen, Finnian had brought from Rome a copy of the entire Bible, partly translated, partly corrected by St. Jerome. Very naturally this copy was highly prized and jealously guarded by the saint, for if any part were lost or injured the damage might have been, at least for him, irreparable. Now, the young Columba was an ardent student of the sacred volume; and especially he was anxious to get a copy of the new Psaltery, which most of our early saints were in the habit of reading daily. In truth it was their Breviary, and in their estimation was the greatest of their treasures. So Columba begged Finnian to allow him to make a copy of the Gallic Psaltery, as we now have it in the Vulgate, but Finnian, fearing for his treasure "of pure red gold," would not allow him, lest the manuscript might be lost or injured. Then Columba, finding a suitable opportunity, stealthily transcribed the Psalter, remaining up all night for the purpose, so that when Finnian came to his cell he found Columba hard at work at midnight, and, lo! a divine radiance illuminated his cell. Next day Finnian sought his manuscript, and Columba confessed that he had made the copy without his permission. Finnian thereupon demanded the copy, but Columba claimed it as his own—it was the fruit of his labour, and the original was uninjured. Nevertheless, as Finnian persisted in his demand, it was agreed to leave the matter to the arbitration of King Diarmaid at Tara. Tara was not far from Druim-fhinn (now Drumin in Louth) where this incident is said to have taken place. The king heard the parties, and then pronounced his award: "The calf goes with the cow, and the son-book, or copy, must go with the mother-book, or original."[1] The decision was not equitable, and Columba was sore distressed. Moreover, it came to pass that a young prince, Curnan by name, accidentally killed a companion at court, and fled for refuge to Columba, who was then standing near at hand. But the king had him dragged from the protection of the saint and slain on the spot. Columba, thus doubly wronged, fled from Tara, and told his royal kinsmen how he had been treated by King Diarmaid. They at once flew to arms to avenge the insults offered to a prince of Conal Gulban's royal line, whose holiness moreover even then was celebrated through all the North. They gathered together a mighty army—all the Clanna Niall of the North—and met the monarch and his forces at a place

[1] *Le gach bain a boinin.*

called Cuil-Dreimhne (now Cooldrummon) in the parish of Drumcliff, to the north of Sligo. In the bloody battle which followed, the forces of king Diarmaid were nearly annihilated —but Columcille was praying for his kinsmen during the battle, and so they nearly all escaped, whilst the enemy was destroyed. The Psalter, too, it seems, became the prize of the victors, and the most famous heirloom in the family of the O'Donnells. But the blood shed on this occasion weighed heavily on the conscience of Columba, although he may have been the innocent cause of it; and for his share in this battle he narrowly escaped excommunication at the hands of the saints of Ireland later on. With heroic fortitude, however, he accepted the penance imposed upon him by St. Molaise of Innismurray at the cross of Ahamlish in Sligo—to go to foreign lands to preach the Gospel and never look upon his native land again. The saint obeyed and, it is said, religiously kept his vow—for though he returned to Ireland again at the high call of duty, he bandaged his aged eyes with a cloth, so that they were never gladdened even with one glance of the green hills of his native land, which he loved with even more than the passionate tenderness of the Irish heart. He gave expression to his bitter grief in several touching poems, written in the sweet and musical tongue of Erin.

The copy of St. Finnian's Psaltery furtively made by Columcille has had a very strange, eventful history, and is perhaps the most interesting of our ancient relics. At present the manuscript, with the casket which contains it, is the property of Sir Richard O'Donnell of Newport in the County Mayo; but it is preserved for public inspection in the strong room of the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin. It is known as the Cathach, or Battler, from the Irish word *Cath*, a battle; and was so called because if carried three times around O'Donnell's host, in battle, on the breast of a priest free from mortal sin, it was sure to bring victory to the clan. Columcille was himself great grandson of Conal Gulban, the great sire of all the Cinel Conal. He thus became the patron of that warlike clan; in defence of his honour and to maintain his right to this very Psalter, they fought the great battle of Cuildreimhne, and they won the victory through his strong prayers. So it was only natural that the Psalter on earth and the saint in heaven should still be shield and buckler for the clan in the hour of danger.

And so indeed it was. But St. Cailin of Fenagh had told them to guard it well, and above all to see that it never fell into the hands of the foreigner. for that day would work woe

for Erin and confusion to the O'Donnells. Thus it became the most precious treasure of the Clan-Conal, and not a man of them that was not ready to die in its defence on the field of battle. Moreover, they appointed as hereditary guardians of the Cathach, the family of McRobartaigh—now McGroarty—and assigned for their maintenance the lands still called from them Ballymacgroarty, in the parish of Drumhome, county Donegal. The casket, or *cumdach*, in which this treasure was contained, bears an inscription in Irish on three sides to this effect:—"Pray for Cathbarr O'Donnell for whom this casket was made, and for Sitric, son of Mac Aedha, who made it, and for Domnall MacRobartaigh (abbot) of Kells at whose house it was made." The casket itself is of the most exquisite workmanship, and this inscription proves that it was made at the expense of Cathbarr O'Donnell, chief of his name in Donegal about the end of the eleventh century—he died in A.D. 1106. It was made, however, in the Abbey of Kells, which had been founded by Columcille, and was then ruled by a member of that very family of McGroarty, who were the hereditary custodians of the Cathach. The McGroartys were more faithful to their trust than the McMoyres, who had the custody of the *Book of Armagh*, and several members of the family met their death in defence of their sacred charge. In A.D. 1497 Con O'Donnell led an army against McDermott of Moylurg; but he and his troops were defeated, and "the Cathach of Columcille was also taken from them, and McGroarty, the keeper of it, was slain." It was restored, however, two years later. Again, in A.D. 1567, McGroarty, the keeper of the Cathach, was slain in a fratricidal conflict between the O'Donnells and O'Neills on the shore of Lough Swilly. In A.D. 1647, when John Colgan wrote, it was still, he tells us, in his own native county of Donegal. Daniel O'Donnell, who fought well for King James, carried it with him to the Continent, and had a new rim fixed on the casket with his name and the date, A.D. 1723. He died in A.D. 1735, leaving this precious relic on the Continent, where it remained until 1802, when it was claimed and recovered by Sir Neal O'Donnell of Newport in the county Mayo, from whom it passed to its present owner, Sir Richard O'Donnell.

It was deemed a heinous crime to open the sacred casket, and the widow of Sir Neal actually brought an action in the Court of Chancery in 1814 against Sir W. Betham, Ulster King-at-Arms, for daring to open the casket without her permission. His crime at any rate gratified our curiosity, for when

opened it was found to contain a small wooden box very much decayed. Within the box was a dark, damp mass, which, on careful and cautious examination, proved to be a portion of the Psalter in Latin, written in a neat but hurried hand, of which, however, several folios at the beginning and end were utterly destroyed by the damp. Fifty-eight leaves remain, containing the Psalter from the 31st to the 106th psalm. We have examined the fac-similes published in the first volume of the *National Manuscripts of Ireland*, and we find that it is a portion of the Gallican Psalter, that is the Psalter at present in our Latin Vulgate, which was a second and more careful correction of the then existing Psalter made by St. Jerome, not according to the Septuagint, like his first correction, the Roman Psalter, but made according to the Hexaplar Greek of Origen. St. Columcille's copy is executed with wonderful neatness and accuracy, containing even the asterisks and obelisks of St. Jerome's correction. We note these facts to show that the Bible brought from Rome by St. Finnian was in truth the new and corrected edition of the old Vulgate, which was just then coming into universal use. This fact is quite enough to explain St. Columcille's anxiety to get a copy, as well as St. Finnian's fear that his own treasure might be lost or injured.

Tourists visiting Ireland would do well to examine this venerable memorial of our ancient Church, as well as the other relics in the Royal Irish Academy. The casket itself consists of a brass box nine and a half inches long, eight in breadth, and two in thickness. The top, however, is covered with a silver plate, richly gilt, chased, and adorned with marvellously wrought figures of Columcille, the Crucifixion, and other sacred objects. The corners, too, were set in precious stones—crystals, pearls, sapphires, and amethysts, many of which, as might be expected, have been lost. The whole work furnishes a striking proof of the skill of our Celtic forefathers in metallurgy so early as the eleventh century, when it was almost lost as an art elsewhere.

St. Finnian composed a Rule for his monks, and a penitential code, which latter is still extant, and of much interest to antiquarians, as it is, perhaps, the earliest expression of the discipline of the primitive Irish Church on this important subject. These penitential canons are fifty-three in number, and several of them are rather rigorous, at least according to our relaxed modern notions. In those days men were more in earnest in the work of saving their souls, and punished with voluntary severity any grave neglect of this great duty. A penance of seven years was imposed for perjury, with the

additional penalty of setting free a bondsman or bondswoman. This goes to show that slavery had not yet been abolished in Ireland; but that the Church took every opportunity of promoting its abolition, not indeed by violence or injustice, but by the gentler method of persuasion and mercy. These penitential canons have been published by Wasserschleben at Halle in 1851, from manuscripts in the libraries of St. Gall, Paris, and Vienna. There is also extant in MSS. an interesting romantic dialogue said to have taken place between Tuan Mac Cairill and Finnian of Moville. In all probability, however, it is a composition of a much later date, and the dialogue, though highly interesting, is purely imaginary. There is a copy of this romantic tale in the book known as *Leabhar na h-Uidhre*, an ancient work said to have been originally written at Clonmacnoise, in the lifetime of its founder, St. Ciaran.

St. Finnian died in A.D. 589, according to the *Annals of Ulster*, at a very great age. In those days, when men led temperate and active lives, free from care, and always rejoicing in God, it was no unusual thing to live to the age of one hundred, or even one hundred and twenty, like St. Patrick and St. Kevin of Glendaloch. This date, too, goes to show that Finnian of Moville was identical with St. Frigidian of Lucca in Italy, for the death of the latter is assigned to A.D. 588 by Ughelli in his *Italia Sacra*.[1]

His death was much lamented, for his fame was great throughout all the land; and all our martyrologists bear testimony to his merits. Marianus O'Gorman calls him "Finnian with heart devout;" and another writer exclaims, "O blessed school (of Maghbile) the resting place of Finnian; how blessed that one saint should be the tutor of his fellow saints." His festival is celebrated on the 10th of September, the day after the festival of his contemporary, St. Ciaran of Clonmacnoise, and his blessed relics rest amid many miracles within that old Church of Moville, under the shadow of its ancient yews, forgotten by men, but watched over by the angels of God.

There is an ancient poem in the *Saltair na Rann* on the patron Saints of the various Irish clans. In the opening stanza Finnian is described as the patron of Ulidia—the Ulidians, it is said, all stand behind his back, that is, under his protection. Here it is in poetry:—

"Of Erin all is Patrick judge
On Macha's Royal Hill;
They bless his name with loud acclaim,
Our King by God's high will.

[1] Cardinal Moran's *Essays*, page 133.

"The Clanna Neil a sheltering oak
Have found in Columcille,
And Uladh's sons are strong behind
Great Finnian of Moville."

St. Finnian was, it seems, a bishop, and his successors in Moville for some two hundred years are spoken of as bishops; but from A.D. 731 they are merely described as abbots, and seem to have lost their episcopal jurisdiction. Still the School of Moville then and long after continued to flourish, although it appears to have been eclipsed by the brighter flame of Bangor, its younger neighbour to the north.

In A.D. 730 flourished Colman, son of Murchu, Abbot of Moville, who is regarded as the author of a Latin hymn of singular beauty preserved in the famous work known as the *Liber Hymnorum* now in Trinity College, Dublin. "Colman, son of Murchu," is described as the author of the hymn, and hence Dr. Todd very justly regards him as identical with the Abbot of Moville. The following is an English translation made for the learned Father O'Laverty, author of the *History of the Diocese of Down and Connor*, by the late lamented Denis Florence McCarthy, a poet whose own pure heart could well interpret the soaring aspirations of a saintly soul:—

THE HYMN OF ST. COLMAN, SON OF MURCHU, IN PRAISE OF ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL.

"No wild bird rising from the wave, no omen from the land or sea,
Oh Blessed Trinity, shall shake my fixed trust in thee.
No name to God, or demon given, no synonym of sin or shame,
Shall make me cease to supplicate the Archangel Michael's name,
That he, by God the leader led, may meet my soul that awful day
When from this body and this life it trembling takes its way.
Lest the demoniac power of him, who is at once the foot of pride
And prince of darkness, force it then from the true path aside.
May Michael the Archangel turn that hour which else were dark and sad
To one, when angels will rejoice and all the just be glad.
Him I beseech that he avert from me the fiend's malignant face,
And lead me to the realm of rest in God's own dwelling place.
May holy Michael day and night, he knowing well my need, be nigh,
To place me in the fellowship of the good saints on high;
May holy Michael, an approved assistant when all else may fail,
Plead for me, sinner that I am, in thought and act so frail,
May holy Michael in his strength my parting soul from harm defend,
Till circled by the myriad saints in heaven its flight doth end;
For me may holy Gabriel pray—for me may holy Raphael plead—
For me may all the angelic choirs for ever intercede.
May the great King's eternal halls receive me freed from stain and sin,
That I the joys of Paradise may share with Christ therein.

Glory for aye be given to God—for aye to Father and to Son—
For aye unto the Holy Ghost with them in council one.

V. "May the most holy St. Michael
The prince of angels defend us,
Whom to conduct our souls heavenward
God from the highest doth send us."

The School of Moville during the subsequent centuries of disaster not only maintained its existence but produced one of the most distinguished of the mediaeval historians, the celebrated Marianus Scotus, the chronicler, to be carefully distinguished from his namesake and contemporary, Marianus Scotus, a poet, theologian and commentator of Sacred Scripture, to whom we hope to refer on another occasion.

II.—Marianus Scotus.

Marianus Scotus, the Chronicler, was born, as he himself tells us, in the year A.D. 1028 ; but we know nothing of his family, or the place of his birth. Marianus is the smooth, latinized form of Maelbridge, the servant of St. Brigid, a favourite pre-nomen in ancient Ireland. He tells us, too, in his chronicle, that when he had on one occasion committed a slight fault, his preceptor Tighernagh Boirceach reminded him, how the abbot of Iniscaltra, an island in Lough Derg, had expelled a holy man from the Island and commanded him to leave Ireland for giving a little food to the brethren without permission. This shows that Tighernach Boirceach, Abbot of Moville for several years before his death in A.D. 1061, must have been the spiritual guide who reprimanded Marianus for his fault; whence we infer that Marianus spent his youth in the School of Moville. In A.D. 1056 he tells us—"I, Marianus, left my native country this year, having become a pilgrim for the kingdom of God." He came to Cologne and there entered the Monastery of St. Martin, at that time ruled by Irish abbots, and containing a community of Irish monks. Two years later he went to Fulda, and "all unworthy as I am, I Marianus, was ordained priest with Sigfrid, Abbot of Fulda, nigh to the body of the blessed Martyr Kilian of Wurtzburg"—his countryman who had been like himself a pilgrim and died for Christ in a foreign land. There he became a recluse, shut up in his little cell for ten long years, given wholly to prayer, penance, and study. Every day during these ten years he offered the Holy Sacrifice over the tomb of his countryman, Anmchaidh, the same who was driven from Inniscaltra as a penance for his

fault, and who died in A.D. 1043 in the odour of sanctity. From Fulda in A.D. 1069, he, the "wretched Marianus," was, as he tells us, transferred by order of the Abbot of Fulda and the Bishop of Mayence to that city, and there again, as he tells us in his sweet humility, he became once more a hermit for his sins. His learning, especially in history and chronology, was very extensive, and so by order of his superiors he wrote a Chronicle in Three Books, which is one of the most valuable memorials of mediæval learning that have come down to our times. The first two books are mainly devoted to questions of chronology in which the writer exhibits vast learning and great ingenuity. He labours especially to refute the commonly assigned date of our Saviour's birth as fixed by the Dionysian computation, which he affirms is twenty-two years behind the proper date. For this, though he is not followed by modern chronologists, he certainly won the applause of his mediaeval contemporaries. Unfortunately these two books have not yet been published; but the "Third Book" has been published by the learned Waitz in the fifth volume of *Pertz's Historical Monuments of Germany.* It has been since republished in *Migne's Latin Patrology,* volume 147, where it can be more readily consulted by Irish scholars. The work extends from the birth of Christ to the year A.D. 1081; the following year A.D. 1082 the writer ended a life full of good works, glorious for God, and for his country. He sleeps, like many another Irish saint, far away from the green hills of Ireland; but he sleeps well with kindred dust in the monastery of St. Martin of Mayence, and posterity has honoured, with the name of "the Blessed," Marianus Scotus, the latest glory of the School of Moville.

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CHAPTER XII.

THE SCHOOL OF CLONMACNOISE.

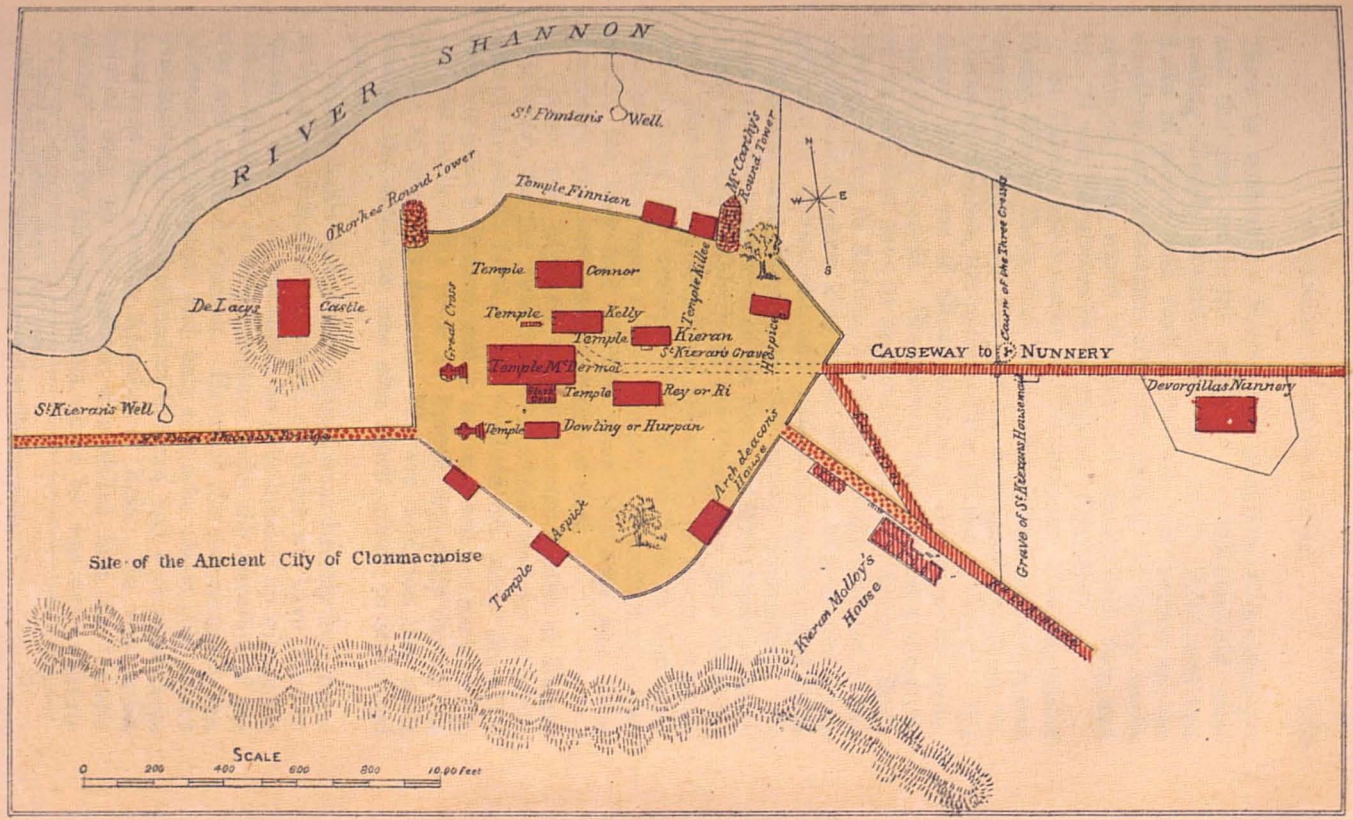
I.—St. Ciaran of Clonmacnoise.

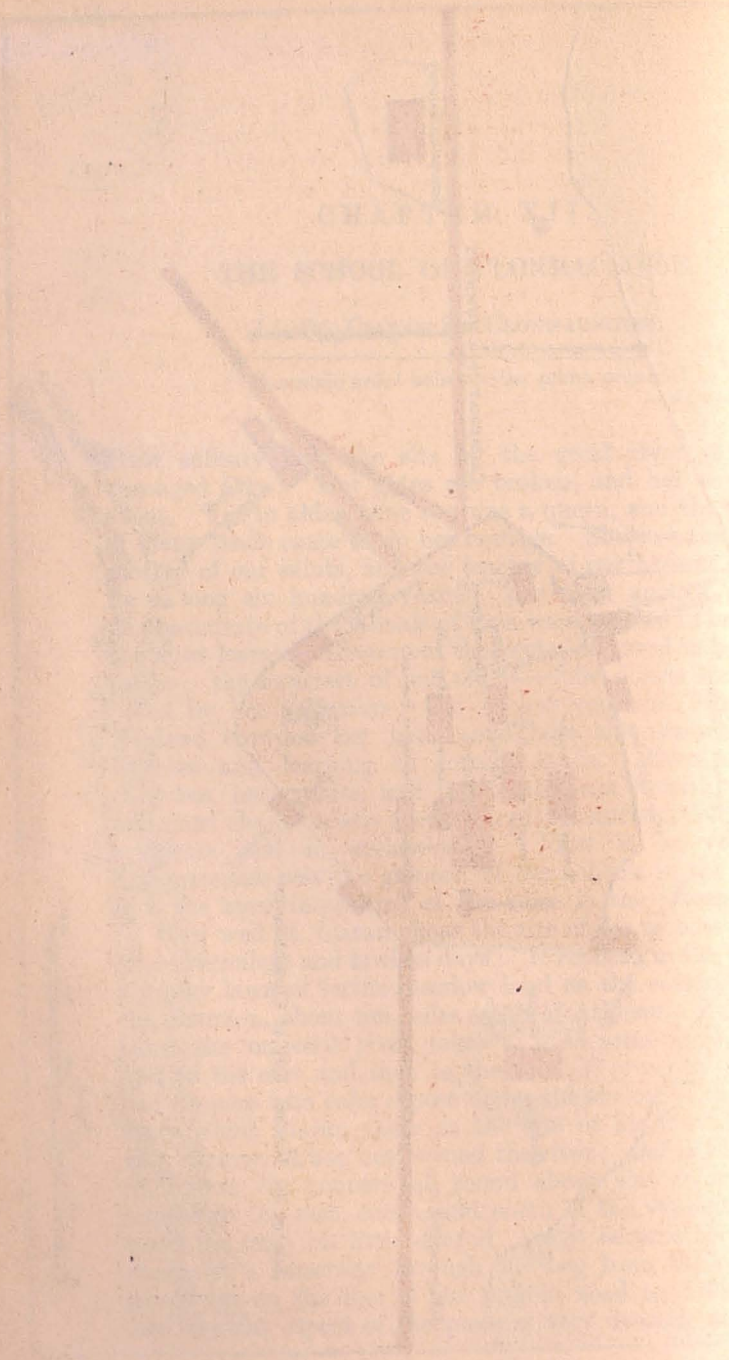
"Quomodo sedet sola civitas plena populo."
—*Jeremias.*

How solitary now she sits by the great river that once thronged City! Her gates are broken, and her streets are silent. Yet in olden time she was a queen, and the children of many lands came to do her homage. She was the nursing mother of our saints, and the teacher of our highest learning for a long six hundred years. The most ancient and the most accurate of the Annals of Erin were written in her halls; the most learned 'Doctors of the Scots' lectured in her class-rooms; the sweetest of our old Gaedhlic poems were composed by her professors; the noblest youth of France and England crowded her halls, and bore the renown of her holiness and learning to foreign lands. Even still her churches, her crosses, and her tombstones furnish the best and most characteristic specimens of our ancient Celtic art in sculpture and in architecture. View it as you may, Clonmacnoise was the greatest of our schools in the past, as it is the most interesting of our ruins in the present.

How well St. Ciaran chose the site of his monastic city in those turbulent and lawless days! It reposed in the bosom of a grassy lawn of fertile meadow land on the eastern bank of the Shannon, about ten miles south of Athlone. Just at this point the majestic river takes a wide semi-circular sweep first to the east and then to the south; presently it widens and deepens into calm repose under the shelter of that grassy ridge, which Ciaran chose as the site of his monastery. A vast expanse of bog lies beyond the river; and in the time of St. Ciaran the country all round about was an impassable morass to the east, south, and north of the verdant oasis on which he built his little church. So it became necessary to construct a causeway through the bog from the monastery somewhat on the line of the present road to Athlone. At this day the aspect of the place is very desolate and lonely.

MAP OF CLONMACNOISE OR THE SEVEN CHURCHES.





There is nothing to distract the attention of the stranger save the gray ruins, the sweep of the full-bosomed river stealing silently onwards like time in its flight, and vast flocks of plover and curlew that are now settled on the meadows, and a moment after are circling in flying clouds around us. The report of a gun had startled both them and us. It was like a voice in the regions of the dead.

St. Ciaran, the founder of Clonmacnoise, is usually called Ciaran Mac In Tsair, that is, the Son of the Carpenter, and sometimes Ciaran the Younger, to distinguish him from St. Ciaran of Saigher, the patron of the diocese of Ossory. His father, Beoit, son of Olcan, though a carpenter by trade, came of high descent. His mother, Darerca, was a daughter of the race that gave its name to the county Kerry. Beoit lived at Larne, in Antrim, but being greatly harassed by the exactions of Ainmire, king of the district, he migrated to the province of Connaught, and settled at a place called Rath Crimthann, near Fuerty, in the county Roscommon. He was, it seems, unmarried at the time, and there took to himself a wife from the daughters of the Ciarraighe, who about the same time had migrated from Irluachair, in Kerry, and had settled along the western bank of the Suck in that very district.[1] They were a holy couple, and trained up a holy family, for they had no less than five sons and three daughters, who were great servants of God.

Ciaran was baptized by the deacon Justus at Fuerty (*Fidharta*), in the year A.D. 512, which we take to be the date of the saint's birth.[2] He received his early education from the same holy man, and in his turn was not too proud to tend the herds of his tutor at Fuerty, especially during the absence of the holy deacon. We are told, too, that while tending the cattle he was also much given to study and prayer.

It is probable that young Ciaran went directly from home to the great School of Clonard, of which we have already spoken. While he was there, he gave himself up with great zeal to the study of holy Scripture under the direction of the wise and learned Finnian. He made the acquaintance, too, of nearly all the great and holy men who about this period lived in blessed brotherhood at Clonard, and were afterwards known as the Twelve Apostles of Erin. He was much beloved both by his master, who called him the "gentle youth," and by his companions, whom he was ever anxious

[1] *Book of Rights*, page 100, note.
[2] See *Chronicon Scotorum*, compiled at Clonmacnoise.

to oblige. Books were then very scarce, and on one occasion when St. Ninnidius of Lough Erne was vainly searching for a copy of the Gospels, Ciaran gave him his own copy, saying that we should do to others as we would have others do to us—the text which he was studying in St. Matthew at the moment.

Ciaran once made a present of corn to his master and the brotherhood, which sufficed for their wants during forty days—it was said, too, this blessed food given by Ciaran had virtue to heal the sick, who partook of it, and a portion of it was reserved for that purpose. Finnian in return blessed his generous and holy pupil, and foretold that his Church in the coming years would be fruitful "of nobility and wisdom;" that it would have much glory and much land; and that half Ireland would one day be subject to his rule. When the master was absent, Ciaran was deputed to take his place, which shows the high opinion then entertained by Finnian of his learning and holiness. One day Finnian saw in vision two golden moons in the firmament of Erin; one he said was Columcille, to illumine the North with the lustre of his virtues and high descent; the other was Ciaran, who would shine over central Erin, with the mild radiance of charity and meekness.

At length the time came for Ciaran to leave Clonard. Both masters and scholars were sorry to part with the gentle youth. Finnian even offered to resign the master's chair in his favour; but Ciaran wisely declined the great honour, for he was too young and inexperienced for that office. Columcille was then at Clonard about the year A.D. 537 or 538, and was greatly attached to Ciaran; he composed regretful stanzas at his departure, and afterwards followed him all the way to Aran:—

> "The noble youth that goeth westward,
> And leaves us mourning here—
> Ah! gentle, loving, tender-hearted
> Is Ciaran Mac In Tsair."

We have in a previous chapter referred to Ciaran's sojourn in Aran with St. Enda. On his departure from the blessed isles Ciaran told the venerable Enda that he saw in a vision a large fruitful tree planted in the midst of Erin, and its boughs sheltered all the land. Its fair fruit was borne over land and sea, and all the birds of the air came and eat thereof. "That tree is thyself," said Enda; "all Erin shall be filled with thy name, and sheltered by the grace that will be in thee, and many men from all parts will be fed by thy

prayers and thy fastings. Go, then, in God's name, and found thy Church on the Shannon's banks in the centre of the island."

After leaving Aran, Ciaran paid a short visit to St. Senan of Scattery Island, in the Lower Shannon, and was much edified by the example and conversation of that holy man. He then went north in obedience to the word of Enda, and at first founded a church at a place called Isell Ciaran, where he remained only a short time. He then founded another oratory on Inis Ainghin, now called Hare Island, in Lough Ree, a beautifully wooded islet about two miles north of Athlone, where a ruined church may still be seen that was built on the site of Ciaran's more ancient oratory.

It was an admirable site for a monastery; far enough from the shore for security, but near enough for convenience, and situated just at the point where the wide and beautiful lake contracts its waters into the stately stream that flows beneath the historic arches of the bridge at Athlone.

For three years and three months only Ciaran remained at Hare Island. This would fix his arrival there in A.D. 540 if, as we shall see, he died in A.D. 544 at the age of thirty-three years. Going further south by the bank of the river to a place that would be nearer to the centre of the island, he stopped at the spot then called Ard Mantain, which in his opinion was too fertile and too beautiful to be chosen as the abode of fasting saints. "We might," he said, "have here much of the world's riches, but the souls going to heaven from it would be few." So he journeyed on still further to the south through what was then a desolate expanse of fens and brakes, until he came to Ard Tiprait, the Height of the Spring. "Here," he said to his companions, "let us remain, for many souls will ascend to heaven from this spot."[1] It was on the 10th of the Kalends of February that Ciaran took up his abode at Clonmacnoise with eight companions; and it was on the 10th of the Moon, and a Saturday. This is very specific information, and evidently authentic. It shows that the writer of Ciaran's life knew what he was saying, and was not afraid of being contradicted. These dates prove that the foundation of Clonmacnoise took place on Saturday, the 23rd of January, in the year A.D. 544.[2] It was finished on the 9th of May following; and the same ancient and accurate life tells us the circumstances of this most remarkable event—the founding of the greatest school and the greatest monastery in Ireland.

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[1] *Vita S. Ciarani.*

[2] This date of the Latin Life is quite accurate. The Dominical letter for that year is C. B.; therefore the 1st of January was on Friday, and the 23rd was Saturday; and the 9th of Sept. was also on Saturday. We cannot, however, now ascertain the exact day of the moon, for the old cycle was then in use.

When Ciaran was planting the first post to mark out the site of the Cathair of Clonmacnoise, Diarmaid Mac Cearbhaill, who happened to be present with a few of his companions, helped the saint with his own hands to fix the post in the earth. "Though your companions to-day are few," said Ciaran, "to-morrow thou shalt be High King of Erin." This prophecy, like many others, helped to fulfil itself. One of Diarmaid's companions, Maelmor,[1] his foster brother, overheard the saint's word; and knowing that he was a man of God, he resolved to help in carrying it out. King Tuathal Maelgarbh, great grandson of Niall the Great, had set a price on Diarmaid's head, or rather on his heart, if brought to him in person; so Diarmaid was forced to hide himself and live in the deserts and bogs around Clonmacnoise. There he met the saint, and not only aided him to build his monastery, as stated above, but in reverence to the saint he placed his own hand beneath that of Ciaran in fixing the first pole. Now, Maelmor hearing the prediction, with Diarmaid's reluctant consent, took his fleet black horse, and a whelp's heart besprinkled with blood on the point of his spear, and rode post haste to a place called Greallach Eillte in Meath, where the king with his nobles happened to be at the time. Seeing the stranger riding post to the king with the bloody heart on his spear, all made way for him, for they, like the king himself, thought it was the heart of Diarmaid, which he was going to present to the king. But instead of Diarmaid's heart, Maelmor gave the monarch a fatal thrust with his spear, which killed him on the spot. Maelmor was immediately set upon by the royal guards and hewn to pieces. But his purpose was achieved—Diarmaid MacCearbhaill was the nearest heir to the throne, and was immediately proclaimed king without opposition. During his reign he was, as might be expected, a great patron and benefactor of Clonmacnoise, and although there is good reason to believe that he still kept Druids[2] and soothsayers in his palace, he gave that monastery large grants of land, and subjected to its authority no less than one hundred of the small churches in its neighbourhood. Such was the origin of the Diocese of Clonmacnoise, which after many vicissitudes is now united to that of Ardagh.[3]

St. Ciaran lived only four months after founding his monastery and little church—the Eclais Beg—on the banks

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[1] *Chronicon Scotorum.* Anno 544.

[2] Colgan says that some of the Druids continued in Ireland down to the eighth century, and were held in high esteem in certain parts of the country as poets and sheanachies.—*Acta SS.*, page 149, n. 15.

[3] See Dr. Monaghan's interesting *Records of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise.*

of the Shannon. The same accurate writer of his life states with great precision that his death came upon him in the thirty-third year of his age, on the fifth of the Ides (the 9th) of September, on a Saturday, the fifteenth day of the moon. These data mark the year A.D. 544 (not 549), as the year of the saint's death. It was also the year in which King Diarmaid ascended the throne, and which brought with it a great plague that proved fatal to many of the saints of Erin, as well as to Ciaran himself.

The death of Ciaran was very touching. "Take me out a little," he said, "from the cell into the open air." Then looking up to the blue sky, he said—"Narrow indeed is the way which leads to heaven." "Not for you, father, will it be narrow," said one of his monks who was standing nigh. "It is not said in the Gospel that it will be easy for me or for any one," said Ciaran; "even the blessed Paul and David were afraid." He would not allow the stone pillow to be removed in order to give more ease to his head. He had kept it during life, and he would rest on it in death—"Blessed are they," he observed, "who persevere unto the end." The brethren now saw God's angels hovering in the air around them awaiting the moment of Ciaran's departure. He grew weaker, so they brought him in again to Eclais Beg. It was fitting he should die there; it was the scene of his prayers and tears. The skin on which he used to sleep in his little cell was stretched on the ground, and he was laid upon it. The end was now at hand. He gave his last blessing to the brethren, and asked them to close the church, and leave him alone with his soul's friend, St. Kevin of Glendaloch, whom he had known and loved at Clonard. Kevin blessed holy water according to the Church's rite, and sprinkled the little oratory, and the couch of the dying saint. Then he gave Ciaran the holy Communion and blessed him once more ere he died. Ciaran loved the holy Kevin much; God had sent him to his bedside at the prayer of Ciaran himself—and as a pledge of his love the dying saint gave to Kevin his bell—the symbol in those days of monastic rule—and bidding him a tender farewell, he gave up his pure and gentle soul to God.

He was, indeed, a wonderful man—that St. Ciaran. He died very young; it was at the sacred age of thirty-three, as all our Annals tell. In four months—from February to May—he built his convent; for four months more he ruled his community; and then he was called to his reward; yet that community grew to be the greatest and most learned of all the land.

All our martyrologies assign the festival of St. Ciaran to the 9th of September; and the day has been celebrated from that hour to the present. St. Ængus says that it is a solemnity that "fills territories and impels fast-going ships" on sea and river—hurrying to celebrate the glorious festival of Ciaran of Cluain.

Anyone who visits Clonmacnoise on the 9th of September will see the "territory" of the saint still filled with pilgrims, and the 'ships' laden with crowds of men and women crossing the Shannon to visit his holy shrine. St. Cummian of Clonfert in his Paschal Epistle, of which we have already spoken, ranks Ciaran, and most justly, amongst the "early Fathers of the Irish Church."[1] Alcuin, who studied at Clonmacnoise, calls him the glory of the Irish nation.[2] "The three worst counsels that were ever accomplished in Erin," says the gloss on Ængus, "by the advice of saints, were the shortening of Ciaran's life, the exile of Columcille, and the expulsion of Mochuda from Rahan." The 'saints,' it seems, were jealous because Diarmaid had conferred so many favours on Ciaran—so they prayed to God to take him out of the world before any harm came of it, and lo! it was done. A more thoughtful man, however, would say, not without reason, that these three counsels were great blessings for Ireland and for Scotland too. It was well that Ciaran was called away so soon to heaven before jealousy or rivalry made enemies for Clonmacnoise; it was well, surely, that Molaise of Innismurray sent Columba to Scotland to preach the Gospel; and it was well, too, that Mochuda left Rahan; for it was only to found a greater and more magnificent monastery at Lismore. So Providence always out of seeming evil brings forth good.

There was hardly time for Ciaran himself to do any literary work at Clonmacnoise—he built the house and blessed it; and was then summoned to his Father's House in heaven. There is, however, an old Gaelic poem widely celebrated, which is attributed to Ciaran. It begins with the words "An rim, an ri, an richid rain," and seems to have been a fruitless prayer that God would spare his life to do greater works for His glory. God thought, however, he had done enough, and called him home. He was, say the ancients, like to John the Apostle in his life and habits—pure, and young, and loving, soaring up to God on the wings of the eagle.

1 One of the "Patres priores." 2 "Cheranus Scottorum gloria gentis."

Like most of the Apostles of the early Irish Church, Ciaran led an extremely ascetic life. He never passed a day without manual labour for the benefit of the brethren. He was never idle. He slept on the naked clay; he had a stone for his pillow; he never wore a soft garment next his skin. He was, as we know, above all, humble, gentle and chaste; he never, it is said, told a lie and never looked on the face of a woman. He never drank ale or milk, except diluted one-third with water. He never ate any bread except one-third, sand was mixed with it. He was thus a man of humility, abstinence, and prayer, and therefore God blessed the work of his hand, and exalted him both during his life and after his death. There was no saint more beloved by his own contemporaries—by Enda, and Kevin, and Finnian, and Columcille. They all loved him dearly whilst he was with them; and their hearts were sore at his departure. And to this day, at least by the Shannon's shore, there is no saint whose name is held in more affectionate remembrance than the founder of Clonmacnoise.

The Eclais Beg, in which St. Ciaran died, became not unnaturally a sacred spot. It was the very centre of the holiness of Clonmacnoise. He left several relics, which the piety of his children deemed most holy, and not without cause. The Imda Chiarain, or cow-skin couch,[1] on which he died was deemed a most precious relic, and cured the sick who were allowed to stretch their feeble frames over it. His holy body was buried in the Eclais Beg, or Tempull Chiaran, and his grave is still venerated by the faithful, although the site is rather doubtful. The "Cemetery of noble Cluain" was deemed as sacred a burial place as any in Rome itself; and the noblest families in all the land built mortuary chapels within the sacred enclosure. There were saints interred in its cemetery, it was said, "whose prayers would make even hell a heaven." The sound of its bell was holy, and frightened away the demons. The shadow of its round tower sanctified the soil that it fell upon. Ciaran brought to heaven by his prayers, during their life or after their death, the souls of all those who were buried in that holy ground. Or, as it is quaintly put in the *Registry of Clonmacnoise*—"What souls harboured in the bodies buried under that dust may never be adjudged to damnation—wherefore those of the same (royal) blood have divided the churchyard amongst themselves by the consent of Kyran, and of his holy clerks."

This is not the imagining of later writers, for the venerable Adamnan tells us that when after the Synod of

[1] This was the hide of the dun cow which Ciaran brought to Clonard where she gave milk to the Twelve Apostles of Erin.

Drumceat (A.D. 585) St. Columcille came to visit Clonmacnoise, he took a portion of the same holy clay to bring it home; but threw it into the sea at Coryvreckan to still the raging waves, which thereupon became quite calm.

II.—The Ruined Churches at Clonmacnoise.

The existing ruins at Clonmacnoise, though now so much dilapidated, are highly interesting, both from the historical and artistic point of view. They belong to different periods, the date of which can be easily ascertained, and thus furnish many authentic specimens of the Irish Romanesque.

Of St. Ciaran's original church or oratory—the Eclais Beg—not a trace now remains. The grave of the saint is pointed out close by the southern wall of the ruin called Tempull Ciaran, which is in the very centre of the churchyard, and in all probability was built on the site of Ciaran's original oratory.

The following are the principal ruined churches still to be seen at Clonmacnoise :—

(1.) There is the Daimhlaig, or Great Stone-Church, called also M'Dermott's Church, and sometimes the Cathedral. We know for certain that it was built in A.D. 909 by Flann, King of Ireland, and by Colman, abbot of Clonmacnoise and Clonard at that time. The beautiful stone cross which was erected to commemorate the building of the church itself is still standing before the great western doorway, and tells its own story. In two of the compartments of the sculptured shaft a prayer is asked of every one who passes for the souls' rest of the founders of the church. In one it is :—OR DO FLAVND MAC MAELSECHLAIND—"A prayer for Fland, son of Maelsechlaind." In the other it is :—COLMAN DORROINI IN CROISSA AR IN RI FLAND—that is, "Colman made this cross for King Fland." The inscriptions are partly effaced, but not so as to obliterate the words completely. Taken in connection with the entry in the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, A.D. 901 (*recte* 908), they are highly interesting. "King Flann and Colman Connellagh this year founded the church in Clonmacnoise called the Church of the Kings." Colman outlived King Flann, who died in A.D. 916, by eight years, and no doubt this cross, as Petrie points out, was erected for the two-fold purpose of commemorating the foundation of the church, and of marking the sepulchre of King Flann, its pious founder. The sculptures on the west side of the shaft represent St. Ciaran and King Diarmaid in

the act of planting the first pole of the Eclais Beg; the opposite side represents in high relief several events in the life of our Saviour, as recorded in Holy Scripture. Hence this great cross came to be called the Cross of the Scriptures —*Cros na Screaptra*. It is fifteen feet in height; and is a most interesting specimen of Celtic art in sculpture at that early and unpropitious period. This, the Cathedral Church, afterwards came to be called M'Dermott's Church, because, as the *Registry of Clonmacnoise* informs us, "Tomaltach M'Dermott, chief of Moylurg, repaired or rebuilt the Great Church upon his own costs; and it was for the cemetery of the Clanmaolruany that he did so." This Tomaltach Mac Dermott, the King of Moylurg, "a most formidable and triumphant man against his enemies, and a man of the greatest bounty and alms-giving," died in the year A.D. 1336,[1] which sufficiently fixes the period of the restoration of the Great Church. There is an inscription over the northern doorway in Latin, which tells that "Odo, Dean of Clonmacnoise, caused it to be made," probably in the fifteenth century.

(2.) On the western boundary of the church-yard is the ruined chancel of the church called Tempull Finnian, which probably dates back to the ninth century, and was built on the site of a more ancient oratory dedicated to St. Finnian of Clonard, if not actually built by that saint. He was, as we have seen, the 'tutor' of Ciaran, and loved him much; so that doubtless he came to visit his former disciple at Clonmacnoise. Close at hand on the river's bank is Finnian's Well; and tradition still points out the grave in which he is said to be buried. The chancel arch of this church in three orders is highly ornamented, and is considered an excellent specimen of the Celtic Romanesque. The round tower, which adjoins this church, appears to be coeval with the building; and doubtless both were erected during the Danish wars. It is only 56 feet high, but it is 49 feet in circumference. The material is a fine sandstone, probably carried thither on the river, for there is none in the neighbourhood. Lord Dunraven considered it to be the most interesting monument at Clonmacnoise, and Petrie describes it as wholly built of ashlar masonry with a fine sandstone laid in horizontal courses. Its conical roof is built in a peculiar herring-bone ashlar, such as is not found elsewhere in Ireland.

This tower is commonly called M'Carthy's Tower; and the church is frequently called M'Carthy's Church, from a

[1] *Annals of Loch Cé.*

mistaken notion that it was built by Finneen M'Carthy of Desmond in the beginning of the thirteenth century. M'Carthy certainly gave some land to the community of Clonmacnoise to secure their prayers, and what he valued even more, a burial-place in its holy soil for his own royal race. Tempull Finnian was assigned to him for the purpose; and it was doubtless repaired by M'Carthy; but it was built long before any of his name was known at Clonmacnoise.

(3.) The O'Conors, Kings of Connaught, also gave a grant of many townlands to secure a mortuary chapel at Clonmacnoise. It was known as Tempull Conor, and was founded by Cathal, King of Connaught, who died A.D. 1010; he was son of that Conor (Conchobhar) who gave his name to their royal race.

(4.) Another kingly family of Connaught—the O'Kellys of Hy-Many—built themselves a sepulchral chapel within the sacred enclosure, which they paid for with many a broad acre. It was founded by Conor O'Kelly of Moenmoy, in the year A.D. 1167, as the Four Masters inform us. He was a great chief, famed for his royal bounty, and ruled over Hy-Many for forty years.

(5.) King Diarmaid, who helped St. Ciaran to fix the first stake enclosing the sacred boundary of Clonmacnoise, belonged to the southern Hy-Niall race. It is no wonder, therefore, that his royal descendants had their chapel there. It was called Tempull Righ—the King's Church—and sometimes Tempull Ua Maelshechlainn, from the family name, which the southern Hy-Niall afterwards assumed. It stands south-east of the cathedral, and measures 40 feet in length by 17 feet in breadth.

(6.) The beautiful round tower at the north-western corner of the cemetery is commonly called O'Rorke's Tower, because, as the *Registry of Clonmacnoise* tells us, it was built by Fergal O'Rorke, King of Connaught, towards the middle of the tenth century. This prince, for his soul's sake, and as the price of his family sepulchre, undertook to keep all the churches in repair during his own life; and he also built the causeway still in part existing from the Yew Tree to the Lough. The portion of the tower built by O'Rorke's men in the tenth century is of fine-jointed ashlar masonry; but the upper portion, executed two centuries later in A.D. 1135, is of ruder and very inferior workmanship.[1] At that date lightning struck the tower, overthrowing its roof and twenty

[1] See Lord Dunraven's *Notes*.

feet of wall. The coarser masonry represents the restoration then effected by Turlogh O'Conor and O'Malone, Abbot of Clonmacnoise. This tower is now sixty-two feet high, and fifty-six feet in circumference. There were other chapels and sepulchral oratories at Clonmacnoise, which have now completely disappeared, and to which it is unnecessary for us to make further reference. The nunnery whose foundations have only recently been brought to light, was about 1,000 paces to the east of the monastery.

On the western border beyond the cemetery are the ruins of a very striking Norman Keep, commonly called De Lacy's Castle. It was built, however, in A.D. 1214, not by De Lacy, who was then dead, but by John de Gray,[1] Bishop of Norwich, an able and vigorous justiciary, who built this strong keep to protect the monastery and defend the passes of the Shannon against the turbulent Connaught men. Like all the Norman work of that period in Ireland, it is as solid and massive as if it were built of solid rock, not by man but by nature.

The churchyard has many inscribed tombstones, which are fully described by Petrie and by Miss Stokes in her interesting work on Christian Inscriptions. These were the tombstones placed over the graves of the abbots of Clonmacnoise, for the humble brothers of the monastery were interred beneath 'noteless burial stones.' The most striking feature exhibited in these monuments is their wonderful variety of design and the delicacy of execution.

One of the most interesting of the tombstones is that placed over "Suibine, son of Mailae Humai," who, in the *Chronicon Scotorum*, is described as an anchorite and choice scribe, and whose death is marked at the year A.D. 890 or 891. He is beyond doubt the person who, as we shall see hereafter, is described by Florence of Worcester as the "most learned Doctor of the Scots"—Doctor Scotorum peritissimus—truly a high eulogy of Suibine, whose name is inscribed on this stone, and whose dust lies beneath it.

There is another stone on which is incised a cross of very peculiar form with the simple legend BLAIMAC. who, as we learn from the same *Chronicon Scotorum*, was princeps, or ruling Abbot of Clonmacnoise, and died in A.D. 896.

There were no less than one hundred and forty of these inscribed stones at Clonmacnoise, when it was first visited by Petrie in early life. Many of them have since disappeared,

[1] See Professor Stokes' *Lectures*.

but a few new ones have been discovered during more recent excavations, so that the place is still a perfect treasury of the monuments of our ancient art. There is an ancient Gaedhlic poem in the Burgundian Library at Brussels which gives an account of the kings and warriors who are buried in "the city of Ciaran, the prayerful, the pious and the wise."[1] A somewhat similar poem, written by Conaing Buidhe O'Mulconry, is in Trinity College, and has been translated by the late Mr. Hennessy.[2] The second stanza tells how Turlough O'Conor and his ill-starred son, Roderick, the last King of Ireland, sleep on either side of the high altar in Temple Mor, which the Four Masters identify with Temple-Ciaran. The independence of Erin sleeps with them in their tomb.

III.—The Scholars of Clonmacnoise.

There was one feature in the government of the monastery of Clonmacnoise which served to make it more than any other school in Ireland a kind of national seminary—it belonged to no tribe. Its monks and its scholars came from all parts of the country; and its abbots were chosen not from any family, or from any tribe, but from all the provinces without distinction. Its founder was a Connaughtman of half-northern and half-southern extraction. His successor, St. Oena, was from the territory of Laeghis (Leix) in Leinster. The third abbot, MacNisse, was of the Ultonians; and the fourth, Alithir, who died in A.D. 599, was a Munsterman. This wise policy tended to develop a generous and large-minded spirit in the community, which must have been productive of the happiest effects.

The influence of Clonmacnoise as a great school was first displayed during the discussions on the Easter question. The Columbian houses in the north of Ireland, following the example of the mother house at Hy, adhered to the ancient method of fixing the date of Easter. On the other hand the religious houses of the south and south-eastern parts of Ireland, in obedience to the directions of Pope Honorious, convoked a Synod at Magh Lene in King's County to discuss this most important question. Magh Lene was near Durrow, and not far from Clonmacnoise; but Durrow was Columbian, and its abbot remained away. Cummian, however, expressly tells us that Ciaran's successor was present at that great assembly and sanctioned its decrees. Though belonging to the northern half—for Clonmacnoise was in the ancient

[1] It has been translated for Miss Stokes by Mr. O'Looney.
[2] See *Christian Inscriptions*, page 79.

Meath—the abbot had learning and courage enough to see that the Irish practice was opposed to that of the universal Church, and ought to be given up in favour of the Roman discipline.

It is from this time forward that Clonmacnoise begins to rank as the first of our Irish Schools. It was already largely endowed by the kings of Meath and Hy-Many, to both of whom, so to speak, it belonged, for the river was the only boundary. These possessions were constantly growing larger. In A.D. 648 or 649, Diarmaid, King of Meath, crossed the Shannon to fight Guaire, King of Connaught, and his Munster allies. Diarmaid on his way to battle stopped at Clonmacnoise, and begged the congregation of Ciaran to pray to God that he would return safe home "through the merits of their guarantee." Then the King, full of courage, continued his march, and fought the great battle of Carn Conaile, near Gort, in which he was completely victorious. On his return he granted the territory of Tuaim-n-Eirc, now Lemanaghan, in King's County, with all its sub-divisions, as an altar sod, *i.e.*, church land, to God and St. Ciaran for ever, so that no king of Meath might take so much as a 'drink of water from its well without paying for it.' For this grant King Diarmaid also secured the right of sepulchre at Clonmacnoise, and was himself buried there. What is stranger still, his rival, Guaire, towards the close of his life came to do penance at Clonmacnoise; and he, too, the Generous and Hospitable, was buried there in A.D. 663, and no doubt did not forget the monks when he was dying. Just at this time the plague wrought great havoc amongst the saints and students of Clonmacnoise. Two or three abbots died in rapid succession, and doubtless the family of the monastery suffered severely, for the frightened students fled far away. In A.D. 719 the monastery was burned. Most of the buildings up to this time were probably of wood, for it was not easy to procure stone at Clonmacnoise. But the schools were soon again at work. In A.D. 724 we hear of the death of Mac Concumba, a learned scribe of this monastery. His duty was to multiply copies of valuable works, and record in the annals of the monastery from year to year entries of all those noteworthy events which happened throughout the kingdom. It was these scribes who prepared the materials afterwards so admirably compiled by Tighernach and his associates. Another 'choice scribe' died in A.D. 768; and we are told that the monastery was burned again in A.D. 751, and a third time in A.D. 773—on both occasions probably by accident.

At this time Clonmacnoise was at the height of its literary glory. The Danes had not yet arrived on the coasts of Ireland. Great scholars flourished there, the fame of whose learning attracted students from many lands. Fortunately here we are not left to vague conjecture; we have definite historical proofs both native and foreign. In the very year the Danes first landed at Rathlin—in A.D. 794 or 795—we find recorded the death of Colgan (or Colgu or Colcu), a professor of Clonmacnoise, who was probably the teacher of the greatest scholar of that age. He was a Munster-man by birth, but seems to have lived and died at Clonmacnoise. His fame was very great amongst his contemporaries, who called him Colgu the Wise. He was lecturer in Theology, and seems also to have been Rector of the Monastic College. That he was a diligent student of St. Paul's Epistles we may infer from a story told in his life. One day returning from his class hall with his leathern book-satchel on his shoulder, he sat down to rest at the place called Mointireanir. As he sat a stranger came up and began to converse in the kindest and most affable way with the professor, and even ventured to give him counsel and instruction. Nay, more, he took up the book-satchel, and carried it on his own shoulders, letting the tired master walk on by his side. The kind stranger turned out to be the Apostle Paul himself. On another occasion when public disputation was being held at the college, it seems certain scholars were objecting vigorously to Colgu's views, when St. Paul once more appeared as a learned stranger, and was invited to take part in the discussion. The unknown scholar accepted the invitation, and reasoned so convincingly that in a very short time he clearly showed to the satisfaction of all present that Colgu's view of the question at issue was the correct one.

The celebrated Alcuin was the most distinguished scholar of his own time in Europe. There is fortunately a letter of his still preserved, which shows quite clearly that he was a student of Clonmacnoise, and a pupil of Colgu, and which also exhibits the affectionate veneration that he retained through life for his *Alma Mater* at Clonmacnoise. It is addressed to "Colgu, Professor (*lectorem*) in Ireland—the blessed Master and Pious Father of Albinus,"[1] the more usual name given to Alcuin in France, by Charlemagne and his courtiers. The writer complains that for some time past he was not deemed worthy to receive any of those letters 'so

[1] Epistola Albini Magistri ad Colcum Lectorem in Scotia—Benedicto Magistro, et Pio Patri Colcuo Alcuine humilis levita salutem.

precious in my sight from your Fatherhood,' but he daily feels the benefit of his absent Father's prayers. He adds that he sends by the same messenger an alms of fifty sicles of silver from the bounty of King Charles, and fifty more from his own resources for the brotherhood. He also sends a quantity of (olive) oil which it was then very difficult to procure in Ireland, and asks that it may be distributed amongst the Bishops in God's honour for sacramental purposes. This shows the thoughtful piety of Alcuin, who doubtless noticed, when he was a student of Clonmacnoise, the difficulty of procuring pure olive oil for the holy Chrism and Extreme Unction. This letter breathes the most beautiful spirit of piety, and shows the affectionate gratitude of Alcuin for the home and the teachers of his youth.

Colgu, or Colgan, of Clonmacnoise, is the earliest *Ferlegind* who is noticed in our Annals. During the course of the ninth century the Ferlegind appears by name in the School of Armagh, and during the tenth and eleventh centuries we find reference made to these 'Readers' in several of our Irish monasteries. We may infer the nature of his office, not only from his name—the 'reading-man' or lecturer—but also from the position, which he appears to have held in the monastery. He is different from the abbot, and subject to him, but he appears superior to all the other teachers and officials, so that he may be described not only as chief professor, but also as the Rector of the Monastic School under the abbot. His position corresponded to that of the scholasticus in the early Continental schools. He arranged the programme of study, superintended the classes, kept the other officials, like the *scribneoir* and *aeconomus*, to their duties, and lectured himself in the most important subjects—especially in Scripture and theology. To be an accomplished 'scribe,' however, required very special gifts not merely of beautiful penmanship, but also a knowledge of the subject, which would prevent the writer from making grave mistakes in transcription, thus destroying the value of his manuscript. Hence we find the same person is frequently described as 'scribe and bishop;' and sometimes 'scribe, abbot and bishop.'

Colgu has been called a saint, and justly; his piety seems to have been quite equal to his learning. The "Prayer of St. Colgu," written by the saint in Latin, has been rendered into English from the copy in the ancient Book of Clonmacnoise, called *Leabhar-na-h-Uidhre*. It is a prayer, full of the deepest and most ardent devotion, in which the holy man

implores, "With Thee, O holy Jesus," the intercession of all the heavenly host and of all the saints, apostles, and martyrs, and bishops, and virgins of the Old and New Law, that, "Thou, O Holy Trinity, may take me this night under Thy protection and shelter, and defend me from the demons. . . . and from desires, from sins, from transgressions, from disobediences . . . from the fire of hell and eternity . . . and that God may light up in their souls meekness and charity, and gratitude and mercy, and forgiveness in their hearts, and in their thoughts, and in their souls, and in their minds, and in their bowels."

Colgan also wrote another celebrated work in Irish, called *Scuap Chrabhaigh*, or the "Besom of Devotion," which his namesake, the renowned Franciscan, also a lector in theology, pronounces to be a "book of most fervent prayers, after the manner of a litany; a book, moreover, of most ardent devotion and elevation of the soul to God."[1] Some think that the "Besom of Devotion" referred to by Colgan, is only the Litany or Prayer of St. Colgan, under another name.

In spite of the devastations both of the Danes and native princes during the ninth century, learning still flourished at Clonmacnoise. That Suibhne, son of Maeluma, whose gravestone may still be seen at Clonmacnoise, died in A.D. 891. His fame was great, not only in Ireland, but in England also. The *Saxon Chronicle* and the *Annals of Cambria*, as well as Florence of Worcester, all notice his death and describe him as the wisest and the greatest Doctor of the Scots or Irish, and the *Annals of Ulster* call him a "most excellent scribe." Unfortunately we have none of his writings extant to confirm the judgment of his cotemporaries.

Yet during this and the following century, which produced these great scholars, we read a shameful record of the burnings, pillage, and slaughter wrought both by native and foreigner in this peaceful home of sanctity and learning.

It was plundered or burned—generally both—on at least ten different occasions by the Danes. But the Irish themselves exceeded even that bloody record, and laid sacrilegious hands on these holy shrines and their inmates no less than fourteen or fifteen times. The Danes began this foul work; both Danes and Irish continued it at short intervals; the English of Athlone completed the job. Nothing more shameful, or so shameful, can be found in the annals of any

[1] *Acta Sanctorum*, page 379.

even half-civilized country. There were many accidental fires that destroyed the monastic buildings during the first three hundred years of its existence, but no pillage, no slaughter is recorded during that period. The Danes set the bad example, and several of the native princes were not slow to follow it. The worst of them was Felim Mac Criffan (Fedhlimidh Mac Crimthann), King of Cashel. He plundered Clonmacnoise and its termon lands three times, at one of which, A.D. 833, he spoiled and pillaged up to the church doors, and butchered the monks like sheep—*jugulatio* is the word in the Annals. He did the same to Durrow and several other religious houses. He broke into the oratory of Kildare in A.D. 836, and took Forannan, the Primate of Armagh and his attendants prisoners, forcing the Primate to give a reluctant consent to his claim to be recognised as High King of all Erin. Ten years later he died after a stormy life, and the *Annals of Ulster* describe him as the best of the Scots—*optimus Scotorum*—a scribe and an anchorite! There is no foundation for Dr. Todd's assertion that he was an 'abbot and bishop,'[1] except a poetic reference to his *bachall*, which the poet mockingly says he left in the shrubbery,[2] and which was carried off by his rival, Niall Caille, King of the North. Neither is there any ground for O'Donovan's assertion in the note that "he was Abbot and Bishop of Cashel in right of his crown of Munster." There was neither an abbot nor bishop of Cashel at the time, nor for many years after; and although Cormac Mac Cullinan was certainly a bishop, he is not described as Bishop of Cashel either in our Annals or our Martyrologies.[3] The warlike Felim Mac Criffan retired to a hermitage a short time before his death to do penance for his many crimes; and he seems to have employed his leisure in copying MSS. Hence the *Martyrology of Donegal* commemorates him simply as an 'anchorite'[4] who retired into solitude to bewail his sins, and as his penance seems to have been sincere, there was nothing to prevent him becoming a saint. The *Chronicon Scotorum*, whilst recording his death, as that of 'a scribe and anchorite, and the best of the Scots,' records a little before that Ciaran followed him to Munster after the last violation of his monastery, and gave him a thrust of his

[1] *Wars of the G. G.* Introduction, xiv.

[2] *Four Masters*, A.D. 840.

[3] Professor Stokes repeats these mistakes in his *Lectures—Celtic Church*, page 200. Keating, however calls Cormac Archbishop of Cashel, which he certainly was not.

[4] At his conference with Niall at Clonfert, Felim sat in the seat of the abbots as a token of his superiority over Niall, not as a bishop.

crozier, causing an internal wound, which, no doubt, hastened his death, and perhaps prompted him to do penance. The true date of his death is A.D. 847.

We cannot stay to record the many similar deeds of violence from which the sanctuary of Ciaran suffered during these lawless times. Even the religious communities themselves were infected with the evil spirit that prevailed around them. The monks sometimes took up arms, not merely to protect themselves against murderous aggression, which would be reasonable enough, but to wage war on their own account as well. It was a woful time for Inisfail. She was writhing in the grasp of the invader; and no sooner did that grasp begin to relax than her own false princes drew their aimless swords in fratricidal strife. Even the salt of the earth lost its savour—lay usurpers called themselves the Heirs of Patrick in Armagh, and the monks of St. Ciaran forgot to pray, and put their trust in sword and shield, like the lawless chieftains around them:—

"Sure it was a maddening prospect thus to see this storied land,
Like some wretched culprit, writhing in the strong avenger's hand—
Kneeling, foaming, weeping, shrieking, woman-weak and woman-loud—
Better, better, Mother Erin! they had wrapped thee in thy shroud."

IV.—Annalists of Clonmacnoise.

During the eleventh century Clonmacnoise produced several most distinguished scholars. This was the earliest era for prose chroniclers in Ireland. Hitherto the chronicles of the kingdom were written in verse, which greatly facilitated the work of the professional sheanachies. It was the safest way to preserve history in those turbulent days. The monastery might be burned, and the parchments all destroyed; but so long as the rhyming chronicler, or even one of his disciples survived, the historical poem committed to their faithful memory could not perish. Amongst these rhyming chroniclers there are several whose poems are still extant, although unpublished. Such, for instance, were Eochy O'Flinn and Kennett O'Hartigan, and in the eleventh century Gilla Caemhain, who died in A.D. 1072. But during that century a new race of prose chroniclers arose for the first time in Ireland. Of these the two most distinguished were Flann of Monasterboice, who died in A.D. 1056, and his illustrious contemporary Tighernach, the greatest glory of the School of Clonmacnoise.

Of the personal history of Tighernach we unfortunately

know little. He belonged to the Sil Muiredhaigh of Magh Aei—the royal race of Connaught—of which the O'Conors were the chiefs. His family name was O'Braoin,[1] and we are merely told that he was Erenach of Clonmacnoise, and elsewhere, that he was Comarb of Ciaran and Coman of Roscommon. Like St. Ciaran himself, he was a native of the co. Roscommon, which bordered on Clonmacnoise; and he was doubtless educated in that monastery. His death is recorded under date of A.D. 1088, in all our Annals; and he is described as a *Saoi* or Chief Doctor, in Wisdom, Learning, and Oratory. His bones repose in the holy clay of Clonmacnoise, but the exact place is not known.

Tighernach truly was one of the greatest Doctors of the Gael. His Annals are yet extant, and prove him to have been a man of great and various learning. Unfortunately we have no perfect copy of his Annals. There are many gaps in the entries, and the original text has been greatly defaced by the errors of ignorant copyists. Dr. O'Conor's edition in the *Rerum Hibernicarum Scriptores* is by no means faultless, and the book is so rare and expensive, that although Tighernach is much talked about he is very little read.

Both Flann of the Monastery and Tighernach have done much to fix the true chronology of Irish historical events. They were men of wide culture, and were familiar with the great Ecclesiastical historians—Eusebius, Jerome, Orosius, Africanus—and followed their example in giving a sketch of universal history in the opening pages of their Annals. They were acquainted not merely with the chronology of the Bible, like several of their predecessors, but also with the history and chronology of Greece and Rome and the great Eastern Empires. The special value of their work is that for the first time in our history they synchronize the leading facts in Irish history with the great events of the general history of antiquity. They were perfectly well acquainted with the use of the Olympian Era, the Era from the Building of the City, and the Christian Era, and were thus enabled to fix the true dates of the reigns of our early monarchs. This was no easy task; for hitherto there were confused lists of Kings often handed down by memory with the length of their reigns; but there was, so to speak, no definite starting point. Tighernach himself, who was a man of highly critical mind,

[1] It is not unlikely that his family resided at Cluain Ui Braoin, now Cloonybrian, near Boyle.

saw this difficulty, and made the famous statement that before the reign of Cimbaeth and the founding of Emania all the historical monuments of the Scots were uncertain. It is strange indeed that he dates our authentic history from the reign of a mere provincial king. The real reason, however, seems to be that from Cimbaeth forward, he found in the poems of Eochaidh O'Flinn definite lists of the Ulster Kings, and of the High Kings also, which enabled him to trace their genealogy, and fix the dates. But he could find no such accurate lists of the earlier kings, and hence he pronounces the bardic histories of the earlier period to be uncertain.

Tighernach was probably the first Irish historian who used the common era—that of the Incarnation. But in the earlier entries he dates from the Creation, giving also the Lunar Epact, and the Day of the Week for the Kalends of January. There are certainly some errors in these dates; but they have arisen probably from the ignorance of the transcribers. The Annals written by himself came down to the date of his death in A.D. 1088; and the scribe continued them to A.D. 1178. Various subsequent additions were made by different writers down to A.D. 1407, where the entire chronicle ends.

These Annals undoubtedly furnish the earliest and most authentic record that we possess of our national history. Their author was a man of judgment, learning, and candour. Hence the statements of Tighernach, supported as they are by collateral evidence in very many cases, may always be accepted as authentic history. It is very probable the work was left in an unfinished state; and this is all the more to be regretted, because he had materials at hand, very many of which have since unfortunately perished. The Irish of Tighernach is considered very pure, like that of Cormac Mac Cullinan, for it was the classic era of the Gaedhlic language. The Annals, however, are too often half-Latin, half-Gaedhlic, although the writer could have done the work much better by adopting either language exclusively.

To Clonmacnoise we also owe the *Chronicon Scotorum*, which has been very ably edited by the late lamented W. M. Hennessy, and is published in the Rolls Series. The text is mainly taken from a transcript made by the celebrated Duald M'Firbis, and now preserved in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin. O'Curry thought it was a compilation made by M'Firbis[1] from different sources, but in this opinion that eminent scholar was mistaken. The work produced by

[1] See *Lectures*, page 127.

M'Firbis is a mere copy of the original work, which was undoubtedly composed and preserved at Clonmacnoise. This is quite evident, as Hennessy remarks, from an entry made under date of the year A.D. 718 by M'Firbis himself. "A front of two leaves of the old book out of which I copy this is wanting, and I leave what is before me of this page for them. I am Dubhaltach Firbisigh."

The entries in this Chronicle of the Scots are very brief and condensed; but contain scraps of most valuable information not to be found in other authorities. They are particularly valuable in all that refers to Clonmacnoise as well as to its neighbouring territories and monastic houses. In the MS. of the Royal Irish Academy there is prefixed a note written in Gaedhlic, which attributes the composition of the Chronicle to Gilla-Christ O'Maeileoin—that is O'Malone—abbot of Clonmacnoise, who flourished in the twelfth century. This is highly probable. O'Malone was a very distinguished scholar of Clonmacnoise, and was present at the Synod of Uisneach held in the year A.D. 1111, of which Synod this Chronicle alone gives original and detailed information. The writer takes care to add that Gillachrist Ua Maeileoin, abbot of Cluain, with the congregation of Ciaran were present at the Synod. The death of this learned abbot is noticed at A.D. 1123, where he is described as "the fountain of knowledge and charity, the head of the prosperity and affluence of Erin." In its present form the Chronicle has been continued by another hand down to the year A.D. 1150. It is, therefore, a later, but hardly less important Chronicle, than that of Tighernach himself.

The Four Masters had before them when compiling their own immortal work a book which they call the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, coming down to the year A.D. 1227. It has been conjectured that the Four Masters in that statement refer to the *Chronicon Scotorum*, which they do not mention under that name, and which doubtless must have come into their hands. But the *Chronicon Scotorum*, although it might properly be called the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, as having been compiled in that monastery, does not in its present form come down beyond the year A.D. 1150. Neither can the work referred to by the Four Masters be the *Book of Clonmacnoise*, translated by MacGeoghegan in A.D. 1627, for that work comes down to A.D. 1407, and, moreover, does not contain important passages, which we know were in the work used by the Four Masters. Our own opinion is that the *Book of Clonmacnoise*, and the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*,

to which the Four Masters frequently refer, are identical with the *Chronicon Scotorum*, and that the work in their time did come down to A.D. 1227, but the folios containing the years from A.D. 1050 to that date have perished from mere careless use, if not from accident.

V.—The Leabhar-na-h-Uidhre.

Another celebrated work, undoubtedly composed at Clonmacnoise, is the *Leabhar-na-h-Uidhre*, now in the Royal Irish Academy. A great part of the work has unfortunately perished, so that the 138 folio pages still remaining can only be regarded as a fragment. The history of the book is very strange. The author, or rather compiler, was Maelmuire—that is, Servant of Mary—a grandson of the celebrated Conn-na-mBocht, or Conn of the Poor. Conn himself was a holy and learned man, but seems to have never taken Orders. He was greatly esteemed at Clonmacnoise; and founded an hospital or refuge for poor laymen, of which he himself seems to have been the head. He had at least two sons, one called Gellananaeve, arch-priest of Clonmacnoise, and another called Ceileachair, probably the father of this Maelmuire. Both were distinguished scholars and writers, whose books Conal MacGeoghegan quotes as sources for his own *Annals of Clonmacnoise*. Conn's grandson Maelmuire, must have been a very distinguished scholar, and was also in all probability a lay brother of the community of Clonmacnoise. The *Annals of the Four Masters* record the tragic end of the industrious scribe. In A.D. 1106 he was slain by a party of robbers in the midst of the great stone church of Clonmacnoise. His work was written therefore during the last years of the eleventh, and the beginning of the twelfth century; and with the exception of the *Book of Armagh* is, so far as it goes, the oldest transcript now existing of our great historical works.

From Clonmacnoise the Book was carried, we know not when or by whom, all the way to Donegal. About the year A.D. 1340 it was given to O'Connor Sligo, so an entry in the Book itself informs us, as a ransom for O'Donnell's chief historian, who had been taken prisoner by Cathal Oge O'Conor. Donnell O'Conor, a chieftain of the same race, ordered his own historian, Sigraidh O'Cuirnin, to make an entry of the name of the author, who composed "this beautiful book," and he made that entry a week before Good Friday in the year A.D. 1345. It seems that even then the

opening pages were lost, and it is to Donnell O'Conor we owe our knowledge of the writer, small as it is. The book remained in Sligo, where it was highly prized, for about 130 years, when the fortune of war brought it back again to Donegal. In A.D. 1470, Hugh Roe O'Donnell took the Castle of Sligo from the O'Conors; and amongst other trophies carried off this book again to Donegal, as the Four Masters proudly record under date of that year. How it came to the Royal Irish Academy we are not informed, but it is quite evident that the work was just as highly prized in Sligo and in Donegal, as it is in the Academy; and what is more to the purpose, the O'Clerys and O'Cuirnins knew much better how to interpret its contents than any of the members of that learned body.

The contents of the fragment are of a very varied character, partly biblical, partly historical, partly old romantic tales. One of the most important documents contained in the *Leabhar-na-h-Uidhre* is the ancient elegy on Columcille, composed by another bard, the celebrated Dallan Forgaill so early as the end of the sixth century. This poem is undoubtedly genuine. The language is so ancient that even the great scholars of Clonmacnoise in the eleventh century found it necessary to write an interlinear gloss in order to render it intelligible to ordinary readers at that early date.

VI.—Dicuil the Geographer.

In connection with the School of Clonmacnoise an account of Dicuil, the celebrated Geographer, as he is called, will not be deemed out of place. For there is very good reason to believe that he was trained at Clonmacnoise; and if not trained there, he was certainly a pupil of some of the Columbian Schools, of which we shall treat in our next chapter. A sketch of his history and his writings, therefore, is most appropriate in this place.

Dicuil's treatise, *De Mensura Orbis Terrarum*, is one of the most interesting monuments of ancient Irish scholarship, and furnishes most conclusive proof that the culture of our writers and the learning of our schools in the ninth century were superior to almost anything yet exhibited in Western Europe since the fall of the Roman Empire. This work has been published in Paris, but it is now very rare, and hence we purpose giving a fuller account of its contents than might otherwise be deemed necessary. It is not to the credit of Irish learning in the present day that no attempt has been made

even by any of our learned Societies to print this treatise in Ireland. It is to French scholarship we are indebted for editing and annotating Dicuil's treatise.[1]

Unfortunately we know nothing whatsoever of the personal history of Dicuil except what can be gathered from a few incidental references which he makes to himself in this treatise; but these, though very brief, are clear and definite. He tells us first of all that his name was Dicuil, and that he finished his task in the spring of the year A.D. 825. Like most of his countrymen at that time, he was fond of poetry, and gives us this information in a neat poem, written in Latin hexameters at the end of the MS., to which we shall refer again. He also implies in his opening statement, or prologue, that he had already written an *Epistola de questionibus decem Artis Grammaticae*, which was probably intended to be copied and circulated amongst the Irish monastic schools of the time, but of which we know nothing more. He tells us that a certain Suibneus (Suibhne), or Sweeney, was his master to whom under God he owed whatever knowledge he possessed. His native country was Ireland, which he describes in affectionate language as "nostra Hibernia,"—our own Ireland—in opposition to the foreign countries of which he had been speaking. Elsewhere he calls it in accordance with the usage of the time *nostra Scottia*. He also adds when referring to the islands in the north and north-west of Scotland, that he had dwelt in some of them, he had visited others, more of them he had merely seen, and some of them he had only read of.

This is really all the information we have about Dicuil, and from data so meagre, it is very difficult to identify Dicuil the Geographer, amongst the many Irish monks who bore that name.

By a careful examination, however, of these and some other facts to which he refers, we can conjecture with some probability where and by whom he was educated.

When speaking of Iceland Dicuil refers to information communicated to him thirty years before by certain Irish clerics, who had spent some months in that island. This brings us back to A.D. 795, so that when Dicuil wrote in

[1] It was first published in 1807 by M. Walckenaer from two MSS. in the Imperial Library of Paris. In 1814, M. Letronne produced a still more learned and accurate edition, in which he shows the advantages that scholars may derive from a careful study of Dicuil's work. It is entitled: *Recherches Geographiques, et Critiques sur Le Livre "De Mensura Orbis Terrarum," composé en Irlande au Commencement du Neuvième siècle par Dicuil.*

A.D. 825, he must have been a man considerably advanced in years. We may infer, too, that his master, Suibhne, to whom he owed so much, flourished as a teacher at a still earlier period than A.D. 795. There were several abbots who bore that name between A.D. 750 and A.D. 850; but it appears to us that the master of Dicuil must have been either Suibhne, Abbot of Iona, who died in A.D. 772, or Suibhne, son of Cuana, Abbot of Clonmacnoise, who died in A.D. 816. If Dicuil were, suppose, seventy-five when he wrote his book, he must have been born in A.D. 750. He would then be about sixteen years of age when Suibhne, Vice-Abbot of Iona, came over to his native Ireland in A.D. 766, where he remained some time. Suppose that Dicuil returned with him as a novice in that year, he could have been six years under the instruction of Suibhne before that abbot's death in A.D. 772. It is likely that Dicuil remained in Iona for several years after the death of his beloved master. It was, doubtless, during these years that he visited the Scottish islands, and dwelt with some of the communities whom St. Columba had established there. On this point his own statement is clear and explicit.

The founder of Iona, Columcille, with his kinsmen, originally came from Donegal, and the monastery seems to have been principally recruited at all times by members of the Cenel-conal race. Amongst the saints who were called Dicuil, or Diucholl, were two who were venerated in Donegal; one the son of Neman, whose memory was venerated at Kilmacrenan on December 25th; the other was Dicuil of Inishowen, whose feast-day is December 18th. The latter is described as a hermit; and it may be that our geographer, after his return from Iona, retired to a life of solitude in Inishowen, and there, towards the close of his life, composed this treatise, of which the most valuable portion is that containing the reminiscences of his early life in the Scottish islands.

The chief difficulty against this hypothesis, that Suibhne, Dicuil's master, was the Abbot of Iona who died in A.D. 772, is the great age at which, in that case, the pupil must have written his book, in A.D. 825. The monks of those days, however, were often intellectually and physically vigorous at the age of eighty, and even of ninety years.

The other hypothesis certainly fits in better with the dates; so we must assume that Dicuil was trained at the great College of Clonmacnoise, which at this period was certainly the most celebrated school in Ireland, if not in Europe. Suibhne, we are told, was abbot for two years before his death,

in A.D. 816; but had been, no doubt, for many years previously, a *fer-legind*, or professor in Clonmacnoise. It was nothing new for the younger monks to travel to other religious houses in pursuit of knowledge and sanctity; and in this way Dicuil, like so many of his countrymen, would visit Iona and the Scottish islands.

The treatise *De Mensura Orbis Terrarum* is very valuable as affording evidence of the varied classical culture that existed in our Irish monastic schools at this period. In the prologue the author tells us that he derived his information mainly from two sources; first, from the Report of the Commissioners whom the divine Emperor Theodosius had sent to survey the provinces of the Roman Empire; and secondly, from the excellent work of Plinius Secundus—that is, the *Natural History* which is so well known to scholars. Dicuil complains that the manuscripts of the Report in his possession were very faulty; but still, being of more recent date than Pliny's work, he values it more highly. He adds that he leaves vacant places in his own manuscript for the numbers, in order to be able to fill them in afterwards when he can verify or correct them by collating his own with other manuscripts of the Report. He also quotes numerous passages from other writers, who, we are afraid, are not very familiar to the classical scholars of our own times. The first of these works is that of Caius Julius Solinus, known as the Polyhistor. Of his personal history we know as little as we do of Dicuil himself. He flourished about the middle of the third century, and appears to have borrowed his matter, and sometimes even his language, from Pliny's *Natural History*. The contents of this work of Solinus may be inferred from the title of an English translation, published in A.D. 1587: "*The Excellent and Pleasant Work of Julius Solinus, Polyhistor, containing the Noble Actions of Humaine Creatures, the Secretes and Providence of Nature, the Description of Countries, the Manners of the People, &c., &c.* Translated out of the Latin by Arthur Golding, Gent." Another work, equally unknown to the present generation, but frequently quoted by Dicuil, is the *Periegesis* of Priscian. It is a metrical translation into Latin hexameters of a Greek work bearing the same title, which was originally composed by Dionysius, surnamed from that fact Periegetes, or the "Traveller," in Goldsmith's sense. He appears to have flourished in the second half of the third century of the Christian era.

Such are the principal authorities whom Dicuil follows; and as he knew nothing of foreign countries himself, he cites

his authorities textually for the benefit of his own countrymen. It is surely a singular and interesting fact that we should find an Irish monk, in the beginning of the ninth century, collating and criticising various manuscripts of those writers either in some Irish monastic school at home, or in the equally Irish school of Iona, though surrounded by Scottish waters and in view of the Scottish hills.

For us, however, the information which Dicuil gives us of his own knowledge, or gathered from his own countrymen, is far more valuable; and to this we would especially invite the reader's attention.

In the sixth chapter, when speaking of the Nile, he says

"Although we never read in any book that any branch of the Nile flows into the Red Sea, yet Brother Fidelis[1] told in my presence, to my master Suibhne (to whom, under God, I owe whatever knowledge I possess), that certain clerics and laymen from Ireland, who went to Jerusalem on pilgrimage, sailed up the Nile for a long way."

—and thence continued their voyage by canal to the entrance of the Red Sea.

This Irish pilgrimage to Jerusalem is worthy of notice, for many of our critics where they find mention of such pilgimages to Rome and to Jerusalem in the Lives of our early Saints, seem to regard it as an exaggeration, if not a kind of pious fraud. But here we have the testimony of one in every way worthy of credit, who himself spoke to such pilgrims after their return from the Holy Land.

Then their testimony is peculiarly valuable in reference to a vexed geographical question regarding the existence of a navigable canal in those days from the Nile to the Red Sea. A canal called the "River of Ptolemy" and afterwards "The River of Trajan," was certainly cut from the Pelusiac branch of the Nile to the Red Sea at Arisnoe. It was certainly open for commerce in the time of Trajan, but during the decline of the Roman empire became partially filled with sand. Trajan, it seems, however, when re-opening the canal connected it with the Nile at a point higher up the river than the old route, opposite Memphis, near Babylon, in order that the fresh water might flow through the canal and help to keep it open. Under the Arabians this canal of Trajan was re-opened, but geographers have asserted that it became choked shortly afterwards and remained so ever since. The testimony of the Irish pilgrims quoted by Dicuil is the only satisfactory evidence that we now possess to prove that this

[1] It might be rendered a trustworthy brother.

canal was open at the end of the eighth century for the purposes of commerce and navigation.[1]

The pilgrims also give some interesting information with reference to the Pyramids, which they call the "Barns of Joseph." "The pilgrims," he says, "saw them from the river rising like mountains four in one place and three in another." Then they landed to view these wonders close at hand and coming to one of the three greater pyramids, they saw eight men and one woman and a great lion stretched dead beside it. The lion had attacked them, and the men in turn had attacked the lion with their spears, with the result that all perished in the mutual slaughter, for the place was a desert and there was no one at hand to help them. From top to bottom the pyramids were all built of stone, square at the base, but rounded towards the summit, and tapering to a point. The aforesaid brother Fidelis measured one of them, and found that the square face was 400 feet in length. Going thence by the canal to the Red Sea, they found the passage across to the eastern shore at the Road of Moses to be only a short distance. The brother who had measured the base of the pyramid wished to examine the exact point where Moses had entered the Red Sea, in order to try if he could find any traces of the Chariots of Pharaoh, or the wheel tracks; but the sailors were in a hurry and would not allow him to go on this excursion. The breadth of the sea at this point appeared to him to be about six miles. Then they sailed up this narrow bay which once kept the murmuring Israelites from returning to Egypt.

This is a very interesting and manifestly authentic narrative. Another interesting chapter is that in which Dicuil describes Iceland and the Faroe Islands. "It is now thirty years," he says, "since certain clerics, who remained in that island (Ultima Thule) from the 1st of February to the 1st of August, told me that not only at the Summer solstice, (as Solinus said), but also for several days about the solstice, the setting sun at eventide merely hid himself, as it were, for a little behind a hill, so that there was no darkness even for a moment, and whatever a man wished to do, if it were only to pick vermin off his shirt—vel pediculos de camisia abstrahere—he could do as it were in the light of the sun, and if he were on a mountain of any height, he could doubtless see the sun all through." This way of putting it is certainly more graphic than elegant, but it is at the same

[1] See Smith's *Dictionary of Geography*.

time strictly accurate, and shows that the Irish monks had really spent the summer in Iceland. For the arctic circle just touches the extreme north of Iceland, and therefore in any part of that country the sun would even at the solstice set for a short time, but it would be only, as it were, going behind a hill to reappear in an hour or in half an hour. So that by the aid of refraction and twilight a man would always have light enough to perform even those delicate operations to which Dicuil refers.

He then observes with much acuteness that at the middle point of this brief twilight it is midnight at the equator, or middle of the earth; and in like manner he infers that about the Winter solstice there must be daylight for a very short time in Thule, when it is noonday at the equator. These observations show a keen observant mind, and would lead us to infer that Dicuil, like his countryman Virgilius, who flourished a little earlier, had been taught the sphericity of the earth in the schools of his native country. He says also in this same chapter, what is certainly true, that those writers are greatly mistaken who describe the Icelandic Sea as always frozen, and who say that there is a perpetual day from Spring to Autumn, and perpetual night from Autumn to Spring. For the Irish monks sailed thither, he says, through an open sea in a month of great natural cold, and whilst they were there enjoyed alternate day and night except about the Summer solstice, as already explained. But one day's sail further north brought them to the frozen sea.

Dicuil's reference to Iceland is interesting from another point of view. In almost all our books of popular instruction, and even in many standard works on geography, it is stated that the Danes, or Norwegians, "discovered" Iceland about the year A.D. 860, and shortly afterward colonized it during the reign of Harold Harfager. But Dicuil clearly shows that it was well known to Irish monks at least more than half a century before Dane or Norwegian ever set foot on the island, as is now generally admitted by scholars who are familiar with Icelandic literature and history.

The following interesting passage which shows the roving spirit that animated some of the Irish monks at that period is contained in the third section of the same seventh chapter. "There are several other islands in the ocean to the north of Britain, which can be reached in a voyage of two days and two nights with a favourable breeze. A certain trustworthy monk (religiosus) told me that he reached one of them by sailing for two summer days and one night in a vessel with

two benches of rowers (duorum navicula transtrorum). Some of these islands are very small and separated by narrow straits. In these islands for almost a hundred years there dwelt hermits, who sailed there from our own Ireland (nostra Scottia). But now they are once more deserted, as they were from the beginning, on account of the ravages of the Norman pirates. They are, however, still full of sheep, and of various kinds of sea birds. We have never found these islands mentioned by any author."

It is quite evident that Dicuil here refers to the Faroe Islands, which are about 250 miles north of the Scottish coast. A glance at the map will show that they are rather small, and separated from each other by very narrow channels, and in this respect differing from the Shetland Islands, to which this description could not therefore apply. Besides, the Shetlands are only 50 miles from the Orkneys, and about 100 from the mainland; hence they could easily be reached in a single day by an open boat sailing before a favourable wind; whereas the islands occupied by the Irish hermits could only be reached after a voyage of two days and a night, even in the most favourable circumstances. The word "nostra Scottia" of course refers to Ireland; for up to the time that Dicuil wrote, that word had never been applied to North Britain. Skene, himself a learned Scot, has shown by numerous citations from ancient authors that beyond all doubt the name "Scottia" was applied to Ireland, and to Ireland alone, prior to the tenth century.[1] Up to that time the name of Scotland was Alban or Albania.

The love of the ancient Irish monks for island solitudes is one of the most remarkable features in their character. There is hardly an island round our coasts, which does not contain the remains of some ancient oratory or monastic cells. But they did not always remain in sight of land. Inspired partly with the hope of finding a "desert" in the ocean, partly, no doubt, also with a love of adventure and a vague hope of discovering the "Land of Promise," they sailed out into the Atlantic in their currachs in search of these lonely islands. Every one has heard of the seven years' voyage of St. Brendan in the western ocean. St. Ailbe of Emly had resolved to find out the island of Thule, which the Roman geographers placed somewhere in the northern sea. He was, however, prevented from going himself, but "he sent twenty men into exile over the sea in his stead."[2] St. Cormac the Navigator, made three

[1] See *Introd. to Celtic Scotland*, page 3, vol. i.
[2] See Reeves' *Adamnan*, page 169, note.

voyages in the pathless ocean seeking some desert island where he might devote himself to an eremitic life. It is highly probable he went as far north as Iceland; for Adamnan tells us that he sailed northwards for fourteen days, until he was frightened by the sight of the monsters of the deep, when he returned home touching on his way at the Orkney islands.

When the Norwegians first discovered Iceland in A.D. 860, they found Irish books, and bells, and pilgrims' staffs, or croziers, which were left there by men who professed the Christian religion and whom the Norwegians called "papas" or "fathers." Dicuil, however, gives us the earliest authentic testimony that Iceland and the Faroe Isles had been discovered and occupied by Irish monks long before the Danes or Norwegians discovered these islands. Of Ireland itself, Dicuil unfortunately gives us no information. He was writing for his own countrymen, and he assumed that they knew as much about Ireland—"our own Ireland"—as he did. The only observation he makes in reference to Ireland is that there were islands round the coast, and that some were small, and others very small. But he takes one quotation from Solinus, who says that—

"Britain is surrounded by many important islands, one of which, Ireland, approaches to Britain itself in size. It abounds in pastures so rich, that if the cattle are not sometimes driven away from them they run the risk of bursting. The sea between Britain and Ireland is so wide and stormy throughout the entire year that it is only navigable on a very few days. The channel is about 120 miles broad."

Dicuil, however, good Irishman as he was, does not quote two other statements which Solinus made about the pre-Christian Scots—for he wrote before the time of St. Patrick—first, that the Irish recognised no difference between right and wrong at all; and, secondly, that they fed their children from the point of the sword—a rather inconvenient kind of spoon we should think. In fact the Romans of those days knew as little, and wrote as confidently, about Ireland as most Englishmen do at present, and that is saying a good deal.

There is one incidental reference in Dicuil—chapter v., section ii.—which is of the highest importance, because it settles the question as to the nationality of the celebrated Irish poet, Sedulius, the author of the hymns *Crudelis Herodes* and *A solis ortus Cardine*, in the Roman Breviary. Dicuil quoting twelve lines of poetry from the Report of the Commissioners of Theodosius, observes, that the first foot of the

seventh and eighth of these hexameter lines is an amphimacrus. Here are the lines :—

> " Cōnfĭcĭ ter quinis aperit cum fastibus annum.
> Sūpplĭcēs hoc famuli, dum scribit, pingit et alter."

" At the same time," says Dicuil, " I do not think it was from ignorance of prosody these lines were so written, for the writers had the authority of other poets in their favour, and especially of Virgil, whom in similar cases *our own Sedulius* imitated, and he, in his heroic stanzas, rarely uses feet different from those of Virgil and the classical poets." " Noster Sedulius," here applied to the great religious poet by his own countryman, in the ninth century, settles the question of his Irish birth. The reader will observe also, what a keen critic Dicuil was of Latin poetry, and will probably come to the conclusion that they knew Prosody better in the Irish schools of the ninth than they do in those of the nineteenth century.

In the closing stanzas of his own short poem on the classic mountains, Dicuil implies that he finished his work in the Spring of A.D. 825, when night gives grateful rest to the wearied oxen who had covered the seed-wheat in the dusty soil.

> " Post octingentos viginti quinque peractos
> Summi annos Domini terrae, aethrae, carceris atri,
> Semine triticeo sub ruris pulvere tecto
> Nocte bobus requies largitur fine laboris."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE COLUMBIAN SCHOOLS IN IRELAND.

I.—St. Columba's Education.

"I hold it truth with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping stones
Of their dead selves to higher things."

—*Tennyson.*

Columba was the greatest saint of the Celtic race; and after St. Patrick, he is the most striking figure in our Celtic history. He was a poet, a statesman, and a scholar, as well as a great missionary saint—the apostle of many tribes, and the founder of many churches. His name is dear to every child of the Scottic race both in Erin and Alba; and what is stranger still, monk and priest though he was, his memory is cherished not only by Catholics but by Protestants and even by Presbyterians also.

His adventurous career has a strange dramatic interest of its own. He was fortunate too in finding a biographer, who has written his Life in a spirit of loving sympathy; and in our own times the biographer has found an editor to publish and illustrate his work with great learning and complete impartiality.[1]

Columba was a typical Celt, and seems to have been endowed by nature with all the virtues and many of the failings of the Celtic race. He was generous, warm-hearted, imaginative; he hated injustice and oppression; he was capable of the tenderest friendship, passionately fond of his native land, and filled with enthusiastic zeal for the propagation of the Gospel. Yet he had his faults. He was fiery and impetuous, impatient of contradiction, and too easily prone to anger and revenge. But this is his glory that with God's help he conquered his faults; and therefore it is we love him because he is so human, so like ourselves in all things. It gives us greater confidence in the struggle, when

[1] See Bishop Reeves' excellent edition of Adamnan's *Life of Columba.*

we have a patron saint who can have compassion on our infirmities because he was tried like us in all things; and, if we are to believe the story of his life, not altogether without sin. It is well too that he should be for us an example of perfect penance; even as he schooled himself in patient endurance, and all other noble virtues.

We, however, have to deal with Columba mainly as a scholar, a teacher, and a writer—the founder of many schools, the patron of learning, the protector and the idol of all the Bards of Erin. It is perhaps best in sketching the literary history of St. Columba to make separate reference to each of the great schools which he established, and at the same time to give an account of those events which brought him into connection with the various scenes in which he played so striking a part. We shall therefore begin with the School of Derry, which was the first he founded in his own native territory. First of all, however, it is necessary to know something of his own early history.

St. Columba was born at Gartan, in the barony of Kilmacrenan, co. Donegal, on the 7th of December, in the year A.D. 521.[1] It is a very wild but beautiful district, surrounded by dark rugged mountains, which cast their shadows over a beautiful sheet of water stretched at their base, sometimes called Lough Veagh, but more properly Lough Gartan. His father, Felim (Fedhlimidh) was prince of the surrounding district, and a scion of the royal race of Niall the Great, or Niall of the Nine Hostages, and his mother was Eithne, the daughter of a Leinster Chief, who came of the equally royal line of Cathaeir Mor, a famous High King of Erin in the second century of the Christian era. Most justly, therefore, does his biographer, Adamnan, say that Columba was sprung from noble parentage, for he was, through Conal Gulban, the great-grandson of Niall the Great. The reigning king at his birth, Muircertach (Murtogh) Mac Erca, was his uncle, of the half blood; and he himself might one day be qualified not only to rule over the Cenel-Conal, but even to be elected High King of all Ireland.[2]

There is no trace at present of any royal rath or ancient fort at Gartan, so far as we could ascertain. The land around is naked and barren, and the cabins of the cottagers are even poorer and blacker than may be seen elsewhere in Donegal. About a quarter of a mile from the place of the saint's birth, there is an old ruined church and church-yard; but

[1] See Reeves' *Adamnan*, page lxix.

[2] "By genealogy he had a natural right to the kingship of Ireland, and it would have been offered to him had he not put it from him for God's sake."—Life in the *Book of Lismore*.

although certainly ancient, the church does not appear to have been coeval with Columba himself. It was probably founded some years after his death, when the place began to obtain some celebrity as the birth-place of so great a saint.

But the flag, on which he was born, is pointed out to every visitor; and there can hardly be any doubt that the tradition fixing the spot is continuous and trustworthy. It is worn quite bare by the hands and feet of pious pilgrims; and what is stranger still, the poor emigrants, who are about to quit Donegal for ever, come and sleep on that flag the night before their departure from Derry. Columba himself was an exile, and they fondly hope that sleeping on the spot where he was born will help them to bear with lighter heart the heavy burden of the exile's sorrows.

Shortly after his birth the child was brought from Gartan to Tulach Dubhglaisse to be baptized by an old priest named Cruithnechan, who dwelt there. It is now called Temple-Douglas, and the old church and church-yard beside the dark stream is still there about mid-way between Gartan and Letterkenny. There is a parish called Kilcronaghan in the Co. Derry, which is supposed to take its name from the 'illustrious priest,' who had the privilege of baptizing Columcille, and who was also his tutor and foster-father.

The boy, however, seems to have spent the years of his early youth mostly at Kil-mac-nenain—now corrupted into Kilmacrenan—which was in all probability, even at that early period, a place of note in Tir-connell. In after times it became celebrated as the place where the O'Donnells were inaugurated as princes of Tir-connell. It is about three miles north of Temple-Douglas, and about the same distance to the north-east of Gartan. The place is supposed to have got its name from the 'Son of Enan,' whose mother was Columba's sister.

We need not specially refer to the visions and prophecies concerning Columba, which are given in his various Lives. The authentic facts of his history are quite as strange and marvellous as any one can desire—in fact his whole life was a miracle of grace. From the fact that the 'illustrious priest,' who baptized Columba, is also described by Adamnan as his fosterer—*pueri nutritor*—we may fairly infer that he was trained by that holy man in the rudiments of learning, both in his native tongue and in the Latin language. It illustrates what was quite a common custom in days when schools were few and far between. The boy designed for the Church was placed under the care of the priest or bishop, and

was thus trained in virtue and learning from his earliest years under the eyes of one whose duty and interest it was to watch over him with the most zealous care.

We know little, however, of Columba's history until he came from Kilmacrenan to the more famous School of St. Finnian at Moville, near the head of Strangford Lough. We have already given an account of the seminary founded there by that great saint. At Moville Columba was ordained a deacon; and here also, according to one account, his baptismal name of Crimthann was changed by his young companions into that other name the "Dove of the Church" —Colum-cille—by which he is best known to history. Dr. Reeves, however, seems to think that he was called Colum at his baptism, and that cille was merely added by his companions because he so loved to haunt the church, when they would have him play. We learn from Adamnan that whilst he was at Moville, the young saint devoted his attention chiefly to the study of Sacred Scripture, of which Finnian was a most distinguished professor. We have the sober testimony of the same Adamnan that whilst the saint was a deacon at Moville no wine could be found on a certain festival day for the "Sacrificial Mystery." Whilst the ministers at the altar were complaining of the want of the wine, the deacon took a cruet to the well, as it was his duty to procure and taste the water for the Holy Sacrifice. Knowing that the wine was wanting, he invoked our Lord Jesus Christ, and lo! the water in his hands was changed into wine, as it once was at Cana of Galilee; and he brought it to Bishop Finnian for the Sacrifice, who gave thanks to God on account of this wondrous miracle.

It is not certain whether it was at this period or later on that Columba made that furtive copy of Finnian's Gospel, which subsequently begot so much trouble, and appears to have been the main cause of the bloody battle of Cuil-dreimhne in Carberry, co. Sligo. We have referred to this incident before, and we may have to refer to it again, when we come to explain the causes of Columba's departure from Erin.

From Moville Columba, still a deacon, went southward to the plains of Leinster, and placed himself under the instruction of an aged bard called Gemman. The young deacon had a soul for music; and he greatly loved the Bards, who sang of the brave deeds of warrior kings and ancient heroes. He wished, also, to perfect himself in his own native tongue, and to become a pupil in the School of the Bards was the recognised way to study the language and literature of Erin,

such as it was at that time. But he was also learning 'divine wisdom' in Leinster at the same time, probably at the School of St. Finnian of Clonard, which was on the borders of Meath and Leinster.

There a very striking incident took place, which is in itself evidence of the lawless character of the times, and the necessity of the presence of some moral power with a divine sanction to hold that savagery in check. It happened one day that whilst Gemman, the Bard, was sitting in the open field reading his book, he saw a young girl flying to him for protection from the attacks of a ruffian, who pursued her closely as she fled. Gemman called to his disciple Columba who was close at hand, and both of them sought to protect the maiden from the violence of her assailant. But he, heedless of the reverence due both to the deacon and the bard, pierced the maiden with his lance, even as she sought shelter in vain behind their cloaks. She fell dead at their feet, but Columba, divinely inspired, cried out that her soul would fly to heaven, and the murderer's soul would fly as quickly to hell. No sooner was the word spoken, than the wretch fell dead before them, and the name of God and of Columba was greatly magnified through all the neighbouring country.

We have already spoken of the great College of Clonard founded by St. Finnian, who is quite distinct from his namesake of Moville. We have seen that Columba was there, and was recognised as one of the Twelve Apostles of Erin, who were trained up together at that great seminary in all sacred learning. He was about twenty-two years of age at this period, for he was not yet ordained a priest, so that we may fix the period of his sojourn at Clonard about the year A.D. 543. The immediate purpose of Columba's studies at Clonard was to prepare himself for the priesthood. There he was trained by the most celebrated master of Erin in all the virtue and learning necessary for that holy state. He built his little cell close to the church, and when he was not engaged in study, or attending his lectures, he was nearly always to be found before the altar in prayer. Though of the royal blood of Tara's kings, he was humble, and took his turn at the quern, or hand-mill, grinding the corn that was necessary for himself and his companions. Their chief food was bread and water, or a little milk, when it could be had. No doubt from time to time they might succeed in catching some fish in the River Boyne, which flows through the meadows around Clonard. It was a simple life, but a happy and a heavenly one, when the youthful Apostles of Erin

wandered together by the banks of that historic stream, or gathered round their venerable master to hear his lectures, as he sat on the old moat of Clonard, or to listen to his burning words in his little church, when he exhorted them to the love of God and the contempt of all worldly things for God's sake.

It was the custom in those days for the students to visit the various saints of Erin, who were celebrated for holiness and learning; and so we find that Columba, when he had finished his studies under Finnian of Clonard, directed his steps to the school of another great master of the spiritual life, St. Mobhi Clarainech of Glasnevin. Before his departure, however, from Clonard, according to one account, the saint was ordained a priest,[1] not by Finnian, for he does not appear to have been bishop, but by Etchen of Clonfad, which is situated a little west of Clonard, and who doubtless exercised at that time the episcopal jurisdiction, which was afterwards exercised by the prelates of Clonard. It is said that it was Finnian's purpose to have Columba ordained a bishop on this occasion, but through some mistake on the part of Bishop Etchen, he was only ordained a priest. Deeming it providential, Columba in his humility would never afterwards consent to be raised to the episcopal dignity.[2]

The students' cells at Glasnevin were situated on one side of the River Tolka, and Mobhi's church was on the other, at or near the spot where the Protestant church now stands. The light-footed youngsters of those days, however, found no difficulty in crossing the rapid and shallow stream at ordinary times. But when the river was swollen with heavy rains, it was no easy task to breast the flood; yet such was Columba's zeal in the service of God that on one such occasion, to his master's admiration and surprise, he crossed the angry torrent, that he might be present as usual at the exercises in the church. "May God be praised," said Columba, when he had crossed safely over, "and deliver us from these perils in future." It is said that his prayer was heard; and that all

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[1] It is more likely that his ordination took place after he left Glasnevin on his homeward journey.

[2] This mistake led to important consequences. Columba not being himself a bishop found it necessary to have a bishop, subject to his jurisdiction, to perform episcopal functions in his monasteries. It was an unusual arrangement, as Bede declares, "Habere solet ipsa insula (Hy) rectorem semper abbatem presbyterum, cujus juri et omnis provincia, et etiam episcopi, *ordine inusitato*, debeant esse subjecti, juxta exemplum primi doctoris illius, qui non episcopus sed presbyter extitit et monachus."—Bede, H.E. III. 4.

the cells, with their occupants, were suddenly transferred to the other side of the stream, and remained there ever after.

It was doubtless during his leisure hours, while under Mobhi's care at Glasnevin, that Columba used to ramble out to the Hill of Howth, and sitting on the brow of its lofty cliffs, gaze in pensive mood over the wide spreading sea, and contemplate, with a poet's eye, all the stern grandeur of that iron-bound coast. He fed his soul on the glorious vision, and in after years, when surrounded by the sterile rocks of Iona, his sad thoughts often turned to those scenes of his youth, and found expression in words that cannot fail to touch a sympathetic chord in every heart.

"Delightful to be on Benn-Edar
Before crossing o'er the white sea,
(To see) the dashing of the waves against its brow,
The bareness of its shore, and its border.

Delightful to be (once more) on Benn-Edar
After crossing the white-bosomed sea;
To row one's little coracle,
Ochone! on its swift-waved shore.

Ah, rapid the speed of my coracle;
And its stern turned on Derry;
I grieve at my errand o'er the noble sea,
Travelling to Alba of the ravens.

My foot in my sweet little coracle;
My sad heart still bleeding;
Weak is the man that cannot lead,
Totally blind are the ignorant (of God's will.)"

Columba had for companions at Glasnevin St. Cannech, St. Ciaran, and St. Comgall—and during their entire lives a tender and ardent friendship united these holy men together. A pestilence which broke out in A.D. 544, and of which St. Ciaran appears to have died, scattered the holy disciples of St. Mobhi's School; so Columba resolved to return home to his native territory.

When he crossed the stream then called the Bior, but now called the Moyola Water, which flows into Lough Neagh at its north-western extremity, he earnestly prayed to God to stay the ravages of the terrible "Buidhe Chonnaill" on the southern banks of that stream, so that it might not invade the territories of his kinsmen. His earnest prayer was heard, and thus Tir-Owen and Tir-Connell escaped the dreadful plague.

II.—Columba founds Derry.

Columba was now a priest twenty-five years of age; and he began to think of founding a church in his native territory. The *Annals of Ulster* record the founding of Derry by Columba in the year A.D. 545;[1] and it was brought about in this way. The first cousin of St. Columba, Ainmire, son of Setna, who succeeded to the throne of Tara later on, was in A.D. 545 prince of Ailech and the neighbouring territory. His eldest son Aedh, was then a boy of ten years; but it seems, according to O'Donnell's *Life of Columba*, the king in the name of his son Aedh, offered the fort in which he then dwelt on the site of the present city of Derry to his cousin in order to found his church and monastery. Columba, however, was at first unwilling to accept the gift, because his master Mobhi had not yet given him, as was customary, permission to found a church—doubtless thinking him too young and inexperienced. But Mobhi himself was taken sick, and died of the plague in A.D. 544, shortly after Columba had left him; and before he died he retracted his prohibition, and sent two of his disciples to Columba with his girdle as a sign to give him full permission to act as he pleased. These messengers had just then arrived; and so Columba gladly accepted the gift of his cousin, and founded his church on, what was called then and long after, the Island of Derry. It was a rising ground oval in shape containing 200 acres of land, surrounded on two sides by the Foyle, and on the third by low marshy ground since known as the 'bog.' The slopes of the hill were covered with a beautiful grove of oak trees, which gave its name to the place. In ancient times it was called Daire Calgaich, but after the tenth century it came to be more commonly known as Daire Columcille.

Columcille's original church, called the Dubh-Regles, was built close to the site now occupied by the Roman Catholic Cathedral; and hence it was outside the walls of the modern city. Nigh to it were three wells anciently known as Adamnan's Well, and Martin's Well, and Columba's Well. One of them is, it appears, now dry; and the others are called simply "St. Columb's Wells." Near to the church there was also erected a round tower, which in like manner has completely disappeared. So anxious was Columba to spare the beautiful oak-grove which covered the hill, that he would not even build his church with the chancel towards

[1] A.D. 545—"Daire Colum Cille fundatâ est" (*recte*, 546).

the east according to custom, because in that case some of his beloved oaks should be cut down to make room for the church. It was probably for the same reason he built on the low ground at the foot of the hill, instead of on its slope or summit, where the modern city stands. He strictly enjoined his successors to spare the sacred grove, and even directed in case any of the trees were blown down by the storm to give a part to the poor, a part to the citizens, and to reserve another part as fuel for the guest-house. In later ages a cathedral called Templemore was built on the slope of the hill; and the Dominicans, Augustinians, and Franciscans had each a church and a monastery in the city of St. Columba. It also seems that a Cistercian convent was founded there, but not a trace of any of them now remains; so effectually did the imported colonists change the physical as well as the religious aspect of the city.

We know very little of the history of Derry during the period that Columba ruled over his monastery in person. He always loved it dearly, and many a time his heart turned fondly from his lonely island in the Scottish main to his beloved Derry.

"The reason I love Derry is
For its peace, for its purity,
And for its crowds of white angels
From one end to the other.

My Derry! mine own little grove!
My dwelling, my dear little cell;
O eternal God, in heaven above,
Woe be to him, who violates it!"

From all the highlands and valleys of Tir-connell his kith and kin rallied round the young monk in his infant monastery. It was built on the border-land between the territories of Eoghan and Conal; and in after ages every acre of its termon lands was stained with blood, shed in fratricidal strife by the two great clans of the north. It stood, too, under the shadow of that ancient keep, the Grianan of Ailech, which, it is said, was the abode of the northern kings long before the Christian era. It was certainly the Royal Fortress of the Hy-Niall in their proudest days, and still rears its stately walls, that overlook at once the Foyle and the Swilly, as if in silent scorn of time and storm and man.

It will help us to understand better the subsequent history of Columcille, if we try now to realize what manner of man

he was. He came of a fierce and haughty race, and seems to have been himself by nature, notwithstanding his name, a man of ardent temperament and strong passions. He was, says an ancient commentator,[1] quoting from a still more ancient poet, "a man of well-formed and powerful frame; his skin was white, his face was broad and fair and radiant, lit up with large grey luminous eyes; his large and well-shaped head was crowned (except where he wore his frontal tonsure) with close and curling hair. His voice was clear and resonant, so that he could be heard at the distance of fifteen hundred paces, yet sweet with more than the sweetness of the bards." Truly a great and striking man to hear and to look at; one to admire but also to fear, and moreover, animated with lofty purpose, and inspired with all the dauntless courage of his race. In many respects his character appears to us to bear a very striking resemblance to the character of the Prince of the Apostles both in its strength and in its weakness.

Doubtless such a man as we have described, found it not only useful, but necessary to chastise his body and bring it under subjection. "Though my devotion is delightful," he is represented as saying of himself, "I sit in a chair of glass, for I am fleshly and often frail."[2] We are told that he practised the most extreme austerities. He barely took food enough to sustain nature, and that was of the simplest kind. "He did not," says the *Felire,* "take as much in a week as would serve for one meal of a pauper." He abstained from meat and wine, living exclusively on bread and water, and vegetables—sometimes contenting himself with nettles. He slept on the bare ground with a stone for a pillow, and a skin for a coverlid. Three times at night he rose to pray; and often scored his flesh with the discipline in atonement for his sins. By day he read, or preached to the brethren, or recited the divine office; and not unfrequently he took a share in the manual labour of the monks—carrying on his own broad bare shoulders the sacks of meal from the mill to the kitchen.

No wonder with such an example before their eyes that the young nobles of Tirconnell strove with generous emulation to excel each other in the service of God. What marvel if the white-robed brethren under such a master became angels in the flesh; and what wonder if God's angels came down from heaven, and "crowded every leaf on the

[1] See the *Felire of Ængus.* [2] Notes to the *Felire.*

oaks of Derry," to listen to such a brotherhood chanting at midnight's hour and at morning's dawn the inspired strains of the Hebrew Bard?

III.—The Schools of Durrow and Kells.

We know from the express statement of Venerable Bede that Columba founded the noble monastery of Durrow before he left Ireland for Iona.[1] Like Derry, it takes its name from an oak-grove; for it means the Plain of the Oaks—in Irish *Dair-magh*. It was anciently called Ros-grencha—the oak plain of the far famed Ros-grencha—and also Druim-Cain, or the Beautiful Hill; and even to-day whoever wanders through the rich pastures and the stately groves of Durrow will readily admit that it well deserves its ancient name. It is situated not far from Clara in the barony of Ballycowan, in the King's County; but in the time of Columcille it formed part of the ancient kingdom of Teffia. Aedh, son of Brendan, prince of the territory, gave it to Columcille for the purpose of founding a monastery. It is true that Brendan himself was alive until A.D. 576; but, as not unfrequently happened in Erin, after the death of Crimthann in A.D. 533 the lordship passed not to his brother, but to his nephew, Brendan's son, who doubtless had been previously recognised as the tanist. If, as Bede says, the monastery was founded before Columba set out for Britain in A.D. 563, it certainly was not completely founded; for several years after Columba's arrival in Britain we read of the building of the Great House of the monastery—whether that was, as Petrie thinks, the round tower, or what is more likely, a larger church than the original one designed to accommodate the enlarged community.

We may assume then that Durrow was founded about A.D. 553, that is seven years after the foundation of Derry By this time the reputation of Columba had spread far and wide over the entire kingdom. His 'cousins' too of the Southern Hy-Niall then reigned at Tara, and at this period the saint seems to be on friendly terms with that branch of his family. Being so famous and so influential, it is not to be wondered at that Columba was invited to found monasteries through almost all the northern half of Ireland to which even Durrow at that period belonged.

[1] Fecerat autem priusquam Brittaniam veniret monasterium nobile in Hibernia, quod a copia roborum *Dearmach* linguâ Scottorum, *i.e.* Campu roborum cognominatur.—Book iii. 4.

Several interesting incidents are recorded by Adamnan in his *Life of Columba* having reference to Durrow. The monks, it seems, had an orchard near the mŏnastery on its southern border, and in the orchard there was one tree that produced a great abundance of apples; but they were so bitter that no one would eat them. The saint hearing every one complaining of the sour apples, raised his hand and blessed the tree in the name of Almighty God, and lo! at once every apple on the tree became sweet and good to eat.

Even when he was in Iona Columba was solicitous about his beloved monks of Durrow. One cold winter's day the saint in Iona was very sad, and shed silent tears. Diarmait, his attendant, asked what troubled him; and Columba replied, that he was sore grieved because he saw in spirit how Laisren, the prior of Durrow, kept his poor monks working on that bitter day in building the Great House.[1] At the very same moment Laisren in Durrow found himself moved by some internal suggestion, and bade the monks, as the weather was so severe, to get their dinner, and take rest for the remainder of the day. This too was made known in spirit to Columba, and he greatly rejoiced.

On another occasion during the building of the same Great House, Columba in spirit saw one of the monks falling from the very top of the roof. "Help! help!" cried the saint—and lo! the guardian angel of Iona flew to the monk's aid at the prayer of Columba, and caught him up before he fell to the ground. Such is the speed of an angel's flight, and the virtue of a saint's prayer; for it is written, "He hath given His angels charge over thee; to keep thee in all thy ways. In their hands they shall bear thee up; lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."[2]

When Columba was leaving Durrow, he was very anxious to secure the future well-being of that dear monastery, which next to Derry appears to have held the highest place in his affection. There is an ancient poem attributed to the saint in which he describes with loving minuteness the various charms of Durrow. There the wind sings through the elms, as well as through the oaks; the blackbird's joyous note is heard at early dawn; and the cuckoo chants from tree to tree in that noble angelic land—"all but its government was indeed delightful." Elsewhere the saint speaks with

[1] The 'Great House' was perhaps the abbot's residence. See Petrie's *Round Towers*, page 431.

[2] Ps. xc. verse 11.

tenderest feeling of the toll of its soft-toned bell; and the glories of the woods in beautiful many-coloured Dair-magh.

> "O Cormac, beautiful is that church of thine,
> With its books, with its learning;
> A city devout with its hundred crosses,
> Without blemish, and without transgression."

The reference here is to Cormac Ua Liathain, who seems to have been left in charge at Durrow, when Columba himself retired to Iona. But Cormac was a Momonian, as he is called in the dialogue with Columba, and hereditary jealousy between North and South soon showed itself at Durrow after Columba's departure. The princes of the Clan-Colman, or Southern Hy-Niall, objected to have a Momonian the ruler in Durrow, and made it so unpleasant for Cormac that the latter, without waiting for Columba's permission, resolved to leave the government of Durrow to Laisren, the first cousin of Columba, and seek for himself a desert isle in the ocean to be the place of his rest and resurrection.

With a few companions he set out from Killala, and sailed the northern seas for two long years, but yet could find no island home in the northern main. After perils and hardships untold, he and his famished crew succeeded in reaching Iona, where they were kindly welcomed by Columba. But when Columba discovered why it was that Cormac had sailed so long 'over the all-teeming sea, from port to port and from wave to wave,' his brow grew stern; and he felt much inclined to rebuke Cormac severly for his disobedience. "Thou art welcome," he said; "since the sea hath sent thee hither—else thou hath merited satire and reproach."[1]

Columba then urges on Cormac to return back again to his monastery in Durrow; he enlarges on the beauty of that devout city with its books, and its learning, and its hundred crosses; he describes how sweet is the blackbird's song and the music of the wind, as it murmurs through the elms on the Oak-plain of far-famed Ros-grencha; he promises Cormac that he will cause the Clann-Colman of the reddened swords to protect the monastery of Durrow; "and I pledge thee my unerring word," he said, "which may not be impugned, that death is better in reproachless Erin than life for ever in Alba."[2]

Still Cormac was unwilling to return—"How can I go there amongst the powerful northern tribes in that border

[1] See Reeves' *Adamnan*, page 276. [2] *Ibid*, page 269.

land, O Colum ? and if it is better to be in noble Erin than in inviolate Alba, do thou return to Erin and leave me at least by turns in Alba." The discussion grew warm between the two saints ; but it appears to have ended amicably. Cormac was allowed to remain for a time in Iona, and afterwards to found a monastery of his own in Tyrawley, on condition that he used his influence with his southern kinsmen to make them pay their alms and dues to the monastery of Durrow.

The two Irish poems printed by Colgan and Bishop Reeves giving an account of these events, can scarcely in their present form be regarded as the composition of Columcille. There can hardly be any doubt, however, that they convey a truthful narrative of the facts, and were in their original form the work of Columcille himself.

Whilst Columba was at Durrow he wrote, as far as we can judge with his own hands, the celebrated copy of the Gospels, known as the *Book of Durrow*. That the saint was an accomplished scribe is certain; we know from many passages in his life that he spent much time in copying parts of the sacred volume ; and he was engaged in the same pious labour when he felt the call of death, and asked Baithen "to write the rest." We shall see later on how he copied stealthily Finnian's MS. of the Gospels, which afterwards led to serious trouble and much bloodshed in Erin.

The *Book of Durrow* is a highly ornamental copy of the Four Gospels according to Jerome's version, then recently introduced in Ireland. It is written across the page in single columns, and the MS. also contains the Epistle of St. Jerome to Pope Damasus, an explanation of certain Hebrew names, with the Eusebian Canons and synoptical tables. It has also symbolical representations of the Evangelists, and many pages of coloured ornamentation—spiral, interlaced, and tesselated.[1] There is a partly obliterated entry on the back of fol. 12, praying for "a remembrance of the scribe, Columba, who wrote this evangel in the space of twelve days." That Columba was indeed the scribe who wrote this manuscript is rendered still more probable from the old tradition that he with his own hands wrote a copy of the Gospels for each of the monasteries which he had founded. We have already seen that the *Book of Derry* was lost, but fortunately the *Book of Durrow* and the *Book of Kells* are still in existence. It is referred to by O'Clery in the *Martyrology of Donegal*, "as having gems and silver on its cover," and was seen by Connell

[1] Gilbert. *National MSS.*, page 10.

Mac Geoghegan, the translator of the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, who made an entry at the foot of folio 116 in the year A.D. 1623. It was then at Durrow, but passed into the possession of Henry Jones, Vice-Chancellor of Trinity College in the time of Cromwell. O'Flaherty saw it in A.D. 1677, and fortunately then deciphered the inscription on the cover, and entered it on the fly-leaf of the manuscript. The cover has since disappeared with its gems and its silver cross—but thanks to O'Flaherty we know the inscription, which it bore in Irish—Oroith agus benedacht Coluimcille do Fland Macc Mailshechnaill do righ Erenn las a ndernad a cumdach so.

"The prayer and benediction of Columcille for Mailshechnaill, King of Erin, for whom this cover was made."

"I have seen," says O'Flaherty, referring to this MS. and its cover, "handwritings of St. Columba in Irish characters, as straight and as fair as any print, of above 1,000 years standing, and Irish letters engraved in the time of Flann, King of Ireland, deceased in A.D. 916." O'Flaherty saw the Book in Trinity College in A.D. 1677; and it is there still. Jones, the Vice-Chancellor, afterwards Bishop of Meath, gave it to the College.

At present there is no trace of any of the ancient buildings at Durrow. There is a holy well—St. Columba's well—still flowing, which is greatly venerated for the virtue of its waters, and is kept in good order by the present noble proprietor of these lands, Lord Norbury, whose mansion is close at hand. There is an old church-yard, too, which doubtless marks the site of the ancient churches; it is still much used for burials, although already overcrowded with the dead. The most interesting memorial, however, at present in Durrow is a beautiful sculptured cross which stands on a low stone pedestal close to the church-yard. It is like the Cross of Monasterboice. There are also two ancient inscribed stones, one unfortunately broken, but the inscription remains, ✠ OR DO CHATHALAN—(pray for little Cathal)—the proper name being a diminutive of Cathal. This fragment is now only six inches long. The other stone asks a prayer for *Aigide*. The inscribed cross on this stone, now half buried in the grass, is of the most chaste and beautiful design, richly adorned with spirals, knots, and frets, which point to the most flourishing period of Celtic art. Nowhere else has a cross of similar design been discovered. Two of the outer arch-stones of an ancient and once very beautiful window are built into a wall near the High Cross. No other remains of antiquity

are now to be found on the site of the once celebrated monastery of Durrow.

Hugh de Lacy completely desolated Durrow and uprooted its ancient shrines. In the year A.D. 1186 that stern warrior set about building a castle at Durrow. For this purpose he seized the abbey-lands, drove out the neighbouring Celtic proprietor, whose name was Fox, and proceeded to build his castle with the stones of Columba's monastery and churches. But this was the close of his evil career. A workman, sent it is said by Fox for the purpose, was watching for his opportunity, and when De Lacy, who superintended the work in person, was stooping forward, he struck off his head with one blow of his keen axe. The body fell into the ditch of the castle; and at the same moment the assassin burst through the astonished workmen, and fled into the neighbouring woods. "It was in revenge of Columcille" that this was done, say the Four Masters, and certainly it seems as if the fate that overtook this "profaner and destroyer of many churches" was the not unnatural outcome of his own evil deeds. In 1839 the Earl of Norbury, a worthy successor of De Lacy, was assassinated in the same spot, after he had erected a castle on the site of De Lacy's.

——Pallas te hoc vulnere, Pallas
Immolat, et poenam scelerato de sanguine sumit.—*Virgil.*

IV.—The Foundation of Kells.

The foundation of Kells took place soon after that of Durrow, but the exact date cannot be assigned—all we know is that it was founded during the reign of King Diarmait, the son of Fergus Cearbhaill. It is necessary to know something of this King Diarmait, whose history is intimately connected with that of Columcille. He was great grandson of Niall of the Nine Hostages, and therefore a second cousin once removed of Columcille himself. But Columcille belonged to the northern or Ulster Hy-Niall, who derived their descent from Eoghan and Conal Gulban; while the southern, or Meath Hy-Niall, were descended from Conal Crimthann, another son of Niall the Great, who fixed his residence in Meath. Considerable jealousy existed between these two branches of the Hy-Niall stock, especially when Diarmait succeeded to the throne of Tara after the murder of his predecessor, Tuathal Maelgarbh in A.D. 544; for he was supposed to have instigated the commission of that crime. The princes of the North, especially the sons of the gallant and ill-fated Muir-

[1] See Professor Stokes' very interesting Lecture.

Seartach Mac Earca, considered that they themselves had a better title to the throne than Diarmait, and indeed during his reign of twenty years they were often in rebellion against him, and not unfrequently were victorious in the strife. Still Diarmait contrived to maintain his hold of Tara, and governed the kingdom with vigour and wisdom, until he fell out with the 'Saints,' whom he found more difficult to control than the princes of the rival line. In consequence of his dispute with St. Ruadhan of Lorrha, Tara was cursed and abandoned; and because of another outrage which he offered to Columcille the great battle of Cuil-dreimhne was fought in which his army was utterly routed, and he himself escaped with much difficulty. Shortly afterwards he, in his turn, was slain by the hands of an assassin.

The only authority we have in reference to the foundation of Kells during the reign of this Diarmait is O'Donnell's *Life of Columba*. It is not noticed in our Annals, nor, at least explicitly, in the other Lives of the Saint. According to O'Donnell's *Life*, Columba, after founding Durrow, went to Kells[1]—in Irish Cenannus—where it seems the king then lived, although he happened to be absent at this time. The saint when entering the place was very rudely received by certain soldiers of the Royal Guard, to whom he was most probably unknown. But when the king returned home and heard that his soldiers had insulted the greatest saint in Erin at the time, and moreover one of his own royal blood, he resolved to make over the city itself to Columba for a monastery, as an atonement for the rudeness of his soldiers. Columba could expect no more, and thankfully accepted the gift. The donation was also ratified by the sanction of Aedh Slaine, the eldest son of the king, and heir apparent to the throne. In return Columba predicted that Aedh would mount the throne of Erin, and that his reign would be prosperous so long as he abstained from shedding innocent blood—a condition, however, which he afterwards did not observe.

Kells was thus founded about the year A.D. 554, although its foundation is sometimes set down so early as the year A.D. 550. It does not, however, seem to have attained great eminence during the lifetime of St. Columba himself; for its fame was eclipsed by other more celebrated houses founded by the saint. It was only after the decline of Iona in the ninth century, consequent on the ravages of the Danes, that Kells became the chief monastery of the Columbian order both in Erin and Alba, as we shall see further on.

It may be useful, however, at present to make reference to

[1] The Irish Life in the *Book of Lismore* indirectly implies that Kells was founded by St. Columba, as well as many other churches in Bregia.

the chief memorials of Columba, which point to his own intimate connection with that establishment. St. Columba's 'House' is the most interesting of the existing antiquities at Kells. We may safely accept the opinion of the learned and accurate Petrie, that St. Columba's House at Kells and St. Kevin's at Glendalough were erected by the persons whose names they bear, and that they both served the double purpose of a habitation and an oratory.[1] The building is a plain oblong, twenty-four feet long by twenty-one broad, having a very high-pitched pyramidal stone roof, which is now covered with a luxuriant growth of ivy. The original door was in the west end, but for the purpose of greater security was placed about eight feet from the ground, and must have been reached by a ladder which could easily be drawn up by the inmates in case of alarm or danger. The building contains two apartments; the lower, which was the oratory, is covered with a semicircular stone arching, and was lighted by two small windows—a slender semicircular one in the east gable, and a triangular headed one in the south side-wall. The chamber or sleeping apartment of the saint was in the croft between the convex arching and the roof. It is about six feet high, and is lighted by a small window in the gable. It appears originally to have contained three apartments, in one of which is a large flat stone six feet in length, which is traditionally said to have been Columba's bed. If we suppose a somewhat similar house to have been at Durrow, it will help to explain Adamnan's reference to the Great House, and the danger of falling from the ridge of the roof, for in Kells it is thirty-eight feet from the ground.

There is a sculptured cross standing in the market-place of the same character as that of Durrow; there is another fine ancient cross in the churchyard having on the plinth in Irish characters the words—

"Patricii et Columbae (Crux)."

which show that it was erected to commemorate these two great saints, and probably at the time when Kells was the recognised head of all the Columbian foundations. There is a third cross, which Miss Stokes declares to have been the finest of the three, now lying mutilated in the church. These crosses show that ecclesiastical art was carefully and successfully cultivated at Kells, and that the city well deserved the appellation of "Kells of the Crosses."

The fine round tower of Kells, which is still ninety feet

[1] *Round Towers*, page 437.

high, marks the importance of the place during the Danish wars, and fixes also the site of the great church, for the towers were almost always built within ten or twelve paces of the great western door of the church towards the left or southern side, looking from the doorway. No trace, however, of the great church now remains at Kells, from the sacristy of which we are told the Great Gospel of Columcille was stolen at night in the year A.D. 1006.[1]

This Great Gospel of Columcille was without any doubt the celebrated MS., known as the *Book of Kells*, which is now preserved in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin. It is highly probable both from intrinsic and extrinsic evidence, that like the *Book of Durrow*, this celebrated codex was written by Columcille himself, although, doubtless the ornamentation was, at least to some extent, wrought by other, if not by later hands. The tradition of the church itself, as shown from the entry in the Annals quoted above, shows that so early as the year A.D. 1006 it was regarded as a copy of the Gospels, if not written, certainly used by the saint himself. It is called the Great Gospel of Columcille, and truly well deserves that name, for it has been pronounced by Professor J. O. Westwood, of Oxford, to be "unquestionably the most elaborately executed MS. of so early a date now in existence, far excelling in the gigantic size of the letters at the beginning of each Gospel, the excessive minuteness of the ornamental details crowded into whole pages, the number of its very peculiar decorations, the fineness of the writing, and the endless variety of its initial capitals, the famous Gospels of Lindisfarne in the Cottonian Library." We may add that the Gospel of Lindisfarne was also a work of Irish art, as Lindisfarne itself was originally a monastery founded and peopled by Irish monks from Iona.

No description can give an adequate idea of the *Book of Kells*—it must be seen and studied to be duly appreciated.

It has had, too, a strange history. It was stolen, as we have seen, by some sacrilegious wretch in A.D. 1006; and at that time it was regarded as the chief relic of the western world. Fortunately it was found after forty days and two months, covered with sods in a bog, but its gold had been stripped off. Some few leaves at the beginning have been lost, and certain deeds and grants of land made to the churches of Kells are recorded in Irish on some of the blank pages probably left there for that purpose. In the time of Usher it was still preserved at Kells; but he secured it when Bishop of Meath, as he himself tells us, to collate the readings with

[1] *Four Masters.*

the Vulgate; whether it was by purchase or otherwise we cannot say.[1] It passed to Trinity College with Usher's collection, and, like many of the other ancient treasures of Celtic Ireland, is preserved there at present.

We have already referred to another manuscript written by Columba, which has had a far more momentous history than either the *Book of Durrow* or the *Book of Kells*, that is the MS. which caused the battle of Cuil-Dreimhne, and which was indirectly, at least according to the common account, the means of sending Columba to preach the Gospel in Alba. It was brought about in this way according to Keating.

That Diarmait, of whom we have already spoken, made a great feast at Tara, and many princes and nobles were present at the feast. There were also games on the green of Tara, and during a game of hurling Curnan, son of Hugh, son of Eochaidh Tirmcharna, struck the son of the king's steward with his hurley and killed him with the blow. Brawling at the games of Tara was strictly forbidden; so the young Prince of Connaught knowing the consequences of his rash act, fled for refuge to Columcille, who was in Tara at the time. But Diarmait seized the fugitive, tore him from the embrace of the saint, and had him put to death on the spot.

But this was not all. It seems that on this occasion Columba came to Tara to claim in the court of the king that copy of the Psalms which he had stealthily made from the copy which St. Finnian had brought from Rome, and which he very highly prized. Finnian waited until Columba, who was a choice scribe, had completed the copy, and then claimed it as his own. We have already spoken of Diarmait's decision, and Columba's appeal to his kinsmen in the North.

They flew to arms, and called to their aid all those who had suffered wrongs at the hands of King Diarmait. Very soon they assembled a great army in the heart of the North. It was led by the two sons of Muircheartach Mac Earca, Fergus and Domhnall, the rival claimants of the crown, and by Ainmire, son of Sedna, first cousin of Columba, and by Nainnidh, son of Duach, another first cousin, and by Aedh, the Prince of Connaught, whose son had been put to death by the King at Tara. This was a formidable alliance, but King Diarmait lost no time in raising troops to meet his foes. The two armies came into collision on the ridge of Cuil-Dreimhne, now Cooladrummon, between Benbulbin mountain and the

[1] At the Dissolution in A.D. 1539 the Book came into the hands of Gerald Plunket of Dublin, but he appears to have restored it to the monks of Kells.

sea, in the county Sligo. It is said the rival saints supported the rival armies—that Columcille prayed for the men of the North, and that St. Finnian was behind the lines of King Diarmait. Be that as it may, the men of the North were completely victorious; three thousand of their foes were slain, while only one man fell on their side, who had transgressed the precept of Columba forbidding them to go beyond a certain point on the field, called the Druid's fence.

Then it seems his conscience sorely smote Columcille. Was he justified in urging his kinsmen to fight this bloody battle which caused the loss of three thousand lives? He went straight to his confessor, St. Molaise of Innismurray Island, who at the time was in his own Church of Ahamlish, not more than two miles from the scene of the battle. Molaise declared that Columcille had sinned, and that he must do penance; and his penance must be proportionate to his fault. He bade him leave Ireland, and go to preach the Gospel, where he would gain as many souls for Christ as lives were lost in the battle, and never look upon his native land again.

It has been said that this story is the invention of a later age;[1] that it is in itself improbable; and above all, that Adamnan is silent in reference to it. It is, however, the expression of a very ancient tradition, and it is assumed as true by O'Donnell in his *Life of Columba*, by Keating, and by the Four Masters. The silence of Adamnan, too, is very significant. He refers in more than one place to the battle of Cuil-Dreimhne, as if it were an era in the life-history of Columba. He plainly does not want to say anything derogatory to the Saint of Iona; but in our opinion he also plainly implies that he had some connection with the battle of Cuil-Dreimhne; to which he either thinks it inexpedient or unnecessary for him to make more explicit reference. We, therefore, cannot reject the story as either improbable in itself, or unsupported by authority. His connection with this battle may have been a fault, or even a crime, on the part of Columba; but in itself it is so natural, and in its consequences so edifying, and so encouraging to our frail human nature, that we cannot help saying from our hearts—*O felix culpa*—O blessed fault which produced so much good both for Erin and for Alba. The poem[2] in which Columba declares that the voyage to Alba was enjoined on him for his own share in this battle, if not his composition, is certainly

[1] Such is the opinion of the learned Cardinal Moran expressed to the writer in person.

[2] See Reeves' *Adamnan*, page 275.

of very ancient origin, and furnishes a distinct proof of the existence of the tradition at the time it was written.

The site of the battle is a remarkable spot. The townland of Cooladrummon is situated on the very crest of the hill, in a line with the nose of Benbulben mountain, about six miles north of Sligo. It commands a view of unrivalled beauty both by land and sea. The tourist travelling from Sligo to Bundoran will be on the very battle field of Cuil-Dreimhne as soon as he reaches that point of the road on the very crest of the ridge, where the Bay of Donegal at once bursts full upon his view. Let him pause and admire it at his leisure, for rarely, if ever, will he see again such an expanse of sea, backed by noble mountains, and waving woods, and fertile fields, and, especially in Columba's own Drumcliff, many a neat but frugal happy homestead.

The battle of Cuil-Dreimhne was fought A.D. 561 ; but Columba and his associates did not set out for Alba until nearly two years later, in A.D. 563. The traditional accounts of his departure from Derry, and his arrival in Iona, are exceedingly touching.

Having made up his mind to perform the bitter penance enjoined on him by Molaise at the Cross of Ahamlish (Ath-Imlaisi), his first object would naturally be to seek companions for his voyage. It was, no doubt, a perilous and laborious enterprise ; but he found no difficulty in procuring associates in his task. As soon as he made known his resolution to the monks of Derry, he had abundance of volunteers who feared no perils, and were ready to accompany their beloved abbot to any spot on earth where he chose to dwell. He selected twelve from amongst them—men of his own blood, and monks of his own obedience. Amongst them were his uncle, Ernaan, who afterwards became superior of the monastery in the Island of Hinba, and his two first cousins, Baithen, who succeeded him in Iona, and his brother, Cobthach, both sons of Brenden, son of Fergus, grandfather of the saint.

It appears the exiles set sail from Derry for the north in one or two currachs, in the year A.D. 563, when Columba was in the forty-second year of his age. When they came to set sail, not only the monks of Derry, but the bishops and clergy and people, from all the country round about, crowded to the shore to bid farewell to their beloved saint. Then a great wailing was borne on the breeze that filled the light sails of the currachs ; even the wild sea-birds hovered round their bark, as if loth to leave the blessed Columba. His heart was full, and his eyes were dim with tears, as he saw the oak-

woods of Derry and the hills of Inishowen fading, it might be for ever, from his view. In the old Irish poem already referred to, there are some stanzas which are supposed to give expression to the feelings of the saint, when, with bleeding heart, he vainly sought another glimpse of Erin amid the waste of waters all around him. We venture to render a few of these stanzas in verse:—

"Ah! my heart will never find rest,
There's a tear in my soft grey eye;
Give Eri once more to my breast,
And then I am ready to die.

I stand on the deck of my bark,
And gaze o'er the southern sea;
But alas! and alas! my Eri
For ever is hidden from me.

How bright are the eyes of my Eri,
Like the gleam of an angel's wing;
And sweet is the breath of my Eri—
Her voice is the music of Spring.

Oh! deep is my burden of sorrow;
I pine like the mateless dove—
Will this heart from the years never borrow
A balm for the loss of my love?"

Supposing that Columba and his twelve companions sailed straight for the Western Isles of Scotland, one day's prosperous breeze would carry them past the Rhynns of Islay, and bring them in sight of Colonsay. It is said that Columba and his companions landed on the southern extremity of Colonsay, now called Oronsay, and mounting the cliffs looked along the verge of the southern horizon. Dimly in the distance like a cloud, he saw the hills of Inishowen, and once more he bade his companions embark—for he might not stay where he could see the distant hills of Erin. So they re-embarked and sailed further north, until they landed on Iona, which is about twenty miles north-and-by-west of Colonsay.

"To oars again; we may not stay,
For ah! on ocean's rim I see,
Where sunbeams pierce the cloudy day,
From these rude hills of Oronsay,
The isle so dear to me.

But when once more we set our feet
On wild sea-crag or islet fair,
There shall we make our calm retreat,
And spend our lives as it is meet,
In penance and in prayer."[1]

[1] *Green Leaves*, by T. D Sullivan.

On the southern shore of Iona there is a small sandy cove, bounded on both sides by steep and rugged cliffs rising from the waves. A patch of green sward runs down to the sandy margin of this little bay, and outside it is sheltered from the fury of the south and south-west winds by several rocky islets, through which, however, a currach might easily glide even in broken weather, and reach the little sandy beach in safety. This cove is still called *Port a Churraich*, and it is the unfailing tradition of Iona that it was in this cove Columba and his companions first landed, and that the cove takes its name from his currach. "The length of the curachan or ship is obvious to anyone who goes to the place, it being marked up at the head of the harbour upon the grass between two little pillars of stone, set up to show forth the same, between which pillars there is three score of foots in length, which was the exact length of the curachan or ship."[1] We must now devote a separate chapter to Iona and its scholars, for, during six hundred years, it was an Irish island in Scottish seas.

[1] From an account written in A.D. 1761.

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CHAPTER XIV.

THE COLUMBIAN SCHOOL IN ALBA.

I.—Iona.

"Saint of the seas——
Whose days were passed in teacher's toil—
Whose evening song still filled the aisle—
Whose poet's heart fed the wild bird's brood—
Whose fervent arm upbore the rood—
Still from thy roofless rock so gray,
Thou preachest to all, who pass that way."

—*M'Gee.*

When Columba landed on Iona he ascended the steep cliff still called *Cnoc-na-Faire*—the Hill of the Outlook—just above Port-a-Churraich, and looking southward over the sea to the utmost verge of the horizon, he sought in vain for one glimpse of the hills of holy Ireland. He could see, as we saw from the same spot, the rugged peaks of Jura, and the brown summits of Islay; and further still he might perceive the bare blue mountains of Kintyre mingling with the sky; but no trace of the land of his love to the south or south-west—nothing but the open shoreless sea. Then Columba knew that this was the land which God gave him to be the place of his exile, and there he resolved to make his monastic home.

Iona is little more than three miles long, and less than a mile in average breadth; and its physical features are uninviting. It is separated from the Ross of Mull—a bare and bleak mountain district—by a strait less than a mile wide. The surface of the island is very bare and rugged, especially towards the south and west. On the north-eastern border there are a few patches of tillage, but no trace of a tree. The craggy rock crops up everywhere, interspersed with moory or sandy flats; and in sheltered corners there are fields of potatoes, oats, and barley, which, especially on the north-eastern shore, grow very well. The cattle are a small woolly haired breed, easily fed and very hardy. Craggy is the only epithet that will correctly describe the general appearance of the place; there are crags everywhere, interspersed with patches of pasture, which furnish a scanty and precarious herbage to the sheep and black cattle. Dunii is the highest

hill on the island; it is situated towards the northern extremity, not far from the monastery, and rises to the height of more than 300 feet above the sea. Like the other hills, it is almost all naked rock. The south and south-western portion of the island is entirely uninhabited; and is still more wild and barren than the north. Across the middle of the island from east to west, there stretches an extensive belt of low and comparatively level land, called the *Machar*, or Plain. The eastern portion of this plain, called *Sliganach*, from its shelly beach, is fairly cultivated; the western part affords pasturage to a goodly number of sheep and small hardy cattle.

Port Ronan, the usual landing place, is close to the village near the centre of the eastern shore of the island. The village itself, in which there were some hovels as poor as any in Connemara, contains about a dozen of houses; the whole island has about 500 inhabitants, amongst whom, when we visited it, there was not a single Roman Catholic. There is a fair hotel; but as the Duke of Argyle allows no spirituous drinks to be sold on the island, of which he is proprietor, travellers who wish to procure refreshment of this kind had better take it with them. Porter was, however, surreptitiously sold in more than one house in the village.

When Columba, with his twelve companions, came to Iona, it was a wilderness, without inhabitants and without cultivation. Fishermen and pilgrims sometimes landed there, but none appear to have settled permanently in the island. Tighernach, the accurate annalist of Clonmacnoise, states expressly that the island of Hy was granted to Columcille by Conall, King of the Dalriada. On the other hand, Bede says that it was the gift of Brude, King of the Picts; but as Columcille was established at Iona before the conversion of Brude, we must understand Bede to mean that the King of the Picts confirmed the grant, which the sub-king Conall had already made to Columba. King Conall was the son of Comgall, who was a grandson of Fergus Mor Mac Earc, one of the leaders of the colony that came from Dalriada about the year A.D. 506 to establish themselves in Alba. Kintyre and Knapdale was the cradle of this gallant band, that founded the kingdom afterwards known as the Scottish Dalriada, whose princes became the stem of the royal line of Scotland's kings. It was from this prince Conall that Columba received permission to settle in Iona in the first instance, but Brude later on, being a much more powerful prince and ruler of the outer islands, confirmed the grant, most probably at the earnest request of Columba himself.

There is at present no trace of any of the original buildings founded by Columcille. They were probably, as at Durrow, constructed for the most part of perishable materials; but if of stone, they were entirely destroyed during the oft-renewed ravages of the Danes. We do not think it necessary to make here special reference to the churches of a later date, which have no particular connection with our subject. They are in two groups—the Cathedral group about 200 yards from the shore, somewhat to the north of Port Ronan; and a little to the south and nearer to the shore the nunnery group with the ancient parish church of Kilronan, a portion of whose walls are still standing. Near this group of ruins is an ancient cross standing by the way-side, and now commonly called M'Lean's Cross. It is a tall thin flag covered with interlacing ornaments of an Irish character. It is fixed in a kind of millstone;[1] and is probably as old as the time of Adamnan himself.

In the cathedral group may be noticed the *Reilig Odhrain*, or ancient cemetery surrounding the Church of St. Odhran, which is a little to the south of the cathedral. This Odhran was, according to the Irish Life, one of the twelve who came with Columcille, although Adamnan seems to imply that he was a Briton. He took sick and died in the island, and gladly met his end, that the burial of his body might, as Columcille said, fix the roots of the holy community in the island, and make it kindred earth. The cemetery was called by his name, and is to this day the only cemetery in the island; for Columcille saw Odhran's soul going to heaven, and he said that no request would be granted to anyone at his own tomb except it were first asked at the tomb of Odhran.

There is a large number of sculptured gravestones in this cemetery, and many of them beautifully wrought; but none are of the most ancient time, and very few of them bear inscriptions. Yet they are obviously the tombs of distinguished persons during the middle ages—of kings and princes; of bishops and abbots; of knights in armour with sword and shield—all resting side by side in *Reilig Odhran*.

There is a low square tower in the very centre of the "Cathedral," between the nave and chancel. It has also two transepts, and apparently two lady-chapels—nearly opposite the sacristy; perhaps one was a mortuary chapel. The

[1] This cross 'in margine viae' is the only cross now in the island which could answer Adamnan's description as that nigh to which Columba sat down to rest himself on his last journey from the monastic farm.—Page 231.

cloister and other monastic buildings adjoined the church on the north-west—so as to enable the monks to enter from the cloister by a door beneath the tower. There are two crosses; one is still standing—St. Martin's—just before the great western doorway; the second cross, now broken, stood a little more to the north, and nearer to the wall of the church. The sculptured figures are much effaced by the hand of time, the severity of the climate, and partly, too, it is to be feared, by the zeal of the 'reformers.' In the little church of St. Odhran there was a beautifully sculptured crucifix just over the throne or abbot's seat; but it has been wantonly broken and defaced.

These, however—except the *Reilig Odhran*—are all the remains of the mediæval monastery and churches founded by the Scottish Kings long after the ravages of the Danes. It is now difficult to fix the exact site of Columba's monastery. It was in our opinion within the circular enclosure, a little to the north, just outside the wall enclosing the present cathedral ruins. The site of the mill, to which Adamnan refers, can easily be traced; there is the lakelet that served as a mill-pond; the stream that turned the mill still flows to the sea; and even the place of the sluice can be observed near the cottage, that has been probably built on the site of the mill. Just on the road side beyond the church-yard is the craggy eminence, which Adamnan refers to as the monticulus monasterio eminens; and Torr Abb—the Abbot's Rock—is still there within the present enclosure and on the same side of the road. Nature's land-marks are all there, and testify to the truth and accuracy of Adamnan's most minute details; but the works of human hands are gone—by men they were raised, and by men they were destroyed.

It is no part of our purpose to refer to Columba's missionary labours amongst the Picts of the Highlands, whom he converted to the faith of Christ. We can only make a brief reference to his influence both as a saint and as a scholar on the learning of his own time, and of subsequent ages.

In all the monasteries which he founded, we find that Columba made ample provision for the pursuit of sacred learning, and the multiplication of books, without which these studies could not be successfully carried on. He was himself, as we have already seen, a celebrated scribe:—

> "Three hundred gifted, lasting,
> Illuminated, noble books he wrote."[1]

[1] *Irish Life.*

In Iona there was always one or more scribes constantly at work; and it was considered a most honourable occupation. Baithen, who succeeded Columba as Abbot, was frequently employed as scribe, and on one occasion he wrote rather quickly—*percurrens scripsi*—a copy of the Psalter, yet so accurately, that there was not a mistake of a single letter, except in one word where the vowel *i* was omitted. Sometimes the scribe became abbot, but at other times he became the bishop, usually resident in the community, to perform episcopal functions in Iona, and its dependant houses. Dorbene, abbot in A.D. 713, was a "choice scribe." We have one of his manuscripts still with his name in it;[1] and the celebrated Adamnan, of whom we shall speak more fully hereafter, also wrote a beautiful hand. There was, doubtless, a *scriptorium* in Iona; and reference is explicitly made to waxen tablets for writing—*tabulae*—and also to the pens and styles—*graphia* and *calami*—and to the ink horn—*cornicula atramenti.*

The study of the Holy Scripture was their primary concern; the psaltery was generally got by heart; the Lives of the Saints were read for the community; and the works especially of the Latin Fathers, were frequently studied. Classical learning was not neglected in Iona, and the writings of Adamnan show that he was familiar with the best Latin authors, and had some knowledge of Greek also.[2] Theological and moral conferences were also held from time to time in presence of the principal members of the community. It was a monastic principle at Iona as elsewhere "to let not a single hour pass in which the monk should not be engaged either in prayer, or reading, or writing, or some other useful work."[3] This was, Adamnan tells us, the invariable practice of Columba himself; and he sought to make it the rule of life in all the monasteries that he founded. A great portion of the time was undoubtedly given to manual labour—but then *laborare est orare*—whilst the hands laboured, the thoughts were with God; and besides labour is in itself a prayer, when the toil is necessary and the purpose holy.[4]

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[1] Codex A. of Adamnan's *Vita.*

[2] Greek characters are found in Adamnan's earliest MSS.

[3] In the Irish Rule attributed to Columcille we find:—"Three labours in the day, *i.e.*, prayers, work, and reading," prescribed for all. But Adamnan's statement is even more authoritative and explicit:—

"Nullum etiam unius horae intervallum transire poterat (Columba), quo non aut orationi, aut lectioni, vel scriptioni, vel etiam alicui operationi incumberat."—*Adamnan's* Praefatio II.

[4] In the Life in the *Book of Lismore* it is said that "Columba had thrice fifty monks for contemplation, and sixty for the active life"—that is in their turn.

It was also prescribed in the Rule attributed to St. Columba that the monk should help his brethren by giving them instruction, or by writing for them; or if he were not qualified to discharge these important works of charity, then he was to help them by sewing their garments, or by whatever labour they might be most in want of—the principle being, never to be idle, and to help others as far as possible.[1]

II.—Columba Protects the Bards.

Another way in which Columba exercised great influence on learning in Ireland was by his successful efforts to preserve the Bards from the destruction with which they were threatened.

All our history and all our literature, even to some extent our laws, down to the time of Tighernach, were written in verse. Some people might think it better if they were written in prose; but the probability is—if we did not have them in verse, we should not have had them at all. "It was their duty," says O'Donnell in his *Irish Life of St. Columba*, "to record the achievements, wars, and triumphs of the kings, princes and chiefs; to preserve their genealogies, and define the rights of noble families; to ascertain and set forth the limits and extent of the sub-kingdoms and territories ruled over by the princes and chiefs."

But the Bards did not confine themselves to their official duties. Being a highly privileged class, they soon increased in numbers by the admission of their sons and other relatives amongst their ranks. They became greedy of gain, importunate in their demands, and oppressive in their exactions. They lived at free quarters, extolling their benefactors with extravagant praise, and satirizing the niggardly with unsparing invective. Even their best friends at length became weary of their importunities. The king had expelled them from his palace; but a party of them soon after reappeared, and audaciously demanded as their fee the royal brooch—the Roth Croi—which the king wore on his breast.

Tired of their eulogies and exactions, he and the whole nation rose up against the avarice and venom of the Bards. Their old enemies grew strong in numbers and courage, for now the king himself was on their side. A great convention was to be held forthwith; and it was given out as the fixed

[1] See *Haddan and Stubbs*, Vol. II., part I., page 120.

purpose of the king and his chiefs to procure the total abolition of the Bardic Order; and thus get rid of them and their exactions for ever.

The Bards were now thoroughly alarmed. The whole country was against them, and they probably felt that they were guilty. In this great emergency there was only one person powerful enough to help them; to him they appealed to come to their relief, and save them from destruction; and Columba listened to their prayer.

At this time his influence was all-powerful both in Erin and Alba. He was a cousin of the High King of Erin; he had inaugurated at Iona the king of the Scottish Dalriada, who was also his connection by blood. He had founded many monasteries in both countries; and though he was a stern ruler, he was beloved and venerated by his disciples. He was known to be a man of miracles, filled with the spirit of prophecy, and powerful in word and work. Every one in Ireland had heard how he converted Pictland; how the barred doors of King Brude's fort flew open at his touch. Many feared him; but more loved, and all reverenced him.

The great Convention of Drumceat, in which the fate of the Bards, as well as some other important questions were to be decided, appears to have been held in A.D. 575. "The precise spot," says Reeves, "where the assembly was held is the long mound in Roe Park, near Newtownlimavaddy, called the *Mullagh*, and sometimes Daisy Hill. Aedh Mac Ainmire was king of Ireland at this period, and was a first cousin once removed of Columcille. The saint was accompanied to the meeting by Aidan, king of the Scottish Dalriada, who was resolved to assert the independence of his kingdom, and have it formally recognised without bloodshed in this great assembly. Through the aid of Columcille he was successful. The next request made by the saint was the liberation of Scanlan Mor, son of the king of Ossory, who was most unjustly kept in bonds by the High King. In this demand also Columba, though not without difficulty, succeeded. The third great question—the proposed abolition of the Bards—was then taken into consideration.

King Aedh himself was their accuser. All the princes of the line of Conn were ranged around him. The Bards were there, too, with the illustrious chief Bard, Dallan Forgaill. The queen and her ladies were, it is said, also present; and twenty bishops, forty priests, thirty deacons, and many clergy of inferior grade were seated near Columcille in this great parliament of the Irish nation.

The king brought all those charges against the Bards, to which we have already referred—their avarice, their idleness, their exactions, their insolence; and he called upon the assembly to dissolve the Order, and take away all their privileges. Then Columcille arose; and all that vast assembly did him reverence. With his clear and strong melodious voice, which was borne to the utmost verge of the vast multitude, he defended the ancient Order of the Bards of Erin. He did not deny the existence of grave abuses—let them be corrected; and in future let the guilty be severely punished. But why destroy the Order itself? Who would then preserve the records of the nation—celebrate the great deeds of its kings and warriors—or chant a dirge for the noble dead? His eloquence carried the assembly with him. The Order was preserved from destruction; but it was to be reformed, and restrained by salutary laws from such excesses in future.

It is said that on this occasion Columba made a formal visitation of all the religious houses which he or his immediate disciples had founded in Ireland. It was no easy task to accomplish, for Dr. Reeves in his notes furnishes a list of no less than thirty-seven monasteries throughout the northern half of Ireland, of which Columba is the reputed founder and patron. Besides Durrow, Derry, and Kells, he was also the founder of Swords, Drumcliff, Screen, Kilglass, Drumcolumb, and many other celebrated houses, to which we cannot now refer in detail.[1]

There is a story told, but without good authority, that during these visits to Ireland Columcille wore a cere-cloth over his eyes, and had clay from Iona in his sandals; so that in accordance with the penance imposed on him by St. Molaise, he neither trod the soil of Ireland, nor looked upon his native land again. If such a penance were ever imposed, it was too rigid to be always binding, and even if it were binding, such a public cause as attendance at the assembly of Drumceat would render his presence there necessary and lawful, without making any special effort to observe his obligation to the letter.

Columba was at this period the most powerful man either in Ireland or Scotland. Large grants of land were made to his monasteries, and thousands of people begged to be enrolled amongst his disciples. St. Patrick himself had not greater influence than Columba possessed at this period in the North of Ireland.

In gratitude to Columba for preserving the Bardic Order

[1] See the Irish Life in the *Book of Lismore*, which enumerates several of these churches.

in Erin, Dallan Forgaill composed the celebrated poem in praise of Columcille, known as the Amhra Choluimcille, to which we shall refer again. But Dallan did more effective service to Irish literature in another way. By the advice and under the direction of the saint, he reorganized and reformed the Bardic Order, as decreed by the assembly of Drumceat, and moreover founded regular schools for the instruction of the young aspirants of the Order. This tended to check their vagabond disorderly habits, which led to so many abuses in the past. These schools also fostered habits of systematic study, encouraged the cultivation of the Celtic language, and developed a taste for general literature even outside the monastic schools.

According to Keating, who had sources of information at hand that have since been lost, Dallan appointed four Arch-poets—one for each province—who were to preside over these Bardic schools, and carry out the regulations enacted at Drumceat. There is no doubt that it is in a great measure to these schools of the Bards, and the systematic training which their pupils received, that we owe the preservation not only of the ancient and authentic chronicles of Erin, but also of that immense mass of romantic literature in the Gaedhlic tongue, which at length is beginning to attract the attention not only of British, but also of foreign scholars. It was the monastic schools, no doubt, that preserved and transcribed the Lives of the Saints, which, in spite of many fables, have added so much to our knowledge of ancient Erin in things profane, as well as in things sacred. We know what the Four Masters have done for the literature and history of ancient Erin. But they were in reality the last and not unworthy representatives of the ancient Bards of Erin. Through good and ill they laboured to preserve and perpetuate the knowledge of our ancient books; and when the nation's day was darkest, and the future without a single ray of hope to light up the deepening gloom, they sat down in the ruined convent of Donegal, and at the peril of their lives, arranged and transcribed for posterity those immortal Annals, which, like the work of the Greek historian, will be our treasured possession for all time.

We cannot narrate in detail the subsequent history of Columba's life. It was such as we have already seen, a life of study, of labour, of prayer, a life of missionary toil that carried the light of the Gospel over stormy seas to the remotest islands on the west of Scotland, and over pathless mountains to the Pictish tribes on its farthest eastern border.

We must hasten to the close of his glorious career, and see, as it were with our own eyes, in the simple narrative of his biographer, how an Irish saint could die.

III.—The Death of Columba.

There is no more touching or edifying scene recorded in the life of any saint, than that which exhibits in the simple language of his biographer the beautiful death of Columba. We shall give it as far as possible, in Adamnan's own words.

In the month of May before his death the saint paid a visit to his monks, where they were working on the farm in the western part of the island, and on that occasion he told them that God would, if he (Columba) wished it, have called him away at Easter, but that he was unwilling then to leave his beloved monks, and turn the joyous festival of Easter into one of grief and sadness for them. Now, however, the day of his departure, he said, was fast approaching, when he should have to leave them for ever. Then they were all filled with grief at his words; he however, sought as best he could to give them consolation, and turning towards the east in the direction of the monastery, he blessed it, with the entire island, and all its inhabitants. In consequence of this blessing no noxious thing has ever since been seen in our island. Immediately afterwards the saint returned to the monastery.

Some days later Columba whilst saying Mass in the church had a vision of an angel, whom God sent to warn him that he should soon be called away.

Now on the last day of that same week, that is, on Saturday, the venerable man went out with Diarmait, his attendant, to bless the barn; and after he blessed it, he observed that he was glad to see from the great heaps of corn that his dear monks would have enough of food for the year, even if he himself were called away. Then Diarmait was sad, and said, "You grieve us often of late, father, by referring to your approaching departure from amongst us." "I will tell you a secret, Diarmait," replied the saint, "if you promise faithfully never to reveal it to any one before my death." Diarmait promised on his knees, and then Columba said, "This day (Saturday) is called in Scripture the Sabbath; and it will also be the Sabbath of my labours, for on this coming Sunday night I will, in the words of Scripture, be gathered to my fathers. My Lord Jesus has deigned just now to invite me; and at midnight I shall de-

part in obedience to his summons." Diarmait hearing these words, began to weep, and the saint strove as well as he could to console him.

On their way home from the barn to the monastery, the saint sat down to rest himself on the roadside, at the spot where the cross now stands fixed in the millstone. And as he sat resting his aged limbs, the old white horse that used to carry the milk-pails from the byre to the monastery, came up to the saint, and put his head in the saint's bosom, as if the animal had the use of reason, and knew that his master was going to leave him; and the horse seemed deeply grieved and appeared to shed tears like a human being in his master's bosom. Then the saint was deeply moved, and blessed the poor faithful horse, "for," he said, "it is God that has made known to him through instinct that he will see me no more."

And going thence the saint ascended the hill that overlooks the monastery (now called Cnoc-na-Carnan), and standing on its summit he raised his two hands aloft and blessed his monastery, and foretold that the kings of the Scots, and even the rulers of rude and foreign nations with their subjects would yet pay much honour to his poor monastery, and that the saints of other churches too would hold it in veneration.

Then he came down the hill and went straight to his cell, and sat there copying the psaltery. But as soon as he came to that verse of the thirty-third psalm where it is written—*Inquirentes autem Dominum non deficient omni bono*—"Here I must stop," he said, "at the end of this page—let Baithen write the rest." And it was an appropriate verse for him to end with, as the next was an appropriate one for his successor to begin with—*Venite filii, audite me, timoren Domini docebo vos.*

Having written his last verse the saint went to the church to join in the first vespers of the Sunday, which are chanted on Saturday evening; and when the office was over he returned to his litle cell and sat down upon his bed during the night—that bed was a naked rock with a stone for a pillow—the stone that now stands beside his grave as the title of his monument. Whilst sitting thus on the rocky bed he gave his last instructions to his monks in the hearing of Diarmait alone. "My little children," he said, "my last words to you are:—Cherish mutual and unfeigned love for each other, and God will never let you want the necessaries of life in this world, and you will have, moreover, eternal glory in the world to come."

And now, as the happy hour of his departure was quickly approaching, he became silent for a little. But as soon as the bell for matins struck at the midnight hour, he rose up quickly, and going to the church before the others he entered it alone and threw himself on his bended knees in prayer near the altar. Diarmait, his attendant, followed a little more slowly to the church, and at that moment as he approached the door, he saw the church lit up with a bright angelic light as if shining over the saint. Others saw it too at the same moment, but when they came nearer it disappeared. Diarmait then entered the church, and groping through the darkness —for the lights were not yet brought in—he found the saint stretched before the altar, and raising him gently, he sat down beside him and took his holy head and laid it in his bosom.

The crowd of monks now coming up with lights, and seeing their father dying, broke out into lamentation. But the saint, as we heard from those who were present, lifting his eyes towards heaven, looked around him on both sides, and his face was full of a wondrous heavenly joy, as if he were looking at angels. Then Diarmait raised the saint's right hand to bless the circle of monks, and our holy father moved his hand as well as he could, so that he might with the motion of his hand give them that blessing which he could not utter with his voice. Having thus blessed them, he immediately expired; yet his face remained still bright-coloured, so that he did not look like one that was dead but only sleeping. Meanwhile, the whole church was filled with wailing.

So passed away the blessed Columba, as he had foretold, on Sunday night a little after 12 o'clock, the 9th of June, in the year of our Lord 597. It was the seventy-seventh of his age, and the thirty-fourth of his pilgrimage in Iona.

As soon as matins were finished, the blessed body of the saint was carried back to the hospice, accompanied by all the brethren chanting psalms. Thereafter for three days and three nights the obsequies of the saint were celebrated with all due and fitting rites. After which the venerable body of our holy patron was wrapped up in clean linen and buried in a coffin with all reverence—but Adamnan does not mention the exact spot, where it was laid.

IV.—The Writings of Columba.

Many writings have been circulated under the name of the great St. Columba—some few of which are genuine, but most of them spurious. We shall very briefly call attention to both. There are three Latin poems published in the

second volume of the *Liber Hymnorum* by the late Dr. Todd, which are generally regarded by critics as genuine. The first and most celebrated is the *Altus Prosator*. It was first printed by Colgan from the Book of Hymns preserved at St. Isidore's. A splendid edition has also been lately printed by the Marquis of Bute, who has good reason to regard Columba as the patron saint of his family, which is sprung from the early Dalriadan Kings.

The *Altus Prosator* is beyond any doubt a very ancient poem, written in rather rude Latinity, but syntactically correct, that is, if we make allowance for the errors and ignorance of the copyists. It consists of twenty-two *capitula* or stanzas, each stanza consisting of six lines, except the first which being in honour of the Holy Trinity has seven, and each line has sixteen syllables. The meter is a kind of trochaic tetrameter, with a pause after the eighth syllable, and a rhyme or assonance at the end of the lines. The first word of each of the twenty-two stanzas begins with one of the letters of the alphabet in regular order according to the Hebrew letters.

There is a preface, or introduction, to the whole poem, and a brief notice of the title and subject matter at the head of each stanza. The preface which is substantially the same both in the *Book of Hymns* and in the *Leabhar Breac*, sets forth as usual the time, place, motive, and author of the poem, but gives two different accounts. The author was, according to all accounts, Columcille, and he wrote the poem in the Black Church of Derry after much careful preparation. His motive was to praise God and do penance for the sins he had committed, especially in causing the bloody battle of Cuil-Dreimhne. The time was during the reign of Aedh Mac Ainmire in Erin, and of Aidan, son of Gabhran in Dalriada. The other account represents the poem as written in Iona, while Columba was grinding a bag of meal in the mill for the entertainment of some clerics who came from Rome to present him, in the name of Pope Gregory, with a richly enshrined relic of the true Cross, known afterwards as Morgemm, and long, it is said, preserved at Iona. This is a much less plausible explanation than the former, and probably invented by some foolish admirers of the saint, who did not relish the idea of Columcille having to do penance for grave faults of anger and indiscretion.

The poem is the production of a fervent and pious spirit that feels the power and mercy of God's all-ruling Providence in the past and in the present. It describes the Trinity, the Angels, the creation of the world, and the fall

of man, also the deluge and other noteworthy events in sacred history, ending with a vivid description of the terrors of the last judgment. Many graces are promised to those who recite it worthily: Angels will attend them while chanting it; the devil shall not know their way to lie in wait for them, nor their enemies to destroy them; there shall be no strife in the house where it is sung; it protects against sudden and violent death; and there shall be no want where it is regularly recited.

Columba's second Latin Hymn, known as the *In te Christe*, is merely the complement of the *Altus Prosator*. Columba sent that latter Hymn to Pope Gregory in Rome in return for the portion of the Cross which he had sent to Columba. When it was recited before the Pope he was greatly pleased with it, especially as he was privileged to see the Angels listening to it at the same time. He observed that there was only one fault in it—that the praise of the Trinity was too scanty, being confined to the first stanza alone. Columcille hearing this resolved to supplement the *Altus* by another poem in praise of the Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It contains fifteen rhyming couplets of the same character as those in the *Altus*, but its authenticity is by no means so certain. The fact that it is contained in the *Book of Hymns* proves, however, that it is a very ancient poem, although even there in the preface some doubt is thrown on its authenticity.

The third Latin Hymn attributed to Columba is the *Noli Pater* containing seven rhyming couplets, with sixteen syllables in the line. It is found in the *Book of Hymns*. The short preface says that it was composed by the saint in Daire Calgaich at the time that he received the grant of that place from Aedh Mac Ainmire; and the messengers came at the same time announcing Mobhi's death, and bearing his girdle as the token of the saint's permission for Columcille to found his church. But just then the place took fire, and Columcille composed the hymn to stay the ravages of the flames. And it has been sung from that time forward as a protection against fire, and lightning, and the wrath of the elements.

The following is the first stanza of the *Altus* which shows the metre.

"Altus prosător, vetustus dierum et ingenitus,
Erat absque origine primordii et crepidine,
Est et erit in saecula saeculorum infinitus,
Cui est unigenitus Christus et Spiritus Sanctus
Coaeternus in gloria Deitatis perpetuae;
Non tres Deos depromimus, sed unum Deum dicimus
Salva fide in personis tribus gloriosissimis."

The two principal Irish poems attributed to Columcille are the "Dialogue of Columcille and Cormac in Hy"—and his pathetic "Lament for his Native Land"—to both of which we have already referred. There is a third poem known as his "Farewell to Aran," which has been rendered into English verse by another true poet, Aubrey de Vere. T. D. Sullivan has given a very beautiful rendering, if not of the words, at least of the spirit of Columba's "Lament for his Native Land." "The 'Dialogue' and the 'Lament' may not," says Reeves, "be genuine, but they are poems of very considerable antiquity, and the first shows the early notions which existed in Ireland about Cormac's adventures, and his relations to Columba." Colgan is inclined to think them genuine, and has given them amongst the reputed writings of the saint. They may have been retouched by some bard later than Columba's time; but in our opinion they represent substantially poems that were really written by the saint. They breathe his pious spirit, his ardent love for nature, and his undying affection for his native land. Although retouched perhaps by a later hand, they savour so strongly of the true Columbian spirit that we are disposed to reckon them amongst the genuine compositions of the saint.

That Columba was indeed a true prophet, to whom God made known to some extent things future and things distant, is clearly shown by his biographer Adamnan. It was probably his fame in this respect that gave some countenance to the "forgeries" that were circulated under his name, not one of which appears to have the smallest claim to be considered genuine; although some of them are undoubtedly very ancient. O'Curry found one of them in the *Book of Leinster*, purporting to be a prophecy of the coming of the Danes on Lough Ree, and their occupation of the abbacy of Armagh. Reference is also made to the death of Cormac MacCullinan, and the destruction of Aileach by Mortogh O'Brien, and to similar historical events that were manifestly foretold (and sometimes with mistakes) after they had happened. But in the MS. Columcille is described as narrating these things in cold Iona to Baithen, his friend and successor. Both Reeves and O'Curry justly denounce the spirit of greed and impiety, that would in recent times try to palm off on simple-minded people certain impudent forgeries as the genuine oracles of the saints of God. Such fraudulent practices are injurious to religion; they dishonour the saints, and are unworthy of any publisher who calls himself a Catholic.

V.—Lives of Columcille.

Of these Colgan with his usual industry and erudition has published five. The author of Colgan's *First Life* is unknown, but Colgan believed that it was writen by some contemporary or disciple of the saint, and he therefore placed it first in order. The *Second Life* is attributed by Colgan to Cuimine the Fair[1] (Cuimineus Albus), seventh abbot of Hy; who, if he did not himself see the saint, was in daily intercourse with those who did. Adamnan cites this author by name, and embodies the work in his own splendid biography. The *Third Life* is that published by Capgrave, and taken by him from John of Teignmouth—a learned Benedictine monk, who flourished about the year A.D. 1366. He was a mere compiler, not an author. Colgan's *Fourth Life* is the celebrated one by Adamnan, to which we shall refer at length a little later on. The *Fifth Life* is a lengthy one written in Irish. Its author was Manus O'Donnell, chief of Tir-Connell, as the writer distinctly sets forth in his Preface:—"Be it known to the readers of this Life, that it was Manus, son of Hugh, son of Hugh Roe, son of Niall Garve, son of Torlogh of the Wine O'Donnell, that ordered the part of this Life, which was in Latin to be put into Gaelic, and who ordered the part that was in difficult Gaelic to be modified so that it might be clear and comprehensible to every one; and who gathered and put together the parts of it that were scattered through the old books of Erin; and who dictated it out of his own mouth, with great labour and a great expenditure of time in studying how he should arrange all its parts in their proper places, as they are left here in writing by us; and in love and friendship for his illustrious Saint, Relative, and Patron, to whom he was devoutly attached. It was in the castle of Port-na-trinamad (that is Lifford—the Port of the three enemies) that this Life was indited when were fulfilled twelve and twenty and five hundred and one thousand years of the age of the Lord (A.D. 1532)."

What may be called the autograph copy—it has never yet been printed—exists, says Dr. Reeves, in all its original dimensions, beauty, and material excellence written in large vellum folio in double columns, and is preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. Colgan's edition is merely an

[1] The first part of this Vita Secunda is not the work of Cuimine the Fair.

abstract of the Irish life rendered into Latin. It may be safely said that O'Donnell's Life comprises everything that has been written, or handed down by tradition, concerning Columcille. Some of the miraculous stories which he gives were deemed so extravagant even by Colgan, that he omitted them in his own compilation. Still, this Life is of great value, and we hope to see it soon fitly edited by some competent Irish scholar.

VI.—Other Scholars of Iona.

Besides Columba himself there were several other distinguished scholars connected with Iona. Of these the most distinguished was the celebrated Adamnan, ninth abbot of Hy. Before, however, giving an account of Adamnan, it will be useful to give a brief sketch of some of his predecessors in the abbatial chair.

"Let Baithen write the rest," said Columba, when he was attacked with his last illness, and dropped his pen at the end of the page in the middle of the thirty-third psalm. The saying was taken as an indication of his wish that Baithen should succeed him as head of the Columbian Houses. He was a cousin of the founder, and had been for many years prior of Iona. Moreover, he was in every way fitted for the high office by his virtues, his learning, and his prudence. Kinship with the founder, too, was deemed at the time an indispensable qualification for holding the abbacy. The monastic family formed, as it were, a kind of spiritual clan or tribe, and as connection by blood with the head of the tribe was deemed necessary for the chieftaincy in the temporal order, so also was it deemed for many generations to be essential in the spiritual order likewise.

Baithen from his boyhood was the pupil of Columba himself, and inherited all his virtues. He was especially remarkable for his spirit of prayer. When walking his hands were clasped in prayer beneath his habit; when working at the harvest he prayed whilst he was carrying his handful of oats to the sheaf; even at his meals he said, *Deus in adjutorum meum intende*, between every two morsels of food. He was a monk in Derry, when chosen by Columba to accompany him to Iona. There he was appointed a general overseer of the work done by the monks in the field, but being an accomplished scribe, he was often engaged in reading and writing. Like his friend and master, whatever time he did not spend in relieving the wants of others, he gave to reading, or prayer, or bodily labour; so his Life expressly states.

His great virtues marked him as a fitting person to be sent to govern the monastery, which Columba had founded at Magh-Lunga—the Plain of the Ships—in the Island of Heth, called also Ethica, 'the low lying land of the barley,' as it is called in an ancient Gaedhlic poem. It was situated about twenty miles to the north-west of Iona, from which it is of course distinctly visible. It is a low, sandy tract, about eleven miles long, and varying in breadth from one to three. He, however, maintained a constant connection with the parent house, which he frequently visited; for twenty miles even of that wild sea were as nothing to the hardy sailor monks, who knew that God watched over them on sea as well as on land. He wrought many miracles, and possessed in a very striking manner that power, which our Saviour gave His apostles, of casting out devils.[1] He is also recognized either as the founder or patron saint of Taughboyne (Teach-Baeithin), in the barony of Raphoe, county Donegal. It is not unlikely that this was his native district, and was afterwards placed under his special protection.

Baithen's rule as Abbot of Iona was very brief—from A.D. 597 to A.D. 600—three years exactly, if these dates are correct; for he died on the same day of the month as his beloved master Columcille. He was seized near the altar with a fainting fit on Tuesday, the 4th of June. The brethren crowded round him in tears, for they thought he was going to die, and Dermitius, Columba's old attendant, said to them, "You see, my brothers, what a small interval will separate the feast-days of our two abbots." Thereupon Baithen opened his eyes, and prayed earnestly to God not to take him out of the world until the feast-day of his beloved master. His prayer was heard; he died like Columba on the 9th of June, and, doubtless, was buried beside him in that church, where they so often joined in prayer before the same altar.

The very last sentence in the Life, as given in the Salamanca MS., states that the intense pains, which he suffered, did not prevent the sick monk from continuing his constant occupation of writing, praying, and teaching, up to the very moment of his happy death.

Writing, praying, and teaching—truly fit occupations for the head of a great monastic school. No wonder that Fintin, son of Lippan, when asked about the learning of St.

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[1] *Matt.* x. 8

Baithen, replied—"Be assured that he had no equal on this side of the Alps in his knowledge of sacred Scripture, and in the profundity of his science."[1] There is an old Irish poem still extant, purporting to be a dialogue between Columcille and Baithen, which has been attributed to the latter; and some verses eulogistic of Columba have also been circulated under his name. That he was a man of great learning is undoubted; and that he left his spirit behind him in Iona will be seen from what follows.

Columba used to say that Baithen was like St. John the Beloved in his innocence and simplicity of heart, and that even in the rigorous discipline of perfection they were not much unlike; but that it was very different with their fosterers—he himself was very far indeed from being like unto Christ.

Laisren, who had been Abbot of Durrow during Columba's lifetime, was now called to succeed Baithen in Iona. We know little of his history, except that he was uncle of Seghine, the fifth abbot, who ruled from A.D. 623 to A.D. 652, during the stormy period of the Paschal Controversies. The latter was an ardent defender of the ancient discipline both as to the tonsure and paschal observance. He had been a pupil of Columba in Iona; and was of his knowledge able to testify to many things concerning the saint in presence of the Abbot Falveus, the immediate predecessor of Adamnan.

In literary history Seghine is chiefly remarkable as the person to whom Cummian addressed his celebrated Epistle on the Paschal Question in the year A.D. 634, to which we have referred at length already.[2] The superscription is "Segieno Abbati Columbae Sancti et Caeterorum Sanctorum Successori"—a high testimony to the reputed sanctity of his predecessors. Seghine was also one of those to whom the Roman clergy during the vacancy of the See in A.D. 640, addressed an important letter on the same subject. This shows that from his high official position, as head of the Columbian monasteries, and, doubtless, also from his high personal character, it was deemed of the greatest importance to secure the adhesion of Seghine to the Roman discipline. In this, however, the authors of both the letters were disappointed. Seghine, who was animated with the unyielding and somewhat haughty spirit of Conal Gulban's line, could not bring himself to believe that his sainted predecessors,

[1] "Scitote quod nullus citra Alpes compar illi in cognitione divinarum scripturarum et in magnitudine scientiae reperitur."—*Salamanca MS.*

[2] See *School of Clonfert.*

whose holiness was proved by so many miracles, could by any possibility be wrong in the discipline, which they followed. The monks who were trained under him, like Aidan and Colman of Lindisfarne, were animated with the same spirit; so that even after the Conference of Whitby the aged Colman preferred to leave his beloved retreat in Lindisfarne, and sail back again to his stormy home on the coast of Mayo, rather than adopt the new discipline; and we know that the Irish monks of Lindisfarne followed him to a man.

Seghine was succeeded by Suibhne, the first "outsider" whom the monks of Iona elected as head of their Order. Colgan observes that his genealogy is not recorded in our native annals; whence we may infer that he owed his elevation to his merit rather than to the accident of his birth. He died in A.D. 657. His successor, Cuimine, was of the Cenel-Conail line, for he was nephew of Seghine, the fifth abbot. He wrote a tract, *De Virtutibus S. Columbae*, which is cited by Adamnan. It really forms the groundwork of Adamnan's *Third Book*, into which it has been bodily transferred. It has been also published by Colgan, and the Bollandists, though from different sources. It is also to be found in the recently published *Salamanca Codex*. This life shows that Cuimine was an excellent Latin scholar, and although scarcely possessing the wide culture of Adamnan, he is little inferior to that celebrated writer, in the graphic account which he gives of the miracles and virtues of St. Columba.

The Paschal Epistle already referred to has been attributed to this Cuimineus Albus, as Adamnan calls him. We have shown elsewhere that the real author was Cummian Fada, Bishop of Clonfert; and it is well known that during the whole of the seventh century the entire community of Iona was vehemently opposed to the adoption of that discipline, which the author of the Paschal Epistle advocates and defends. This of itself proves that the Abbot of Hy was not its author. We are now come to Adamnan, the ninth abbot, whose history we must narrate at greater length.

VII.—Adamnan, Ninth Abbot of Hy.

In the year 1845 Dr. Ferdinand Keller was poking with a German's pertinacity through the shelves of the Town Library of Schaffhausen, in Switzerland. In a corner of the room he found a high book chest filled with all kinds of old MSS., without title or number of any kind, and at the very

bottom of the heap he came upon a dark brown parchment manuscript, bound in moth-eaten beech wood, covered with calf skin, carefully clasped in front, and very neatly and curiously sewed at the back. It was a goodly quarto of 68 leaves, with double columns, written on dark coloured goat skin parchment in large heavy drawn letters of the character known as minuscular. Everything about the MS. showed great antiquity—the cover, the parchment, the lettering, and the ornamentation. Dr. Keller at first thought he had come upon a hitherto undiscovered treasure; but in this he was mistaken. He only recovered a lost treasure, and secured its preservation for the learned world. On examination, the MS. turned out to be the oldest and most authentic copy of Adamnan's *Life of St. Columba*, made in Iona either during the life time of Adamnan himself, or certainly within a few years after his death.

The monastery of Richenau in the ninth century appears to have had many Irish inmates; and this is not unnatural, for the great Irish monastery of St. Gall was within a few miles of the shore of Lake Constance, and considerable intercourse would naturally take place between the two houses. Walafridus Strabo, Abbotof Reichenau, from A.D. 842 to A.D. 849, had been previously Dean of St. Gall, and in his writings shows an intimate knowledge of many things connected with Ireland, which he could have learned only from Irishmen.[1] We know, too, from other sources, that crowds of Irishmen came to France and Germany in the beginning of the ninth century, and that many of them brought their books from their schools at home along with them, as Dungal brought the books which he bequeathed to the monastery of Bobbio. It is thus easy to understand how some of the monks of Iona, driven from home by the Norsemen, who so often plundered the Island about the beginning of the ninth century, would migrate to some friendly monastery on the continent, carrying their literary treasures with them.

There can, however, be no doubt that the Schaffhausen MS. of St. Columba's Life was written in the Island of Hy by one of the Family, so early as the beginning of the eighth century. The character is of that peculiar kind of which we have almost contemporary specimens the *Book of Kells*, and

[1] For instance, the details of the martyrdom of St. Blaithmac of Iona by the Danes in A.D. 824, which he describes in Latin verse, and may have learned from a fugitive who was, perhaps, the bearer of this very MS.

the *Book of Durrow*, and which is now universally acknowledged to be purely Irish; the ornamentation of the chapters and of the capital letters is Irish; the orthography is Irish, and what is stranger than all, the Lord's Prayer is written in Greek on the last page of the MS., and in Greek, of which we have other specimens remaining in old Irish MSS. with the same peculiar spelling, in the same semi-uncial character, without accents, and without breathings—a fact which of itself indisputably proves that the Greek tongue was taught and written in the Irish School of Hy, 1170 years ago.

The Colophon, or superscription, in rubric, at folio 136, at the end of the life, records, according to the usual custom, the name of the scribe:—"Whoever reads these books on the virtues of St. Columba, let him pray to the Lord for me, Dorbbeneus, that after death I may possess eternal life."

In A.D. 713, Tighernach records the death of Dorbene, Abbot of Hy, the very year of his election to that high office. There can be no doubt that this Dorbene was the writer of the Schaffhausen MS.; there is no mention of any other of the same name in our annals except of one Dorbene, whose son Failan is said to have died in A.D. 724. This Dorbene was as Dr. Reeves thinks, a layman; and, if his son died in A.D. 724, he himself in the course of nature must have lived and died before Adamnan. But the Abbot who died in A.D. 713, would have outlived Adamnan only nine years, and in all probability had been for many years scribe of the monastery, and may have written the book at the dictation of Adamnan himself.

And now, who was Adamnan? Unfortunately we know very little of his early youth. He gives us to understand, at least by implication, that he was born at or near Drumhome, in the barony of Tirhugh, and co. Donegal. The church of Drumhome was founded by St. Columba, but St. Adamnan is the patron; and this fact, too, indicates his connection with the locality. There, also, he seems to have spent his earlier years; for it was there he says, "in my youth that a very old man called Ferreol, a servant of Christ, who is buried in Drumhome, told me of a glorious vision which he saw, when fishing in the valley of the Finn, on the night of Columba's death." Scarcely any traces of the old church of Drumhome now remain; but it was once nobly endowed by the O'Donnells. Even so late as A.D. 1609, an Inquisition tells us that "there are in the said parish of Drumhome, four quarters of church land, three quarters of Columbkille's land, each quarter containing six townlands, then in the possession of

Lewis O'Cleary," the head of that family, which the Four Masters have made illustrious for ever. The old church was finely situated near the shore of the Bay of Donegal, not far from Ballintra, and in view of the bold range of mountains, where the sons of Conal Gulban so long and so nobly defended their ancient freedom.

Adamnan's father, Ronan, was sixth in descent from that same Conal Gulban, and thus belonged to the royal blood of Tirconnell; his mother was Ronnat, a daughter of Enna, who gave his name to Tirenna, the territory that in ancient times extended from Lough Foyle to Lough Swilly. Thus Adamnan was of the same family as St. Columba himself; for Columba was grandson of Fergus, son of Conal Gulban, and Adamnan was sixth in descent from the same Fergus. He was born in A.D. 624, according to the best authorities, just twenty-seven years after Columba's death, and, as we may fairly assume, was in his youth placed under the care of the monks of Drumhome, in whose old churchyard he himself tells us many of the monks of Columba await a happy resurrection.

How long the boy remained in his native Tirhugh, feeding his spirit on the glorious vision of its waves and mountains, we cannot now ascertain. It was at that time, as we have seen, the custom of scholars, even of the noblest birth, to visit the great monastic schools of the country, and all the more celebrated masters were surrounded by crowds of eager students, who lived on their wits, and lodged as best they could, generally in little huts of their own contrivance. A curious story is told of St. Adamnan himself in his youth, which amusingly illustrates what may be called the University life of the time.

Finnachta, afterwards Monarch of Ireland, from A.D. 675 to 695, and Adamnan's greatest friend, although of the blood royal, was at first very poor. He had a house and wife, but only one ox and one cow. Now the king of Feara Ross (Carrickmacross) strayed to the neighbourhood of Finnachta's hut; his wife, too, was with him and a crowd of retainers; but they could not find their way home, for the night came on dark, cold, and stormy, so they were forced to take refuge in the hut. Small as it was, the size of the house was greater than its wealth. Finnachta, however, "struck the ox on the head and the cow on the head," and feasted all the king's people sumptuously, so that no one was hungry.

Then the King and Queen of Feara Ross gave large herds of cattle to the generous Finnachta, and made him a great

man. Shortly after this time Finnachta, not yet king however, was one day coming with a large troop of horse to his sister's house, and as they rode along they overtook Adamnan, then a young school boy, travelling the same road with a vessel full of milk on his back. Anxious to get out of the way, Adamnan stumbled and fell, spilling all the milk and breaking the jar to pieces. The cavalcade rather enjoyed the fun and rode away; but Adamnan pursued them closely, and said: "O, good men, I have reason to be sad, for there are three good school-boys in one house, and they have us as two messengers—for there is always one going about seeking food for the five—and it came to my turn to-day. The gathering I made is scattered, and what I grieve for far more, the borrowed vessel has been broken and I have no means to pay for it." Then Finnachta declared he would make it all right, and he kept his word. He not only paid for the vessel but he brought the scholars—clerics they are called—to his own house, and their teacher along with them; he fitted up the ale-house for their reception, and gave them such abounding good cheer that the professor, exhilarated by the ale, or filled with the spirit of prophecy, as the annals say, declared that Finnachta would one day become the King of all Ireland, "and Adamnan shall be the head of the wisdom of Erin, and shall become 'scul's friend,' or confessor to the king."

When Adamnan was duly trained in the wisdom of the Irish schools at home his thoughts naturally turned to Iona. For that remote islet, surrounded by the stormy waters and under the misty skies of the Hebrides, had long been the religious home of his race and family. At this very time, when Adamnan was about twenty-five years old, a cousin of his own, Seghine, fifth Abbot of Hy, ruled the entire Order. So with the south wind blowing fair, we may suppose the young scholar launched his currach on the Foyle, and sweeping past the hills of Inishowen, he would in about twelve hours see Columba's holy island slowly rising from the waves. As his bark approached he would eagerly note all the features of the island—the central rugged ridge, the low moory shores and narrow strait separating it from the Ross of Mull on the mainland. With a heart swelling with emotion, he must have stepped on the shore of Port Ronain, and then kneeling prostrate before the Abbot in his wooden cell, begged to be admitted to the habit of the Order. And we may be sure the venerable Seghine received with open arms the strong-limbed, fair-haired boy, who was sprung of his own ancient line and born in his own Tirhugh.

Adamnan began his novitiate about A.D. 650, and after thirty years' service in the brotherhood was himself raised to the abbatial Chair in A.D. 679. We know little of his life during this period, except that it was eminent for virtue and learning. We have undoubted proofs of his success in sacred studies, not only in the works that remain, but also from the testimony of his contemporaries. He was, says Venerable Bede, a virtuous and learned man pre-eminently skilled in Sacred Scripture.[1] This is high testimony from a high authority. Father H. Ward felt himself justified in saying that Adamnan was thoroughly educated in all the knowledge of his time, liberal, sacred, and ascetical; that he was also skilled in the Greek and Hebrew languages, as well as in the arts, laws, and history written in his native tongue.[2]

Yet this learned monk was not above giving his assistance in the manual labour of the monastery. He tells us in his life of St. Columba[3] how on a certain occasion he and a number of other monks cut down as many oak trees in one of the neighbouring islands, probably Arran, as loaded twelve boats in order to procure material to repair the monastery; and how, when detained by an adverse wind, St. Columba heard their prayer and procured for them a favourable breeze to waft them home. This fact, incidentally mentioned, proves that most of the monastic cells were made of oaken boards, which were covered in with a roof of reeds. St. Columba's own hut is represented as *tabulis suffultum*, and we know from other sources that as a protection against the weather these cells were thatched with reeds—*harundine tecta*. It is in this respect that the "Vita Columbae" is so valuable because it gives us incidentally not only a graphic picture of the simple and pious lives of the Family of Hy, but also of their food, their clothing, their monastery, and their entire social arrangements.

Although St. Adamnan ruled the monastery of Hy from A.D. 679 to his death in A.D. 704, he paid several visits to Ireland, and exercised a large influence both on its ecclesiastical and civil polity. This was due partly to his high character for learning and holiness, partly to his position as

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[1] "Erat enim vir bonus et sapiens, et scientia Scripturarum nobilissime instructus."

[2] "Eductus est omnes liberales, sacras et asceticas disciplinas, linguas etiam Hebraicam et Graecam; et quicquid patria lingua (in qua tunc pleraeque scientiae et Dryadum quae non fuerant damnata dogmata) scriptum est vel artium vel legum vel historiarum."

[3] Book II., c. 45.

supreme Head of the Columbian Houses, and in great measure also to his influence with Finnachta, the High King, from A.D. 675 to 695. It is not easy to ascertain the exact date of these visits, nor the work done on each occasion, but the substantial facts are certain.

In the year A.D. 684 one of the generals of the Northumbrian King, Ecgfrid, made a descent on Magh-Bregh, that is the eastern plain of Meath along the sea-shore. He pillaged and slaughtered in the usual fashion, and furthermore carried off many captives, male and female. This attack was wholly unprovoked, and, as Bede testifies, brought down upon the Northumbrian prince the signal chastisement of heaven. In the following year, rashly advancing against the Pictish King Brude, Ecgfrid was slain and his army routed at a place called Dun Nechtain. Thereupon Aldfrid, his brother, returned from Ireland, where he had been for many years an exile, and succeeded to the throne. Aldfrid, during the years he spent in Ireland, became intimate with Adamnan—our annalists call him the alumnus, or foster son of Adamnan. Now, that he was raised to the throne, the latter took occasion to pay him a visit in order to obtain by his friendly offices the release of the captives. Miraculously crossing the Solway Frith, whose rushing tide "the best steed in Saxon land ridden by the best rider could not hope to escape," he came to the Northumbrian Court at Bamborough, and seems to have been received with open arms by his alumnus, who at once consented to restore the captives, sixty in all, whom shortly after Adamnan brought home to Ireland. But this visit to the English court had other important consequences. "When he saw," says Bede, "during his stay in our province (probably at Easter) the canonical rites of our church, and was prudently admonished that they who were placed on a little corner at the end of the world should not persevere in their peculiar Paschal observance against the practice of the universal church, he changed his mind and willingly adopted our custom." On the same occasion he visited the monastery of Jarrow, where the monks greatly admired the humility and modesty of his demeanour, but were somewhat scandalized at his Irish frontal tonsure from ear to ear, then known as the tonsure of Simon Magus.

On his return to Hy, Adamnan tried to induce his monks to adopt the Roman Paschal observance; but they were so much attached to the practice sanctioned by their great and holy founder that even Adamnan failed to bring about a change. It was not until A.D. 716, twelve years after his death, that

they finally consented to adopt the Dionysian cycle of nineteen years in fixing Easter Day.

He was more successful in Ireland. On his return thither with the captives in A.D. 686, a Synod seems to have been held for the purpose of bringing about this change, to which he himself alludes in his *Life of St. Columba*. Neither the time nor place of the Synod can be exactly ascertained; it is not unlikely, however, that it took place on the Hill of Tara at the "Rath of the Synods," where tradition still marks out the place of "Adamnan's Tent," and "Adamnan's Cross."[1] Others think it was held at a much later date in A.D. 696 or 697, when "Adamnan's Canon" was published, to which we shall refer later on. It is certain, however, that Adamnan exerted his great influence thenceforward to introduce the new Paschal observance into Ireland, although he did not perhaps finally succeed until towards the end of his life.

On this occasion Adamnan's visit was not of long duration; but he paid a second visit to Ireland in A.D. 692—fourteen years after the death of his predecessor, Failbhe, as the Annals say. This time it was a political question that attracted him from Hy. For forty reigns the men of Leinster had been paying the cow-tax, known as the Borumean tribute, to the princes of the Hy-Niall race, to which Adamnan himself belonged. Finnachta, however, the reigning High King, the old friend of Adamnan, remitted this tribute at the prayer of St. Moling, whom our Annalists represent as having recourse to a curious equivocation to effect his purpose. The king, at the prayer of the Saint Moling consented to remit payment of the tax for "the day and night." "All time," said the saint, when the king had pledged his royal word to this remission, "is day and night; thou canst never re-impose this tax." In vain the monarch protested that he had no such intention; the saint kept him to his word, promising him heaven if he kept it, and the reverse if he did not. When Adamnan heard how weakly the king had yielded the ancient rights of the great Hy-Niall race, he was somewhat wrathful, and at once sought out the monarch, and asked to see him. The king was playing chess, and told Adamnan's messenger, who asked an interview for the saint, that he must wait till the game was finished; then he played a second and was going to play a third, when the saint threatened him with reading a psalm that would not

[1] See Petrie's *Tara*, page 147.

only shorten his life, but exclude him from heaven. Thereupon he came quick enough, and at once Adamnan said, "Is this true that thou hast remitted the Borumha for day and night?" "It is true," said the king. "Then it is the same as to remit it for ever," said the saint; and he "scolded" him in somewhat vigorous language, and made a song on him on the spot, calling him a foolish, white-haired, toothless king, and using several other epithets the reverse of complimentary.

Of course all this is the work of a northern bard, who puts into the mouth of Adamnan language which he would use himself; nevertheless, there is a substratum of truth in the story highly coloured as it is by poetic fiction. In the end, however, the writer adds:—"Afterwards Finnachta placed his head on the bosom of Adamnan, and Adamnan forgave him for the remission of the Borumha." Shortly after, however, Adamnan was again angry with the king, and foretold "that his life would be short and that he would fall by fratricide." The Irish life gives the true cause of the anger and the prediction; it was because Finnachta would not exempt from taxes the lands of Columbkille, as he exempted the lands of Patrick, Finnian, and Ciaran. This not unnaturally incensed the saint against the ungrateful king, whose throne he had helped to maintain. The prediction was soon verified; Finnachta fell by the hand of a cousin in A.D. 697.

It was on his return to Hy after this second visit that Adamnan seems to have written the *Life of Columbkille*. Shortly after he paid a third visit to Ireland in A.D. 697, and apparently spent the remaining seven years of his life in this country. It was in that year, most probably, was held the Synod of Tara in which the *Cain*, or Canon of Adamnan, was promulgated. According to a story in the *Leabhar Breac* there are four great Laws, or "Canons" in Ireland. The Canon of Patrick, not to kill the clergy; the Canon of the nun Dari, not to kill the cows; the Canon of Adamnan, not to kill women; and the Sunday Canon, not to travel on that day. The origin of the Canon of Adamnan was this:—He was once travelling through Meath, carrying his mother on his back, when he saw two armies in conflict, and a woman of one party dragging a woman of the other party with an iron reaping hook fixed in her breast. At this cruel and revolting sight, Adamnan's mother insisted that her son should promise her to make a law for the people, that women should in future be exempted from all battles

and hostings. Adamnan promised and kept his word[1]—in A.D. 696, according to the *Ulster Annals*. That is he procured the passing of a law exempting women and children—innocentes—from any share in the actual conflict or its usual consequences, captivity or death. This fact is substantially true, though considerably embellished in the details.[2] And Ireland owes the great Abbot a lasting debt of gratitude for procuring the enactment of this law, which was afterwards re-enacted in A.D. 727, when the relics of Adamnan were removed from Iona to Ireland and the "law renewed." There were several other Canons probably enacted at a Synod held at Armagh about the same time, but this is far the most important of them all.

The *Life of St. Gerald* of Mayo represents Adamnan as governing the monastery of that place, originally founded by the Saxons, for seven years. Tradition also connects the saint with the Church of Skreen in the county Sligo, of which he is the patron, and was in all probability the founder. As head of the Columbian Order it was his duty, from time to time, to visit the Columbian Churches in Ireland, of which there were very many, especially in Sligo and Donegal. He may thus have spent a considerable time in Mayo of the Saxons, although the *Life of St. Gerald* is very unsatisfactory evidence of the fact.

We cannot stay to notice the alleged "cursing" of Irgalach by Adamnan. The story is intrinsically improbable and unsustained by respectable authority. In the last year of his life, A.D. 704, he returned to Iona. Although the monks would not consent to give up St. Columba's Easter, he loved them dearly, and wished to bless them before he died. After his noble life he might well rest in peace with the kindred dust of all the saints of Conal Gulban's line that sleep in the holy island.

A century later, however, as we have seen, the sacred relics were transferred to Ireland, but it is not known for certain where they were laid.

Adamnan's two most important works are his *Vita Sancti Columbae*, and his book, *De Locis Sanctis*.

The life of St. Columba has been pronounced by Pinkerton to be "the most complete piece of such biography that all Europe can boast of, not only at so early a period, but even through the whole middle ages." Adamnan himself declares

[1] "Dedit legem innocentum populis."

[2] The story of Adamnan's carrying his mother on his back originated in his well-known filial piety. Vol. III.

that he wrote the book at the earnest request of the Brothers; and that he states nothing except what was already written in the records of the monastery, or what he himself heard from the elder monks, many of whom saw the blessed Columba, and were themselves witnesses of his wonderful works. The entire narrative, which is written in fairly good Latin, furnishes ample proof of the truth of this statement. Hence the great value of this Life, not only as an authentic record of the virtues and miracles of St. Columba, but also as a faithful picture of the religious life of those early times by a contemporary writer, so well qualified to sketch it, and who does so quite unconsciously. The manuscript in the library of Schaffhausen is of equal authority with the autograph of the saint, if, indeed, it were not actually written at his dictation, so that the most sceptical cannot question the authenticity of this venerable record. The Life was printed from this codex by Colgan in 1647, and by the Bollandists at a later date. But the edition published in 1837 by Dr. W. Reeves for the Irish Archæological and Celtic Society, is by far the most valuable. The notes and appendices to this admirable volume render it a perfect mine of wealth for the student of Irish History.

Venerable Bede gives us a very full account of the treatise *De Locis Sanctis*, in the 16th and 17th chapters of the fifth book of his *Ecclesiastical History*. It is, he says, a book most useful to the reader (in that age). The author, Adamnan, received his information about the holy places from Arculfus, a bishop from Gaul, who had himself visited Jerusalem, Constantinople, Alexandria, and all the islands of the sea. When returning home a tempest drove his vessel to the west parts of Britain,[1] where he met Adamnan, probably in Hy, to whom he narrated all the noteworthy scenes he had gone through. Adamnan at once reduced the narrative to writing, for the information of his own countrymen. He presented the work to his friend King Aldfrid, through whose liberality copies were multiplied for the benefit of the young, if such be the meaning of Bede's phrase:—"Per ejus largitionem etiam minoribus ad legendum contraditus." Bede himself was greatly pleased with the book, from which he inserts several extracts in his own history, concerning Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Mount Olivet, and other places in Palestine. It was published at Ingoldstadt in 1619.

[1] Up to the tenth century Britannia included Scotland.

A Life of St. Patrick and some poems have been attributed to Adamnan, but there is no evidence to prove that they are genuine. The same may be said of the "Vision of Adamnan," a kind of moral discourse in Irish, which purports to relate a wonderful vision of the joys of heaven, and of the torments of hell, as seen and narrated by the saint. The work is certainly very ancient, but contains many things that go far to disprove its own authenticity.

When we consider the life and writings of this great man, as well as the large influence which he exercised on Irish affairs during the latter half of the seventh century, few will be disposed to question his right to take a high place amongst the saints and scholars of the west. He has been justly described in the prologue to the *Vision* as "the noble sage of the Western World." We have already quoted Bede's high testimony to his virtue and learning. The Four Masters emphatically endorse that testimony, and add that "he was tearful, penitent, fond of prayer, diligent and ascetic;" and that he was, moreover, "learned in the clear understanding of the Holy Scriptures of God."

After the death of Adamnan, A.D. 704, the Annals of Hy become less interesting. It still retained its headship of all the Columbian houses both in Erin and Alba—its abbots holding what is called a *principatus* over the rulers of the subject monasteries. Mention is also made of the *cathedra* of Columba and of Iona; but probably the same thing is meant—not episcopal or territorial jurisdiction, but the supreme authority over the Columbian houses and their wide domains. Reference, however, is made, for instance, in A.D. 712, to the death of "Ceddi, Bishop of Iona," but he doubtless derived his jurisdiction from the abbot. In A.D. 717 we are told that the Pictish King, Nectan, expelled the Columbian monks from his dominions, because they refused to conform to the general discipline as to the paschal observance, and the coronal tonsure. This seems to have brought the entire community to a sense of their duty, for now at length, under the Abbot Faelcu, they began to wear the Roman tonsure, as they had already adopted the Roman Easter. In A.D. 727 we are told that the "Relics of Adamnan" were brought to Ireland, and his Law renewed in that country. The object of bringing over these relics seems to have been to heal a feud between the Cenel-Eoghain and Cenel-Conal, in which the clergy appear to have been also mixed up, contrary to the Cáin or Law of Adamnan. The relics were brought back again by the abbot in A.D. 730.

In A.D. 739, we read of the *Dimersio familiae Iae*, as if the greater part of the community were lost in some flood or shipwreck—most likely the latter. In A.D. 753, and in subsequent years reference is made to enforcing the Law of Columcille, which seems to have been a tribute assessed by the parent house on the subject monasteries and their adjacent lands. As the relics of Adamnan were carried to Erin, where his Cain was enforced, so it is likely some relics, if not of Columba's body, yet in some other way connected with him, were carried round on these occasions.

Iona had now become a celebrated place of pilgrimage. Even kings and princes, as Columba had predicted, came to the island shrine, and were deemed especially happy, when they died on their pilgrimage. Niall Frassach gave up his crown to take the pilgrim's staff, and died in Iona in A.D. 778; so did Artgal, son of Cathal, King of Connaught, in A.D. 791, and many princes of the Picts and Saxons in like manner.

Thus for two hundred years since the death of their holy founder, the community had been growing in celebrity and influence, but now a day of trial and doom was at hand.

In A.D. 794 the 'Gentiles' made their first descent on the Hebrides; the following year they attacked and pillaged the holy island itself. It was, however, only the beginning of the evil time. It was burned in A.D. 802, and the same year saw the death of Connachtach, 'a very choice scribe,' whose end was doubtless hastened by the sight of his beloved monastery in flames.

Fortunately, however, the community of Hy got two years later "a free grant of Kells without a battle." They had, doubtless, been claiming it as their own; for it was given to Columba by King Diarmait long ago; but the place may have got into other hands in the interval. Now, however, that they had recovered it in peace, they resolved to make it their headquarters in future. In A.D. 807 they began to build a new religious 'city' in Kells; the great church was finished in A.D. 814, when the old Abbot Cellach resigned the principatus of Iona, which thenceforward was transferred to Kells, where the new abbot fixed his official abode. It seems that the venerable Cellach would not leave his beloved island for the new city in Ireland, and so he resigned his office, and next year went to his rest in that old churchyard, where the bones of so many of his sainted predecessors were already laid.

Many of the monks still clung with the same tenacious

affection to the old monastery in the sacred island of Columba, although they knew that they lived there in daily peril of their lives. It was thus the martyrdom of St. Blaithmac came to pass in A.D. 825. The Gentiles' fleets were once more upon the seas. Word was brought that they were harrying the neighbouring islands; and the monks of Iona betook themselves to flight. It was not difficult to cross the narrow strait, and escape into the wild hills of Mull. But Blaithmac would not stir; he was ardently longing for the crown of martyrdom, and now the hour of his triumph was at hand. He had hidden the shrine containing the relics of the holy founder, adorned with gold and gems, deep in the earth, and covered over the spot with fresh green sods, so as to leave no trace of the treasure beneath. This was, however, what the spoilers wanted. They asked the old man where he had hidden the shrine. He refused to tell; and then, enraged by baffled greed, they slew him on the spot. It was fitting that Iona, the sacred nursery of so many doctors and confessors, should also have its martyrs in the ranks of the saints of God. It was fortunate, too, that the heroic martyr should have found a poet to celebrate his triumph in verses not unworthy of such a Christian hero.

Walafridus Strabo, a monk of the abbey called Augia Dives, now Reichenau in Switzerland, heard of the heroism of the Ionian monk from his fellow monks who had fled for refuge to their countrymen in this Irish House on the Rhine. Of German birth himself, he was filled with admiration for such lofty Christian courage; and composed a poem of 180 Latin hexameters, in which he celebrates the fortitude of—

> "Blaithmaic, genuit quem dives Hibernia mundo,
> Martyriique sequens misit perfectio caelo."

The poem is too long to insert here, but it is a noble tribute from the pen of a foreigner to the courageous virtue of the Columbian monk who gave his life for Christ in Iona more than one thousand years ago.

The Rule of Columba[1] required that his monks should be ready for martyrdom whenever God's honour required it. Their mind was to be always fortified and steadfast for 'the white martyrdom' of patient endurance; but they were also bound to have the mind if occasion arose prepared for 'red martyrdom.' Blaithmac found the opportunity and was unwilling to lose his crown.

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[1] See *Haddan and Stubbs*, vol. ii., part 1, p. 120.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LATER COLUMBIAN SCHOOLS IN IRELAND

I.—Kells Head of the Columbian Houses.

"A voice from the ocean waves,
And a voice from the forest glooms,
And a voice from old temples and kingly graves,
And a voice from the catacombs."

—*Aubrey de Vere.*

During the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries Kells became the Head of the Columbian Monasteries, and produced several distinguished men. Its professors are frequently referred to during this period in our Annals, especially during the eleventh century. Two of them bore the name of Ua h Uchtain, of whom one was unhappily "drowned coming from Alba, with the bed of Columcille—it was a stone—and three of Patrick's relics, and thirty persons along with him." In A.D. 1050 died Maelan of Ceanannus, a distinguished sage; and eleven years later the death of Ciaran is noticed, another distinguished sage of the same school.

Meanwhile Kells did not escape the ravages of the Danes. In A.D. 949, *recte* 951, it suffered greatly. Godfrey, King of the Danes of Dublin, marched to Kells, and having plundered all the country round about, returned home with "3,000 captives, besides gold, silver, raiment, and various wealth and goods of every description."[1] Although Kells suffered much in various attacks, both before and after this date, it is doubtful if the good monks of Columcille were ever so completely cleaned out as on that occasion. It is called an *expilatio* by an old chronicler—pillage that left nothing after it. Kells was five times plundered during the tenth century; once also at the close of the ninth, and once at the opening of the eleventh century; and it was burned during the same period even oftener than it was plundered. Yet the school and monastery lived on, and after the Danish wars seem to have become once more quite flourishing.

The celebrated *Cathach*, to which we referred when speaking of the School of Moville, was enshrined at Kells about the close of the eleventh century. On the margin of the

[1] *Four Masters*, A.D. 1034.

under silver plate of the casket, which contains the MS., the following words in Gaelic are still quite legible.

"Pray for Cathbarr O'Donnell for whom this casket was made, and for Sitric, son of Mac Aedha, who made it, and for Domnald Mac Robartaigh Comarb of Kells, at whose house it was made." As this abbot of Kells died in A.D. 1098 the *cumdach*, or casket, must have been fabricated by MacHugh's son before that date, probably at the joint expense of O'Donnell and the abbot.

The family of Mac Robartaigh seems to have produced several distinguished scholars during this century, many of whom were connected with the monastic school of Kells. The MacRobartaigh clan appears to have belonged to Donegal. The parish of Ballymacgroarty in Tirhugh was most likely their family inheritance, as it takes its name from the clan. The celebrated Marianus Scotus was a member of the same family; for in his own hand he describes himself as Muredach Mac Robartaig, giving his original Irish name, instead of the literary patronymic, which his learning and virtue have immortalised.

II.—This Marianus Scotus,

Scribe and Commentator on Sacred Scripture, must be carefully distinguished from his countryman and namesake Marianus Scotus the Chronicler. We have fortunately an authentic Life of the former written by another Irishman, who was an inmate of the same religious house as Marianus, and who tells us that he derived his information from Father Isaac, then living, the life-long associate of Marianus himself.

This Life sets forth that Marianus was a native of the North of Ireland, but does not name the locality in which he was born. In his early youth he was handed over by his parents to the care of certain religious men in order to be trained up for the clerical state in all learning and pious discipline. There is hardly a doubt that the reference here is to the monks of Drumhome, in the barony of Tirhugh, county Donegal. The old monastic church was situated near the sea shore, where the boy must have often wandered in view of the noble mountains that rise up so grandly beyond the bay, and in the sight and hearing of the wild Atlantic waves that break upon its shore. Later on he was doubtless sent to Kells to complete his studies, for several members of his family presided over that abbey about this period.

We gather from statements made by Marianus himself, that he left Ireland in A.D. 1067; and therefore just eleven

years after the departure of his namesake, Marianus the Chronicler. At this period old Father Isaac described him to the writer of his life, as a handsome fair-haired youth, strong-limbed and tall, moreover a man of goodly mien, and gracious eloquence, well trained in all human and divine knowledge.[1] His purpose was to go on pilgrimage to Rome; but calling to see Bishop Otho of Bamberg, he was induced to remain with that prelate for a whole year. Subsequently the bishop gave Marianus and his two companions a cell at the foot of the mountain, in which they lived as recluses, the bishop generously supplying their simple wants.

After the Bishop's death they journeyed on to Ratisbon, where they were once more induced to stay at the earnest entreaty of the venerable abbess Emma and her nuns. As before they lived as recluses in their own little cells, Marianus devoting himself with great zeal to the composition and transcription of religious books for the good abbess Emma and her nuns. He also found leisure to write books for the monks around Ratisbon; "for his pen was swift, his handwriting clear and beautiful, and his labour incessant." He worked so diligently in his cell that his two companions, John and Candidus—Irishmen also—found quite enough to do in preparing the parchments which he filled up with the words of salvation. We are expressly told that they all laboured without fee or reward—giving their books gratuitously, contenting themselves with the poorest raiment and the plainest and scantiest fare. "To tell the truth without a fog of words," says the writer of the *Life of Marianus*, "amongst all the things which Divine Providence wrought by the hands of the said Marianus, nothing in my opinion is so wonderful and praiseworthy as the zeal with which the holy man, not once or twice, but frequently transcribed with his own hand the entire Old and New Testament with commentaries and explanations; while at the same time he wrote many smaller books, and psalters for poor widows, and for the needy clerics in the same city (of Ratisbon), and that, too, merely for his soul's sake, without any hope of earthly gain. Moreover, many monastic congregations in faith and charity imitating the same blessed Marianus, having come from that same Ireland (Hibernia), and now dwelling throughout Bavaria and Franconia, are for the most part sustained by the writings of that same holy man."

[1] Decoro vultu, crine nitenti, ultra communem valentiam hominum, formâ erat speciosus, divinis ac humanis litteris et eloquentiâ erat praeditus. —*Vita.*

Such is the noble testimony borne to the learning, zeal, and charity of this pure-souled Irish monk in the land of the stranger. And therefore it was that, not without good reason, he and his countrymen were so warmly welcomed and so generously treated in all the great cities of mediæval Germany.

But Marianus was quite as remarkable for the holiness of his life as for his learning and literary labours. "He was," says the writer of his Life, "like Moses, the meekest of men; and God bestowed upon him in a wonderful way the gift of healing many diseases, but especially fevers, and not only during his life, as I have heard from trustworthy witnesses, but at his tomb after his death, *as I have seen with my own eyes.*"

We cannot now, however, give an account of the celebrated monastery of St. James of Ratisbon, which was founded by Marianus for his countrymen, who came to that city in great numbers towards the close of the eleventh century, nor of the great scholars which it produced.

Marianus is described by Aventinus in the *Annals of Bavaria* as a distinguished poet and theologian—poeta et theologus insignis—second to no man of his time. His poems are unfortunately lost, but his Commentaries still remain to us at least in manuscript. His Commentary on the Psalms was so highly valued, as Aventinus tells us, that it was not allowed outside of the walls of the monastic library without a valuable deposit being left to secure its safe return. There is in the Cotton collection a codex not yet published entitled *Liber Mariani genere Scoti excerptus de Evangelistarum voluminibus sive Doctoribus.*

His most famous work, however, is the codex containing the Epistles of St. Paul, with a marginal and interlinear commentary. This precious MS. is now in the Imperial Library at Vienna,[1] and is especially valuable because it contains several entries in the old and pure Gaedhlic of the eleventh century.[2] It is quite astonishing what a number of writers is quoted by Marianus in the marginal gloss—Jerome, Augustine, Cassiodorus, Arnobius, St. Gregory, Origen, St. Leo the Great, Alcuin, Cassian, Peter the Deacon, Pelagius, and the Ambrosiaster are all laid under tribute. We wonder how many Irish scholars of the present day are acquainted with them.

This great work was completed on Friday, the 16th day before the kalends of June, A.D. 1079—he marks the date himself, and asks the reader to say 'Amen' to the brief

[1] No. 1247 (Theol. 287). [2] See *Transactions of the R.I.A.*, Vol. vii., 295.

prayer for his soul's salvation. "Amen, God rest him" (*Amen Got der Erleich*), wrote a pious old German of the fifteenth century on the face of the page in response to this pious request. Amen say we too—may God give him rest—that God whom he served so well during all the years of his pilgrimage in the land of the stranger.

"And now, my brothers," says the eloquent old Irish monk, who wrote the Life of Marianus, thinking no doubt of his own far-off home in Ireland by the swelling Boyne or winding Erne; "and now my brothers, if you should ask me what will be the reward of Marianus and pilgrims like him, who left the sweet soil of their native land which is free from every noxious beast and worm, with its mountains and hills, its valleys and its groves so well suited for the chase, the picturesque expanses of its rivers, its green fields and its streams welling up from purest fountains, and like the children of Abraham the Patriarch, came without hesitation unto the land which God had pointed out to them, this is my answer: They will dwell in the house of the Lord with the Angels and Archangels of God for ever; they will behold in Sion the God of Gods, to whom be honour and glory for endless ages."

The exact date of the death of Marianus is not marked, but it seems to have occurred in A.D. 1088, just six years after the death of his namesake the Chronicler. After Adamnan he was the most distinguished writer produced by the Columbian Schools.[1]

III.—The Later School of Derry.

As the great Columbian order of monks and scholars began in the Black Cell of Derry, so also from Derry flashed out the latest bright gleams of that sacred lamp which Columba had kindled, and which at one time irradiated both Scotland and Ireland. Kells held the principatus during the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries, as we have already stated; but during the twelfth century Derry came again to the front, and produced a large number of very distinguished men, most of whom belonged to a famous literary family named Ua Brolchain, or O'Brollaghan. This family derived its descent from Suibhne Meann, who was King of Ireland from A.D. 615 to 628. He was of the Cenel-Eoghain, but belonged to a sub-division known as the Cenel-Feradhaich, whose tribe-land seems to have been in the barony of Clogher, County Tyrone. The first of the Ua Brolchain family noticed

[1] The author has received from Most Rev. Dr. Donnelly, Bishop of Canea, a duly attested relic of the Blessed Marianus—Ex sepulchro S. Merchertachi Scoti.

in our Annals is Maelbrighde, whose death is recorded in A.D. 1029. He is described as chief builder of his time in Erin.[1]

The next of the name whom we meet with is St. Maelisa O'Brolchain, a very celebrated man, who died A.D. 1086. He was probably an alumnus of the monastery of Derry, but afterwards retired to Both-chonais, an ancient monastic church in Inishowen, which is best known from its connection with this holy and learned man. It was delightfully situated[2] on the margin of a semicircular bay in the north-western extremity of Inishowen, where the fierce Atlantic billows spend their force in broken wavelets on its sandy shore. It is well sheltered on the east and south by a range of steep and rugged hills. The entire parish of Clonmany, in which it was situated, abounds in natural curiosities as well as in objects of antiquarian interest, such as cromlechs, raths, and castles perched on lofty crags.

No traces of the old monastery now remain, but its site is probably marked by an old church-yard in the townland of Binnion, situated close to a narrow inlet of the bay, and in a spot which a sea-king of old might fitly choose as the site of his stronghold. The place got its name of Both-chonais—the House of Conas—from its founder, who was the husband of St. Patrick's sister, Darerca, and by her the father of two holy bishops, Mael and Maelchu. It is referred to at intervals as a place of some celebrity during the ninth and tenth centuries, and the death of its Airchinneach is recorded in A.D. 1049.

Maelisa O'Brolchain shunned church dignities, if he were not indeed a lay professor; but all the same he certainly acquired great fame even in this remotest corner of Erin both as a teacher and a scholar. The Four Masters describe him as "the learned senior (or sage) of Ireland, a paragon of wisdom and piety, in poetry as well as in both languages—(Irish and Latin)." The term 'chief senior' is never given except to the most eminent men, who were recognised as such by their contemporary annalists. Colgan speaks of him, too, in the highest terms as an humble man shunning all worldly honours, and devoted to a pious and studious life. He was the author of many books "replete with genius and intellect," which were preserved in the neighbourhood of Both-chonais in Colgan's time, but have since unfortunately perished. "I have in my own possession," adds Colgan,

[1] *Four Masters.* [2] According to O'Donovan's identification.

"some few fragments which he wrote," and which also appear to have completely disappeared since Colgan's time. Even the site of his monastery is uncertain. O'Donovan seems to think it was in the townland of Binnion; but Reeves places it in the townland of Carrowmore, parish of Culdaff, on the left-hand side of the road from Moville to Carn, and about three miles from the latter village.[1] It is said that he founded an oratory at Lismore, which was burned in A.D. 1116, and is called the Oratory of Maelisa. He may have spent some time either as a student or as a teacher in that celebrated seminary. He died in A.D. 1086 at a very advanced age, for he had no sickness, but simply gave back his soul to God. This holy and eminent scholar seems to have belonged to that class of learned lay professors, of whom Conn-na-m-Bocht at Clonmacnoise was the most remarkable example. They were equally renowned for holiness and learning, but abstained from taking Holy Orders either from humility, or in order to have more leisure and more freedom in the pursuit of knowledge.

The death of Aedh, son of Maelisa O'Brolchain, who is described as "an eminent professor" *(praecipuus lector)*, is recorded in A.D. 1095. He was, doubtless, the son of Maelisa of Both-chonais, and probably lectured either there or in the monastery of Derry. Two years afterwards, in A.D. 1097, the Four Masters record the death of Maelbrighde Mac-an-tsaer O'Brolchain, Bishop of Kildare, who is described as a 'learned doctor.' There can hardly be a doubt that he was the son of that chief builder—*prim saer*—whose fame as a mason or architect was known throughout all Erin, and who died in A.D. 1029. Then we find two members of the family raised to the primatial Chair; one was Maelcolaim—disciple of Columba—O'Brolchain, who died in A.D. 1122; and another, named also Maelbrighde O'Brolchain, who died in A.D. 1137. It is not unlikely he belonged to the class of laymen who claimed jurisdiction over, and called themselves "Bishops of Armagh" during a portion of the eleventh and twelfth centuries; for "Flaithbhertach, 'son of Bishop O'Brolchain,'"[2] was Comarb of Columcille in Derry from A.D. 1150 to 1175 The history of this remarkable man is especially noteworthy.

When he was elected as Comarb of Columcille to the abbacy of Derry, in A.D. 1150, that ancient monastic seat of learning was, it appears, very much dilapidated. Like other places near the sea, it was greatly exposed to the ravages of

[1] See Reeves' *Adamnan*, page 405. [2] *Annals of Ulster.*

the Danes, and had been several times plundered and burned. Most of the buildings were of wood, for the great stone church—Temple-more—was not yet built. A new era of ecclesiastical architecture was, however, inaugurated in Ireland towards the middle of the twelfth century by the workmen whom the Cistercians brought over from France and England to build their own magnificent churches and monasteries. Nothing like them had yet been seen in the land. There were Irish workmen, however, who, if opportunity offered, would be worthy rivals of the masons that built the Norman abbeys in France and England; and they gave proof of their capacity in the building of Cormac's Chapel at Cashel, which is a gem in its own way that cannot be surpassed. The Abbot of Derry came of a family that had won renown as builders, and he was anxious to show his own taste and skill in the renovation of the ancient monastery over which he had just been placed. Money, of course, was wanting, but it could not be long wanting to the Comarb of Columcille, if he were resolved to procure it. He made an official visitation of the Cenel-Eoghain, to whose kith and kin he himself belonged, and 'received his tribute,' in A.D. 1150—the year of his appointment to Derry. Next year he made a visitation of the Siol-Cathusaigh in the County Antrim, "and he obtained a horse from every chieftain, and a sheep from every hearth, and his horse and battle dress, and a ring of gold, in which were two ounces, from O'Lynn, their lord." In A.D. 1153 he made a visitation of the Dal Cairbre, and the Ui Eathach Uladh, and got a horse from every chieftain, and a sheep from every house, and a screaball, a horse, and five cows from O'Donlevy himself, and an ounce of gold from his wife. Coined money was scarce; but cattle and horses were plenty, and would do as well. Later on he even visited Ossory, and raised his tribute, and procured immunity for the Columbian churches in Meath from all assessments except, we presume, his own. Being at this time Head of the Columbian Order, he was, doubtless, present at the great Synod of Kells, which was held in that city by Cardinal Paparo in A.D. 1152; and during that year we find he made no official visitation elsewhere. No doubt he had enough on his hands; and we may be sure he voted for that Canon of the Council which ordered tithes to be regularly assessed for Church purposes on all the lands of Erin. It was what he had himself twice done already, and what he could now do, not only with custom, but with law also in his favour.

O'Brolchain made an excellent use of the funds which he thus procured. He removed all the houses that surrounded and disfigured the church of Derry, and then built on the site of the old church that new Temple Mor which gives its name to the parish, and appears to have been a large and imposing structure. The Four Masters say it was eighty feet long, and that it was built by O'Brolchain and his clergy, with the help of the king of Ireland, in forty days. If so, the materials must have been all prepared, and a large number of tradesmen must have been employed, which is not unlikely, seeing that he had already built a limekiln[1] measuring seventy feet every way, which took him twenty days to construct. The limekiln was built in A.D. 1163; but the church was not erected until A.D. 1165, and it is highly probable that the walls were being built in the meantime, and that the Four Masters mean that the church was covered in during the space of 60 days, which might easily be done. Doubtless, O'Brolchain constructed many other buildings also at Derry, for otherwise he would scarcely have occasion for building that enormous limekiln.

The merits of O'Brolchain were fully appreciated by the clergy and people of the north, and led to his formal elevation to the episcopal order in the year A.D. 1158. He had previously enjoyed large jurisdiction as Comarb of Columcille not only in Derry, but over the Columbian Churches generally. It was felt, however, especially after the Synod of Kells, that this state of things was now becoming anomalous and unsatisfactory, and might lead to a conflict of jurisdiction between the Comarb of Columcille and the regular diocesan authority. Hence it was resolved at a meeting of the Irish Clergy, held in Meath in that year, to raise O'Brolchain to the episcopal dignity, and circumscribe his jurisdiction by assigning him a definite territory. The Four Masters record it in this manner:—

A.D. 1158. "A Synod of the Clergy of Ireland was convened at Bri Mac Taidgh in Laeghaire (near Trim), when there were present twenty-five bishops, with the legate of the Successor of Peter to ordain rules and good morals. It was on this occasion the clergy of Ireland, with the successor of Patrick, ordered a Chair, like every other bishop, for the successor of Columcille—Flaithbheartach Ua Brolchain—and the Arch-abbacy of the churches of Ireland in general." Very little is known of the history of this Synod; but we

[1] *Four Masters.*

may note the following important facts:—The legate of the Comarb of Peter was Christian, Bishop of Lismore; his presence at the Synod was sufficient to authorize the bishops to proceed to the erection of a new See. The 'Chair' spoken of means not merely a chair in that assembly, but a new diocese, with all the rights and privileges canonically appertaining thereto. The new bishop was, however, still allowed to retain, and perhaps for the first time canonically to acquire, the Headship of all the Columbian monasteries. It may be that Kells was still a rival, and that its abbot also claimed to be Comarb of Columba; if so, this decree settled the question; and the new bishop of Derry was formally recognised as the Head of all the Columbian houses in Erin —for at that time there could be no question of any other.

Thus it was that the See of Derry was established. Mention is made of a Bishop of Derry previously, and of a Bishop-abbot of Derry; but it was, so to speak, by accident that this took place. There was no See of Derry, and no Diocese of Derry until A.D. 1158, when O'Brolchain was formally elevated to that dignity. It is not unlikely that he too was in Episcopal Orders previously—but now for the first time he got a chair or diocese. This eminent ecclesiastic, the founder of the Diocese of Derry, died in A.D. 1175, and the Four Masters record his death with the following honourable testimony:—

"Flaithbhertach O'Brolchain, Comarb of Columcille, a tower of wisdom and hospitality, a man on whom on account of his goodness and wisdom the clergy of Ireland had bestowed a bishop's chair, to whom the abbacy of Hy had been offered (in A.D. 1164), died in righteousness, after exemplary sickness, in the Duibhregles of Columcille; and Gilla Mac Taidgh Ua Brenain was appointed to his place in the abbacy." It is a curious fact that in A.D. 1173, we find recorded the death of Muiredhach Ua Cobthaich, Bishop of Derry and Raphoe; but it only implies that before the year A.D. 1158 he was the bishop territorially of Derry; for after that date he could have no legal claim to the See.

During the half-century between A.D. 1100 and 1150, Iona was under the influence of the Kings of Norway, especially of Magnus the Great, who subjected the island to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Man; but in A.D. 1156 royal Somerlid recovered Hy and others of the 'Southern' islands. Being himself a Celt of Irish blood, he was anxious to restore the Celtic influence in the island; and hence we find that in A.D. 1164, at his instance the abbacy of Hy was offered to

O'Brolchain, Abbot and Bishop of Derry. But O'Brolchain being now Bishop of Derry, and the recognised head of the Columbian Order, declined to accept the abbacy of Hy, preferring to remain in Derry. Domhnall O'Brolchain, however, was appointed to the insular abbacy, and being, like all his family, a building man, he determined to signalize his reign by the erection of a great church in Hy. It was the cathedral whose ruins are still to be seen, and they furnish a striking monument of the taste and munificence of the Irish Abbot. On the capital of the tower column are inscribed the still legible words—DONALDUS O'BROLCHAN FECIT HOC OPUS. We cannot have absolute certainty; but there can be no reasonable doubt of the identity of this name with the Domhnall O'Brolchain, the prior and exalted senior, whose death the *Annals of Ulster* record in A.D. 1203, and the Four Masters in A.D. 1202. After his death a certain Cellach,[1] "without any legal right, and in despite of the family of Hy, erected a monastery there in the middle of Cro-Hy." But the clergy of the North of Erin, bishops and abbots, passed over into Hy and pulled down this new monastery; and Awley O'Ferrall was elected Abbot of Hy by the suffrages both of the Foreigners and Gaedhil. This points to an attempt made by the foreign influence to eject the Irish monks from Hy; but for once it signally failed. The last entry in our Annals records the death of Flann O'Brolchain, the last Irish Abbot of Hy, in the year A.D. 1219. Thenceforward it ceased to be Irish, and became a purely Scottish monastery and remained so until the Reformation.

IV.—GELASIUS.

We cannot pass away from the School of Derry without some reference to one of the most distinguished men it ever produced—the celebrated Gelasius, who succeeded St. Malachy in the See of Armagh. He was one of that noble band of prelates who, with Celsus, and St. Malachy at their head, did so much for the true reformation of the Irish Church in discipline and morals during the half-century that immediately preceded the advent of the Anglo-Normans to our shores.

Gelasius in his native tongue was called Gilla Mac Liag, and also Gilla Mac Liag Mic Ruaidhre. The term *Mac Liag* is commonly taken to mean the 'son of the scholar;' and Harris assures us that he was so called because his father

[1] Skene thinks that this Cellach was the Benedictine abbot Celestinus to whom the Pope granted Hy in 1203, probably after this attempt to seize the place by the authority of Ronald, Lord of the Isles.—*Celtic Scotland*, vol. ii., p. 417.

was esteemed a man of learning, and the most considerable poet of his age. He is sometimes called Diarmaid, which explains why his son is called Gilla Mac Liag Mic Ruaidhri, that is the youngster, the son of the scholar, who was the son of Ruaidhri. We know nothing further of his family or birth-place; but Colgan, who had excellent means of obtaining information, states that he was born in A.D. 1088. It is obvious that he was a native of some territory near Derry, and received his early education in that monastic school, for we find him while still very young holding the important position of airchinneach—or erenach, as it is frequently spelled—of that monastery. It is not improbable that his father, the poet, was connected with the same monastery, if he did not hold the same office. It was one which at this period might be held by a layman, or even by a woman, if we may credit the statement of the Four Masters, that Bebhinn, who died in A.D. 1134, whilst Gelasius was Abbot of Derry, was the female erenach of that monastery. Gelasius became Abbot of Derry in A.D. 1120 or 1121; and held that important office for sixteen years. He must have given general satisfaction in his government of Derry, for he was called by the voice of the clergy and nobles, and with the assent of St. Malachy himself, to succeed that great prelate, when he resigned the primacy of Armagh in A.D. 1137. The reign of Gelasius is remarkable for two things—first, the success with which he asserted his jurisdiction as Primate during his visitations in all parts of Ireland, and secondly for his zeal in holding Synods to correct abuses and reform the morals both of the clergy and of the people.

During the centuries preceding the twelfth century, which was a period of reform, the jurisdiction of the Primate was practically in abeyance. If it was recognised at all in the South of Ireland, it was certainly merely nominal. This arose from many causes—the troubles of the times, the rivalry of the native princes, the ravages of the Danes, and the intrusion of laymen into the See of Armagh, who claimed to inherit the jurisdiction of St. Patrick to the great disgust of all well disposed persons, both clergy and laity, throughout Ireland.

The great Brian Boru did much to cause the primatial authority to be recognised and respected once more in the South as well as in the North of Ireland. When the great 'Imperator of the Scots,' himself from the South of Ireland, came and laid his gifts on the altar of Armagh, and afterwards ordered his body to be buried there, it was a recognition

of the primatial rights of Patrick's See which none could affect to ignore or to despise.

Then during the next century Providence raised up a line of great and holy prelates in Armagh—Celsus, Malachy, and Gelasius—men of courage, learning, energy, and filled with the apostolic spirit, who expelled the intruders, vindicated the rights, and, by their conduct and character even more than by words, asserted the dignity of the primatial see.

Gelasius had certainly his own share in this noble work. The very year after his accession to the see of Armagh he made a formal visitation throughout the Province of Munster, and was everywhere received with honour and loaded with gifts.

The next year he went to Connaught, where he was also received with all honour and obedience. Torlough O'Conor was then King of Connaught; and claimed to be High King of Ireland. He successfully asserted his claim by overrunning Munster, Meath, and Leinster in succession; he even penetrated into Oriel and threatened Ailech itself. But he received the Primate Gelasius with the most profound respect; he gave him efficient protection in his journeys through the province, and seems to have also assisted him in carrying out his schemes of reform. In fact, whether it was because he wanted to correct abuses, or liked his treatment beyond the Shannon, the Primate visited that province no less than four different times before his death.

Gelasius was no less zealous in convening and presiding over Synods for the maintenance of discipline and the extirpation of abuses.

The earliest of these was held at Holmpatrick by the Primate and St. Malachy in A.D. 1148. It is called by the Four Masters Inis-Padraig, but the place is the same—the small island near Skerries, now called Holm-Patrick, or Patrick's Island. Its object was to make formal application to the Pope in the name of the Irish Church for a pallium or pall for each of the archbishops both of the old and new creation. St. Malachy set out for France to meet the Pope, as we have already seen, but died on his way at Clairvaux on the 2nd of November in the same year.

The object, however, was not lost sight of either by the Pope or the Primate. Cardinal John Paparo landed in Ireland in A.D. 1151, and went straight to Armagh to meet the Primate, with whom he remained for a week making arrangements for the coming Synod. It was held at Kells,

not Drogheda or Mellifont, in the spring of next year, A.D. 1152, and was attended by twenty-two bishops and five bishops elect, with a large number—some 300 or more—of the clergy of the Second Order, both secular and regular. We cannot here enter into the many interesting questions connected with this Synod. It is enough to say that whilst formally recognising the superiority of Armagh as the Primatial See, four palls were granted by the Cardinal Legate, thus legally constituting four archbishops in Ireland for the first time. It is, however, only in this legal and technical sense that Gelasius can be described as the 'first Archbishop of Armagh.' Other regulations were also made at this Synod, two of which are especially noticed. It was ordered by the Synod to put away all concubines from *men*[1] —not from the *clergy*, as Moore falsely says; and also to pay tithes according to the usage of the Church elsewhere. This is the first reference to tithes we find in our Annals, and it is said that even the clergy did not care to introduce this new system of getting a maintenance.

The zealous Primate held another Synod at Mellifont in A.D. 1157, partly to have the new monastic church of the parent Cistercian House consecrated with greater solemnity, and partly to pronounce sentence of excommunication against Donogh O'Melaghlin for his impiety and contempt of the Primate's authority. We are not acquainted with the full particulars; but this public act by which the Prince of Meath was solemnly excommunicated and deposed, and his brother appointed by the bishops and the princes in his stead, shows that the Primate was a man of vigour, who was resolved to adopt energetic measures to assert his own authority.

Next year we find Gelasius holding another Synod at a place called Brigh Mac-Taidgh, near Trim, in Meath. Twenty-five bishops were present, with Christian of Lismore, the Papal Legate in Ireland. The Connaught Bishops were unable to attend, because they were robbed and maltreated near Clonmacnoise on their way to the Synod by a party of soldiers belonging to that very Diarmaid O'Melaghlin, whom the Synod of Mellifont had named King of Meath the previous year. This incident shows the violent and lawless spirit of the times, and how necessary it was for the Primate to vindicate to the utmost of his power the authority of the Church, which alone could keep these fierce and bloodthirsty

[1] See *Four Masters*, A.D. 1152.

princes in check. It was at this Synod, as we have already seen, that a Bishop's Chair was set for O'Flaherty O'Brolchain, who was on that occasion formally created, with the assent of the Legate, first Bishop of Derry.

A few years later in A.D. 1162, the venerable Gelasius presided at another Synod at Clane in Magh Liffe—the north of the present County Kildare. It was at this Synod the important decree was passed, which required all the *Fer-leighinn*, or professors throughout Ireland, to graduate in the great School of Armagh. This decree more than anything else shows the far seeing wisdom of the Primate. The School of Armagh was under his own immediate direction and control, so that he could secure a thorough and orthodox training in theology for the students. Then by requiring the professors from all the other schools to attend lectures at Armagh, he secured at once uniformity of system, and soundness of doctrine in all the other schools where the clergy of the Irish Church were being trained for the ministry. At the same time it was a recognition that as Armagh was the seat of authority, it was also the mistress of sound theology. It is quite evident that Gelasius was a man far superior to his contemporaries in wisdom and the science of government.

In the same year he had the satisfaction of consecrating the great St. Laurence O'Toole to be Archbishop of Dublin—the first prelate of that see that was ever consecrated in Ireland. It is clear that the Primate was resolved not to tolerate any longer the claim of the Archbishops of Canterbury to metropolitan jurisdiction in any part of his primacy.

Yet another great assembly of the clergy and laity was held at Athboy in Meath, in the year A.D. 1167. Both the Primate and Rory O'Connor, King of Ireland, were present, with many of the prelates and nobles of the North. Its main object seems to have been to restore peace and concord between the native princes, whose fratricidal strife had reddened every green field in their native land, and offered such strong inducements to the stranger to conquer and divide their inheritance.

The Primate saw the danger, and realized it to the full. As he had held a Synod the year before the arrival of the Anglo-Normans to remove the cause of the danger; so the year after their arrival, that is in A.D. 1170, he held the last Synod of his clergy in his own city of Armagh, to concert means to expel the foreigners, before they could secure a foothold in the country

The venerable old man was then in the eighty-third year of his age, but he had a braver spirit and a clearer mind than any of the degenerate children of Niall the Great, whom he gathered round him in his primatial city. He warned them, and he appealed to them in vain. When the day of trial came, and Strongbow with his knights were besieged in Dublin, and by united energetic action might have been driven into the sea more completely than the Danes were at Clontarf, the men of the North were in their native mountains ignobly heedless of their country's fate.

Alas! for the aged Gelasius, who had laboured so hard and so long for the Irish Church and the Irish people. He saw the princes of his country bow the knee in homage to the triumphant invader; he saw her prelates meet in Cashel at Henry's summons to endorse his laws; he saw her petty chieftains either warring with each other or allied with the Norman. Then, and only then, the old man came from his episcopal city and kissed the hand of Henry in his new capital of Dublin. He had his old white cow driven before him to give him milk, which was his only sustenance. He paid his homage to the king, and then returned home with a sad heart to Patrick's royal City. Two years after he died at the age of eighty-five, and after his death was recognised and honoured as a saint by the entire Church of Ireland.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SCHOOL OF BANGOR.

"Our princes of old, when their warfare was over,
As pilgrims forth wandered; as hermits found rest.
Shall the hand of the stranger their ashes uncover,
In Bangor the holy, in Aran the blest?"

—*De Vere.*

St. Comgall, who founded the famous School of Bangor, though not greatly celebrated for his own learning, was the founder of a school which of all others seems to have exercised the widest influence on the Continent by means of the great scholars whom it produced.

Bangor and Armagh were by excellence the great Northern Schools, just as Clonard was the School of Meath, Glendaloch of Leinster, Lismore of Munster, and Clonmacnoise and Clonfert of Connaught. For it must be borne in mind that Clonmacnoise was founded by St. Ciaran from Roscommon, that he was the patron saint of Connaught,[1] and that until a comparatively recent period it formed a portion of the Western Ecclesiastical Province. The influence of the other schools, however, was mainly felt at home, or to some extent in England, Scotland and Germany; but the influence of Bangor was felt in France, Switzerland and Italy, and not only in ancient times but down to the present day. There are great names amongst the missionaries who have gone from other monastic schools in Ireland to preach the Gospel abroad, but if we except St. Columba, who was trained at many schools in Ireland, there are no other names so celebrated as St. Columbanus, the founder of Luxeuil and Bobbio, and St. Gall, who has given his name to an equally celebrated Monastery and Canton in Switzerland. It is, then, highly interesting and instructive to trace the origin and influence of this famous Irish school.

I.—St. Comgall of Bangor.

St. Comgall, the founder of Bangor, was a native of the territory anciently called Benna Boirche,[2] or Mourne, the name of that wild but beautiful mountain district extending

[1] See the poem from the *Saltair na Rann* on the Patron Saints of Ireland, Cambr. Eversus, vol. ii., page 779.

[2] He was born in Mourne of Antrim, near Larne, not in Mourne of Down as stated here, and belonged to the Picts of Dalaradia.

from Carlingford Lough to the Bay of Dundrum. There is some difference of opinion as to the exact date of his birth, and indeed as to the length of his life; although all admit that he died in the year A.D. 600 or 601. He seems to have been during his life from boyhood to old age a friend and companion of St. Columcille, and hence if we accept the length of his life given by the Bollandists[1] as eighty years, we may fix his birth at about A.D. 520—which was also the date, or near it, of Columcille's birth. Comgallus, the name by which he was baptized, has been frequently explained to signify the 'lucky pledge'—faustum pignus—because he was a child of benediction, the only son of his parents, and born, too, when they were advanced in years. As usual in the case of our Irish saints, several prodigies are said to have taken place both before and shortly after his birth. His father was Sedna, a small chief of the district then known as Dalaradia or Dalaray; his mother was a devout matron called Briga, who is said to have been warned before his birth to retire from the world, because her offspring was destined in future days to become a great saint of God. These pious parents took him to be baptized by a blind old priest, called Fehlim, who knew, however, by heart, the proper method of administering the Sacrament of Baptism. There being no water at hand a miraculous stream burst forth from the soil, and the old priest feeling the presence of the divine influence washed his face in the stream, and at once recovered his sight, after which he baptized the child and gave him the appropriate name of Comgall. This is only one of the numberless miracles recorded in the two lives of St. Comgall, given by the Bollandists, but it will not be necessary for our purpose to refer to them in detail.

The boy in his youth was sent to work in the fields, and seems to have assisted his parents with great alacrity in all their domestic concerns. When he grew up a little more he was sent to learn the Psalms and other divine hymns from a teacher in the neighbourhood, whose precepts were much better than his example. The young child of grace, however, was not led away from the path of virtue; on the contrary, he seems in his own boyish way to have given gentle hints to his teacher that his life was not what it ought to be. On one occasion, for instance, Comgall rolled his coat in the mud and coming before his master, the latter said to him, "Is it not shame to soil your coat so?" "Is it not a greater

[1] In the *Second Life*.

shame," replied Comgall, "for anyone to soil his soul and body by sin?" The teacher took the hint and was silent; but the lesson was unheeded, and so the holy youth resolved to seek elsewhere a holier preceptor.

This was about the year A.D. 545. At that time a young and pre-eminently holy man, named Fintan, had established a monastery at a place called Cluain-eidnech, now Clonenagh, near Mountrath, in the Queen's County. The fame of this infant monastery had spread far and wide over the face of the land; for although in many places in those days of holiness there was strict rule, and poor fare, and rigid life, yet Fintan of Clonenagh seems to have been the strictest and poorest and most rigid of them all. He would not allow even a cow to be kept for the use of his monks—consequently they had neither milk, nor butter; neither had they eggs, nor cheese, nor fat, nor flesh of any kind. They had a little corn, and herbs, and plenty of water near at hand, for the bogs and marshes round their monastic cells were frequently flooded by the many tributaries of the infant Nore coming down from the slopes of the Slieve-bloom mountains. They had plenty of hard work, too, in the fields tilling the barren soil, and in the woods cutting down timber for the buildings of the monastery as well as for firewood, and then drawing it home in loads on their backs, or dragging it after them over the uneven soil. The discipline of this monastery was so severe and the food of the monks so wretched that the neighbouring saints thought it prudent to come and beg the Abbot Fintan to relax a little of the extreme severity of his discipline, which was more than human nature could endure. The abbot, though unwilling to relax his own fearful austerities in the least, consented at the earnest prayer of St. Canice to modify the severity of his discipline to some extent for the others, and they were no doubt not unwilling to get the relaxation.

It speaks well for the love of holy penance shown by these young Christians of Ireland that in spite of its severe discipline this monastery was crowded with holy inmates from all parts of the country, and amongst the rest came Comgall from his far-off Dalaradian home to become a disciple of this school of labour and penance.

He remained a considerable time under the guidance of the holy Fintan, the Benedict of our Irish Church, who, although his "senior," or superior in religion, was probably about his own age in years. There is little doubt that it was from Fintan, Comgall learned those lessons of humility and

obedience which, as we know from his Rule and from his disciples, he afterwards taught with so much effect to others. His teacher then advised him to return to his own country, and propagate amongst his kindred in Dalaray the lessons of virtue which he had learned at Clonenagh.

Hitherto it seems Comgall had received no holy orders. He was a monk and a perfect one, of mature age too, but in his great humility he had hitherto declined the responsibilities of the priesthood. Now, however, he resolved to pay a visit to Clonmacnoise, which is about twenty miles to the north-west of Clonenagh. Its holy founder, Ciaran, was scarcely alive at this time, for he died in A.D. 544; but then, and long after, the fame of the school was great, and crowds of holy men were attracted to its walls. Here Comgall was induced to receive the priesthood from the holy Bishop Lugadius, and after a short stay he returned northward to his own country. This was probably about A.D. 550, or perhaps a little later.

Some authorities place the foundation of Bangor at this time; but it must be understood only in a very qualified sense at this early date. Comgall was now, indeed, a famous saint himself, and likely enough, companions came to place themselves under his spiritual guidance. But we are expressly told that for some time after his return he went about preaching the Gospel to the people, especially amongst his own kith and kin, and in all probability this took place before he established his monastery at least on any permanent footing at Bangor. But the holy man longed for the solitary life, and so we are told that he retired to an island in Lough Erin, called INSULA CUSTODIARIA, or, as we should now say, Jail Island, and there he practised such austerities that seven of the brethren who accompanied him died of cold and hunger. He was then induced to relax his penances and fastings; and shortly after, it seems, at the earnest prayer of his friends, he was again persuaded to leave Jail Island and return to Dalaray. This was about the year A.D. 559, which seems to be the most probable date of the founding of Bangor, although the Four Masters fix it so early as A.D. 552.

Bangor is very beautifully situated. It is about seven miles from Belfast, on the southern shore of Belfast Lough, in the county Down, and may be easily reached either by rail or steamer. It commands a fine view of Carrickfergus on the opposite shore of the bay, with the bold cliffs of Black Head further seaward; to the right across the narrow sea the bleak bluffs of Galloway are distinctly visible, and far away due north in the dim distance, the Mull of Cantire frowns over a

wild and restless sea. We saw this fair scene on a fine day in June, when the sun lit up the steeples of Carrickfergus, and glanced brightly over the transparent waters, so deeply and purely blue, whose wavelets played amongst the bare quartzite rocks, and we felt that if the old monks who chose Bangor to be their home loved God they loved nature also. Most of all they loved the great sea; it was for them the most vivid image of God; in its anger, its beauty, its power, its immensity, they felt the presence, and they saw, though dimly, the glory of the Divine Majesty. It was on the shore of this beautiful bay, sheltered from the south-western winds, but open to the north-east, that Comgall built his little church and cell. Crowds of holy men, young and old, soon gathered round him; they too, without much labour, built themselves little cells of timber or wattles; the whole was then surrounded by a spacious fosse and ditch, which was their enclosure, and thus the establishment became complete. If St. Bernard in his *Life of St. Malachy* was rightly informed, it is clear that there were no stone buildings in ancient Bangor before the time of St. Malachy; and even he, when restoring the place, with some of his companions, only built a small oratory of wood which was finished in a few days.

Not its buildings, however, but its saints and its scholars, were the glory of Bangor. St. Columba from his home in Iona came more than once, with some of his followers, to visit Comgall and his good monks. On one of these occasions one of the brothers died during the voyage, and the corpse at first was left in the boat whilst the monks with Columba went to the monastery. Comgall received them with great delight, washed their feet, and on asking if all had come in, Columba said one brother remained in the boat. The holy man Comgall going down in haste to fetch the brother found him dead, and perhaps thinking it might have happened through his neglect, besought the Lord, and calling upon the monk to rise up and come to his brothers, the dead man obeyed. Walking to the monastery Comgall perceived that he was blind in one eye, and telling him to wash his face in the stream that still flows down to the sea from the church, he did so, and at once recovered his sight. St. Comgall brought back the brother from the grave, and, moreover, restored to him his eyesight. In this age of ours we are apt to smile at such miracles as these, because ours is not an age of faith; and the incredulity of the world around us make us incredulous also. Yet our Saviour said to his disciples (Luke xvii. v. 6), "If you had faith like to a grain

of mustard seed, you might say to this mulberry tree, be thou rooted up, and be thou transplanted into the sea, and it would obey you." We doubt if any of our Irish Saints ever did anything apparently so foolish as this, yet even this they could do in the greatness of their faith.

St. Comgall paid a return visit to Columba, and it is said that he even founded a church in the Island of Heth, now called Tiree, one of the western isles to the north of Iona. He also accompanied Columba in the famous visit which he paid to King Brude, the Pictish King, who, at the approach of the saints, shut himself up in his fortress on the shore of the river Inverness. But Columba signed the sign of the cross, whereupon the barred doors flew open in the name of Christ; and the pagan King of the Picts, fearing with a great fear, allowed the saints to preach the Gospel to his subjects.

A man so famous for holiness and miracles, soon attracted great crowds to Bangor. St. Bernard in his *Life of St. Malachy* says that "this noble institution was inhabited by many thousands of monks." Joceline, of Furness, a writer of the twelfth century, says that "Bangor was a fruitful vine breathing the odour of salvation, and that its offshoots extended not only over all Ireland, but far beyond the seas into foreign countries, and filled many lands with its abounding fruitfulness." In the time of the Danes we are told, on the authority of St. Bernard, that nine hundred monks of Bangor were slain by these pirates—an appalling slaughter, but not at all an unusual, much less an incredible massacre, for the North men to perpetrate. The second life given by the Bollandists says distinctly that in the various cells and monasteries under his care, Comgall had no less than three thousand monks; but this it seems is to be understood of all his disciples in other monasteries as well as in Bangor.

Amongst these disciples, besides Columbanus and his companions, of whom we shall presently speak, were Lua, called also Mo-Lua, the founder of Clonfert-Molua, now Clonfert-Mulloe, in the Queen's County, and St. Carthach, founder of the great School of Lismore, which became almost as famous as Bangor itself. Luanus from Bangor, who seems to be the same as Molua, is said by St. Bernard to have founded a hundred monasteries—a statement that seems somewhat exaggerated. Even kings gave up their crowns and came to Bangor to live as humble monks under the blessed Comgall.

Special mention is made of Cormac, King of Hy-Bairrche, in Northern Leinster. That prince had been freed from the

fetters in which he was held by the King of Hy-Kinselagh at the earnest intercession of St. Fintan of Clonenagh. Before his death, however, he retired to Bangor, and in spite of great temptations to return to the world, he persevered to the end in the service of God, under the care of Comgall, to whom he gave large domains in Leinster for the endowment of religious houses. Comgall, according to some authorities, ruled over Bangor for fifty years, others say for thirty, which is more likely to be true, and died on the 13th of May, A.D. 600, at his own monastery of Bangor, in the midst of his children, after he had received the Viaticum from the hands of St. Fiacra of Conwall, in Donegal, who was divinely inspired to visit the dying saint, and administer to him the last rites of the Church. His blessed body was afterwards enclosed by the same Fiacra, in a shrine adorned with gold and precious stones, which subsequently became the spoil of the Danish pirates.

That literature, both sacred and profane, was successfully cultivated at Bangor, will be made evident from the writings of the great scholars whom it produced, even during the lifetime of its blessed founder. Humility and obedience, however, were even more dearly prized than learning. It was a rule amongst the monks that when any person was rebuked by another at Bangor, whether justly or not, he immediately prostrated himself on the ground in token of submission. They bore in mind that word of the Gospel, "If one strike thee on the right cheek, turn also to him the other." But the career of the great Columbanus will prove that when there was question of denouncing crime against God, or adhering to the traditions of the holy founders of the Irish Church, the monks of Bangor were men of invincible firmness, who felt the full force of the Apostolic maxim—we must obey God rather than man. In the question of celebrating Easter, according to their ancient usage, this firmness bordered on pertinacity; but it was excusable, seeing that it sprang from no schismatical spirit, but from a conscientious adhesion to the ancient practice of the Church of St. Patrick.

II.—St. Columbanus.

St. Columbanus was the great glory of the school of Bangor. He is one of the most striking figures of his age; his influence has been felt even down to our own times. The libraries which contain manuscripts written by his monks are ransacked for these literary treasures, and the greatest

scholars of France and Germany study the Celtic glosses which the monks of Columbanus jotted down on the margins or between the leaves of their manuscripts.

We cannot dwell at length on the facts of his life, striking and interesting as his marvellous career undoubtedly is. His Life, published by Surius, was written by an Italian monk of Bobbio, called Jonas, at the request of his ecclesiastical superiors, and though full enough in details regarding his career on the Continent, it is meagre as to the facts of his youth in Ireland. It is, however, so far as it goes, authentic, for the informants of Jonas were the members of his own community of Bobbio, who were companions of the saint, and eye-witnesses of what they relate.

Columbanus, or Columba, was the Latin name given to the saint, probably on account of the sweetness of his disposition. For although in the cause of God he was impetuous, and sometimes even headstrong, we are told that to his companions and associates he was ever gracious and quiet as the dove. We know for certain that he was a native of West Leinster, and born about the year A.D. 543[1] if not earlier, for he was at least 72 years at his death in A.D. 615. In his boyhood he gave himself up with great zeal and success to the study of grammar, and of the other liberal arts then taught in our Irish schools, including geometry, arithmetic, logic, astronomy, rhetoric, and music. He was a handsome youth, too, well-shaped and prepossessing in appearance, fair and blue-eyed like most of the nobles of the Scots. This was to him a source of great danger, for at least one young maiden strove to win the affections of the handsome scholar, and wean his heart from God. Old Jonas, the writer of the life, shudders at the thought of the danger to which Columbanus was exposed, and the devilish snares that were laid for his innocence. The youth himself was fully sensible of his danger, and sought the counsel of a holy virgin who lived in a hermitage hard by. At first he spoke with hesitation and humility, but afterwards with confidence and courage, which showed that he was a youth of high spirit, and therefore all the more in danger. "What need," replied the virgin, "to seek my counsel. I myself have fled the world, and for fifteen years have remained shut up in this cell. Remember the warning examples of David, Samson, and Solomon, who were led astray by the love of women. There is no security for you except in flight." The youth

[1] Cardinal Moran thinks he was born as early as A.D. 530.

was greatly terrified by this solemn warning, and bidding farewell to his parents, resolved to leave home and retire for his soul's sake to some religious house where he would be secure. His mother, with tears, besought him to stay; she even threw herself on the threshold before him, but the boy, declaring that whoever loved his father or mother more than Christ, is unworthy of Him, stepped aside, and left his home and his parents, whom he never saw again.

He went straight to Cluaninis (now Cleenish), in Lough Erne, whose hundred islets in those days were the homes of holy men, who gave themselves up to prayer, penance, and sacred study. An old man named Sinell,[1] was at that time famous for holiness and learning, and so Columbanus placed himself under his care, and made great progress both in profane learning, and especially in the study of the sacred Scriptures.[2]

At this time the fame of Bangor was great throughout the land: so Columbanus leaving his master, Sinell of Lough Erne, came to Comgall, and prostrating himself before the abbot, begged to be admitted amongst his monks. The request was granted at once, and Columbanus, as we are expressely informed, spent many years in that great monastery by the sea, going through all the literary and religious exercises of the community with much fervour and exactness. This was the spring-time of his life, in which he sowed the seeds of that spiritual harvest, which France and Italy afterwards reaped in such abundance. His rule was the rule of Bangor. His learning was the learning of Bangor. His spirit was the spirit of Bangor.

When fully trained in knowledge and piety, Columbanus sought his abbot Comgall, and begged leave to go, like so many of his countrymen, on a pilgrimage for Christ. It was the impulse of the Celtic mind from the beginning—it is so still—the Irish are a nation of apostles. It is not a mere love of change, or of foreign travel, or tedium of home; no, the pilgrimage, or *peregrinatio*, was essentially undertaken to spread the Gospel of Christ. The holy abbot Comgall gladly assented. He gave him his leave and his blessing, and Columbanus, taking with him twelve companions, prepared to cross the sea. Money they had none: they needed none. The only treasure they took with them was their books slung over their shoulders in leathern satchels, and so with their staves in their hands, and courage in their hearts, they set out from their native country, never to return. At first they went to England, and traversing that country, where it seems, too, they were joined by some associates, they

[1] Sinell himself studied at Clonard. His feast day is Nov. 12th.

[2] It is said that it was in Cluains Columbanus wrote his Commentary on the *Psalter*, lately published by the learned Ascoli. See Stokes' *Island Monasteries*. Journal of the R.S.A.I., page 663.

found means to cross the channel and came to Gaul, about the year A.D. 575, when he himself was about thirty-two years of age.

The apostolic man with his companions at once set about preaching the Gospel in the half-Christian towns and villages of Gaul. Poor, half-naked, hungry, their lives were a sermon; but moreover, Columbanus was gifted with great eloquence, and a sweet persuasive manner that no one could resist. They were everywhere received as men of God, and the fame of their holiness and miracles even came to the court of Sigebert, king of Austrasia, of which Metz was the capital. He pressed them to stay in his dominions, but they would not. They went their way southward through a wild and desert country, preaching and teaching, healing and converting, until they came to the court of Gontran, grandson of Clovis, at that time king of Burgundy—one of the three kingdoms into which the great monarchy of Clovis had come to be sub-divided.

Gontran received the missionaries with a warm welcome, and at first established them at a place called Annegray, where there was an old Roman castle in the modern department of the Haute-Saone. The king offered them both food and money, but these things they declined, and such was their extreme poverty, that they were often forced to live for weeks together on the herbs of the field, on the berries, and even the bark of the trees. Columbanus used from time to time to bury himself alone in the depths of the forest, heedless of hunger, which stared him in the face, and of the wild beasts that roamed around him, trusting altogether to the good providence of God. He became even the prince of the wild animals. The birds would pick the crumbs from his feet; the squirrels would hide themselves under his cowl; the hungry wolves harmed him not; he slept in a cave where a bear had its den. Once a week a boy would bring him a little bread or vegetables: he needed nothing else. He had no companion. The Bible, transcribed, no doubt, at Bangor with his own hand, was his only study and his highest solace. Thus for weeks, and even months, he led a life, like John the Baptist in the wilderness, wholly divine.

Meanwhile the number of disciples in the monastery at the old ruined castle of Annegray daily increased, and it became necessary to seek a more suitable site for a larger community. Here, too, the Burgundian King Gontran proved himself the generous patron of Columbanus and his monks. There was at the foot of the Vosges mountains, where warm

medicinal springs pour out a healing stream, an old Roman settlement called Luxeuil. But it was now a desert. The broken walls of the ancient villas were covered with shrubs and weeds. The woods had extended from the slopes of the mountains down to the valleys covering all the country round. There was no population, no tillage, no arable land; it was all a savage forest, filled with wolves, bears, foxes, and wild cats. Not a promising site for a monastic settlement, but such a place exactly as Columbanus and his companions desired. They wanted solitude, they loved labour, and they would have plenty of both. In a few years a marvellous change came over the scene. The woods were cleared, the lands were tilled, fields of waving corn rewarded the labour of the monks, and smiling vineyards gave them wine for the sick and for the holy Sacrifice. The noblest youths of the Franks begged to be admitted to the brotherhood, and gladly took their share in the daily round of prayer, penance, and ceaseless toil. They worked so long that they fell asleep from fatigue when walking home.[1] They slept so little that it was a new penance to tear themselves from the mats on which they lay. But the blessing of God was upon them; they grew in numbers, and in holiness, and in happiness, not the happiness of men who love this world, but the happiness of those who truly serve God,

But now a sore trial was nigh. God wished to purify his servants by suffering, and to extend to other lands the sphere of their usefulness. The first trial came from the secular clergy. Those Irish monks were men of virtue and austerity, but they were also in many respects very peculiar. They had a liturgy of their own somewhat different from that in use around them; they had a queer tonsure, like Simon Magus, it was said, in front from ear to ear, instead of the orthodox and customary crown. Worst of all, it sometimes happened that they celebrated Easter on Palm Sunday, so that they were singing their alleluias when all the churches of the Franks were in the mourning of Passion time. Remonstrance was useless; they adhered tenaciously to their country's usages. Nothing could convince them that what St. Patrick and the saints of Ireland had handed down to them could by any possibility be wrong. They only wanted to be let alone. They did not desire to impose their usages on others. Why should others impose their usages on them? They had a right to be allowed to live in peace in their wilderness, for they injured no man, and they prayed for all. Thus it was that Columbanus reasoned, or rather remon-

[1] It is said that Columban when working at the spade wore leather gloves through reverence for the Holy Sacrifice which he used to offer.

strated, with a synod of French bishops that objected to his practices. His letters to them and to Pope Gregory the Great on the subject of this Paschal question are still extant, but he cannot be justified in some of the expressions which he uses. He tells the bishops in effect in one place that they would be better employed in enforcing canonical discipline amongst their own clergy, than in discussing the Paschal question with him and his monks. Yet here and there he speaks not only with force and freedom, but also with true humility and genuine eloquence. He implores the prelates in the most solemn language to let him and his brethren live in peace and charity in the heart of their silent woods, beside the bones of their seventeen brothers who were dead, "Surely it is better for you," he says, "to comfort than to disturb us, poor old men, strangers, too, in your midst. Let us rather love one another in the charity of Christ, striving to fulfil his precepts, and thereby secure a place in the assembly of the just made perfect in heaven."

Language of this character, used, too, in justification of practices harmless in themselves, but not in accordance with the prevalent discipline of the Church at the time, was by no means well calculated to beget affection towards the strangers in the minds of the Frankish clergy. Other troubles, too, soon arose. The young king of Austrasia, Thierry, encouraged by Brunehaut, his infamous grand-mother, repudiated his lawful wife and gave himself up to the most scandalous debauchery. Columbanus admonished, remonstrated, rebuked in vain. Finding his efforts fruitless, he denied the guilty pair admission to his monastery, and thereupon they resolved to expel him and his monks from the kingdom.

For the time, however, he was only made a prisoner, and conducted to Besançon, where he was kept under surveillance, until one day, looking with longing to his beloved Luxeuil, and seeing no one at hand to prevent him, he descended the steep cliff which overhangs the river Doubs, and returned to his monastery. When the king heard of his return, he sent imperative orders to have him and all his companions from Ireland and Britain forcibly removed from the monastery, and conveyed home to their own country. The soldiers presented themselves at Luxeuil when the holy man was in the choir with his monks. They told him their orders, and begged him to come voluntarily with them—they were unwilling to resort to force. At first he refused; but lest the soldiers might be punished for not resorting to that violence which they were unwilling to make use of, he finally

yielded. He called his Irish brethren around them: "Let us go," he said, "my brothers, in the name of God." It was hard to leave the scene of their labours, their sorrows, and their joys; hard to leave behind them the graves of the seventeen brethren with whom they had hoped to rest in peace. But go they must; the soldiers would not for a moment leave them. It was a brief and sad leave-taking. Wails of sorrow were heard everywhere for the loss of their beloved father; brother was torn from brother, friend from friend, never to meet again in this world. Thus it was that Columbanus and his Irish companions left that dear monastery of Luxeuil, and were conducted by the soldiers to Nevers. There, still guarded by the soldiers, they embarked in a boat that conveyed them down the Loire to its mouth, where they would find a ship to convey them back again to Ireland.

But it was not the will of Providence that Columbanus and his companions, when driven from Luxeuil, should return to Ireland: other work was before them to do. Accordingly, when they came to the mouth of the Loire, their baggage, such as it was, was put on board, and most of the monks embarked. But the sea rose mountains high, and the ship[1] which Columbanus intended to rejoin when under weigh, was forced to return to port. A three days' calm succeeded, and the captain, apprehensive of a new storm, caused the monks and their baggage to be put on shore, for he feared to take them with him. Thus left to themselves, Columbanus and his companions went to Soissons to Clotaire, King of Neustria, by whom they were received with every kindness and hospitality. The king cordially hated Brunehaut and her grandson—his mother, Fredegonda, had murdered Brunehaut's sister—and he was anxious to keep Columbanus in his own kingdom, but the latter would not stay. He pushed on, with his companions, to Metz, the capital of Austrasia, where Theodebert, the brother of Thierry, then reigned. Here he was joined by several of his old monks from Luxeuil, who preferred to follow their father in his wanderings, to remaining behind in the kingdom of his persecutor.

Columbanus now resolved to preach the Gospel to the pagan populations on the right bank of the Rhine and its tributary streams. So embarking at Mayence, after many toils and dangers, they came as far as Lake Zurich in Switzerland, and finally established themselves at Bregenz, on the Lake of Constance, where they fixed their headquarters. The tribes inhabiting these wild and beautiful regions—the Suevi and Alemanni—were idolaters, though

[1] It was a ship—"quae Scotorum commercia vexerat"—trading between Gaul and Ireland.—*Vita.* c. 22.

nominal subjects of the Austrasian kingdom. Woden was their God, and they worshipped him with dark mysterious rites, under the shadow of sacred oaks, far in the depths of the forest. Discretion was not a gift of Columbanus, so he not only preached the Gospel amongst them, but axe in hand, he had the courage to cut down their sacred trees; he burned their rude temples, and cast their fantastic idols into the lake. It was not wise; the people became enraged, and the missionaries were forced to fly. After struggling for three years to convert this savage people, Columbanus, perceiving that the work was not destined to be accomplished by him, crossed the snow-covered Alps by the pass of St. Gothard, though now more than seventy years of age,[1] and after incredible toil, succeeded, with a few of his old companions, in making his way to the Court of the Lombard King, Agilulph, whose Queen was Theodelinda, famous for beauty, for genius, and for virtue.

At this time the Lombards were Arians, and Agilulph himself was an Arian, although Queen Theodolinda was a devout Catholic. Mainly, we may assume, through her influence the Arian monarch received the broken down old man and his companions with the utmost kindness, and Columbanus had an ample field for the exercise of his missionary zeal amongst the rude half-Christian population. But first of all it was necessary to have a permanent home—and nowhere could he find rest except in solitude. Just at this time[2] a certain Jucundus reminded the King that there was at a place called Bobbio a ruined church once dedicated to St. Peter; that the place round about was fertile and well watered with streams, abounding in every kind of fish. It was near the Trebbia, almost at the very spot where Hannibal first felt the rigours of that fierce winter in the snows of the Appenines, so graphically described by Livy. The king gladly gave the place to Columbanus, and the energetic old man set about repairing the ruined church and building his monastery with all that unquenchable ardour that cleared the forests of Luxeuil, and crossed the snows of the Alps. His labours were regarded by his followers as miraculous. The fir trees, cut down in the valleys of the Appenines, which his monks were unable to carry down the steep and rugged ways, when the old man himself came and took a share of the burden, were found to

[1] According to others he was nearly ninety.

[2] Some writers assert that Bobbio had been founded many years previously, and that this was the second journey of Columban into Lombardy. We follow old Jonas.

be no weight. So, speedily and joyfully, with the visible aid of heaven, they completed the task, and built in the valley of the Appenines a monastery, whose name will never be forgotten by saints or scholars.

The holy old man lived but one year after he had founded Bobbio. His merits were full; the work of his life was complete; he had given his Rule to the new house; he left behind him some of his old companions to complete his work, and now he was ready to die. To the great grief of the brotherhood, Columbanus passed away to his reward on the eleventh day before the Kalends of December, in the year A.D. 615, probably in the seventy-third year of his age. He was buried beneath the high altar, and long afterwards the holy remains were enclosed in a stone coffin, and are still preserved in the crypt of the old monastic Church of Bobbio.

It is not too much to say that Ireland never sent a greater son than Columbanus to do the work of God in foreign lands. He brought forth much fruit and his fruit has remained. For centuries his influence was dominant in France and in Northern Italy, and even in our own days, his spirit speaketh from his urn. His deeds have been described by many eloquent tongues and pens, and his writings have been carefully studied to ascertain the secret of his extraordinary influence over his own and subsequent ages. His character was not indeed faultless, but he was consumed with a restless untiring zeal in the service of his Master, which was at once the secret of his power and the source of his mistakes. He was too ardent in character, and almost too zealous in the cause of God. In this respect he is not unlike St. Jerome, but we forget their faults in our admiration for their virtues and their labours. A man more holy, more chaste, more self-denying, a man with loftier aims and purer heart than Columbanus, was never born in the Island of Saints.

The writings of Columbanus still extant are—a Monastic Rule, a Penitential Treatise, sixteen short Sermons or Instructions, six Letters, and a few Latin Poems.[1]

The *Regula Coenobialis* or Monastic Rule is divided into ten short chapters which treat of the fundamental virtues of the monastic life. It is especially valuable in so far as it affords points of comparison and contact with the more complete and systematic Rule of St. Benedict. In some things it is exceedingly rigorous and very minute in the penances which

[1] See Migne's *Patrologia* vol. lxxx., page 210.

it imposes, even on the most venial and semi-deliberate faults. The first six chapters are devoted to the essential virtues of the monastic state—obedience, silence, self-denial in the use of meat and drink, poverty and chastity. The maxim—*cibus monachorum sit vilis et vespertinus*—seems to allow the poor monks only one plain meal in the day, and that after vespers. He inculcates also a daily fast, daily prayer, daily labour, and daily reading [1]—thus including in one sentence the whole routine of monastic life. The *Liber de Paenitentiarum Mensura Taxanda* is equally rigorous and minute in prescribing penances proportionate to the guilt of the sinner. In those days when there were no elaborate scientific treatises on moral theology, it was very useful to have a work of this kind which apportioned its own penance to almost every class of sin. The confessor, or soul's friend, was thus enabled to form an estimate sufficient for most practical purposes of the magnitude of the crimes from the amount of the penance. To fast for a number of days, weeks, or even years, on bread and water, was the stern penance imposed on the sinner, according to the measure of his guilt, by the rigid directors of the early Irish Church. Drunkenness was punished with a comparatively light penance—only a week on bread and water. That same would be even now of great service if it were rigorously enforced.

The *Sermons* have nothing specially characteristic to recommend them. They are, however, brief and to the point, which is more than can be said of many volumes of more modern discourses.

The *Six Letters* are perhaps the most valuable of the literary remains of Columbanus, because they reflect most clearly the character of the man and the genius of the Celt. We have already spoken of his letters to Pope Gregory the Great, and to Pope Boniface. Whilst full of respect for the Holy See they exhibit an uncompromising spirit of resolute independence and conscious integrity. The letter on the Paschal question to a certain synod of French Bishops is written in the same spirit, and reminds the Gallican prelates of some unpleasant truths, which they must have regarded as a very great impertinence coming from a mere Irish monk, who had uninvited taken up his quarters in the hospitable land of France.

The Latin poems show considerable acquaintance with the language, and are especially valuable as exhibiting the

[1] "Ergo quotidie jejunandum est, sicut quotidie orandum est, quotidie laborandum, quotidie est legendum."

classical culture of our Irish schools in the sixth century. Most of them are in hexameter verse, but contain few classical allusions. The prosody is sometimes faulty; but on the whole it is perhaps better than the pupils or even the professors of our colleges would produce at present if called upon at short notice.

The shorter Adonic verses are simply marvels of ingenuity, and it shows great familiarity with the Latin language to be able to write an entire letter of about 150 lines in this metre.

The two most celebrated literary monuments of St. Columbanus and the School of Bangor that have come down to our time are the *Bobbio Missal,* and the *Antiphonary of Bangor,* both of which are at present preserved in the Ambrosian Library at Milan.

The Missal which was brought from Bobbio to Milan by Cardinal Frederic Borromeo is undoubtedly of Irish origin, and was probably brought from Bangor by St. Columbanus himself, or by some one of the Irish monks who accompanied him. We shall not here repeat the critical arguments used by scholars to prove that it was brought from Ireland in the sixth or seventh century. The fact, indeed, is no longer questioned. This Missal is particularly interesting, because it gives us so early a specimen of the liturgy in use in our Irish Church. The *Missa Cotidiana* of this Bangor Missal has practically the same Canon as that now found in the Roman Missal, and used throughout the entire world. There is greater variety in the prayers, and our Celtic forefathers were fond of inserting a greater number of them in the Mass after the *Gloria in Excelsis.* They were inclined too to canonize their own local saints, and even sometimes inserted their names in the Litanies and in the Canon of Mass without any authority but their own devotion. This led not only to variety in the public liturgy but sometimes to other grave abuses, which were not eradicated until the time of St. Malachy and other great reformers of Church discipline in the twelfth century.

Now that we have the Stowe Missal accessible to scholars in the Royal Irish Academy, we may hope for a minute and careful comparison of these two ancient books, in order to trace the beginnings of these discrepancies in the liturgy which were first introduced into Ireland by the Second Order of Saints, and afterwards led to so much inconvenience.

The Stowe Missal, which is so called, we presume, because it was kept so long locked up in the Duke of Buckingham's

Stowe Library, is considered to have belonged to the ancient Monastery of Lorrha, in Lower Ormond, Tipperary. Dr McCarthy, a very competent judge, thinks it represents the ancient Patrician liturgy used by the First Order of the Saints of Erin, whilst Bangor may be supposed to have the Mass in its Missal derived from Wales, or more likely from Candida Casa.[1] The question is a very intricate one, and full of interest, but cannot be discussed at length in these pages.

The *Antiphonarium Benchorense*, or Bangor Hymnal, is a collection of ancient hymns in the Latin language, which were in common use in the ancient Church of Ireland. Many of them are contained in the *Book of Hymns* edited by Todd, to which we have already referred so often. Some of them were in general use throughout the Latin Church, or at least in the early Gallican Church, like the Hymn of St. Hilary. But others seem to have been peculiar to Bangor, and hence have a special interest for us at present. Such was the *Hymnus Sancti Comgilli Abbatis Nostri;* also the *Hymnus Sancti Camelaci*, and another entitled *Memoria Abbatum Nostrorum*, which has considerable historical interest, inasmuch as it gives a metrical list of the abbots of Bangor down to the time of the writer. These poems, and also the *Missa Cotidiana* of the Bobbio Missal may be seen in the second volume of Father O'Laverty's excellent *History of the Diocese of Down and Connor.*

There is nothing specially interesting in subsequent history of the School of Bangor down to the time of St. Malachy. It was totally destroyed by the Danes, although a nominal succession of abbots was still kept up, whose names are sometimes mentioned in our annals.

III.—Dungal.

Dungal, however, after Columbanus was, perhaps, the greatest glory of the School of Bangor. This distinguished theologian, astronomer, and poet, was one of the Irish exiles of the ninth century who were so highly honoured in the Court of France. His name is not widely known to fame; yet few men of his time held so high a place in the estimation of his contemporaries, or rendered more signal service to the Church. The controversy concerning image worship was carried on with great warmth in the Frankish Empire during the first quarter of the ninth century, and in this contest Dungal was the foremost champion of orthodoxy. He gave the *coup de grace* to the Western Iconoclasts; after his vigorous refutation of Claudius of Turin, they troubled

[1] It appears to us more likely that the Bangor Missal has the Patrician liturgy; and that the Mass in the Stowe Missal is of Welsh origin.—See *Irish Eccl. Record*, Jan., 1891.

the Church no more. It is well, therefore, to know something of his history.

That Dungal was an Irishman is now universally admitted. The name itself is conclusive evidence of his nationality. It was quite a common name in Ireland, and seems to have been peculiarly Irish. We know of no foreigner who was called "Dungal;" but we find from the index volume of the *Four Masters*, that between the years A.D. 744 and 1015 twenty-two distinguished Irishmen bore that name.

In a poem which he composed in honour of his friend and patron, Charlemagne, Dungal calls himself an Irish exile—*Hibernicus exul.* There can hardly be a doubt that he was the author of this beautiful poem to which we shall refer further on. At the close of his life he retired to the Irish monastery of Bobbio, in the north of Italy, founded by Columbanus, to which he left all his books, as we know from Muratori's published list. One of them, according to the opinion of Muratori, was the famous *Antiphonary of Bangor*, which Dungal brought from that great school at home, and fittingly restored to Irish hands at his death.

Yet unfortunately we cannot fix the place or date of his birth in Ireland, although the possession of the *Bangor Antiphonary* leaves little room to doubt that he was educated in the monastic school of St. Comgall. Not a cross, nor even a stone, now remains to mark the site of the famous monastery whose crowded cloisters for a thousand years overlooked the pleasant islets and broad waters of Inver Becne;[1] but the fame of the great school which nurtured Columbanus and Gall, and Dungal and Malachy can never die.

In all probability Dungal left his native country in the opening years of the ninth century. Two causes most likely induced him to leave Ireland, the fame of Charlemagne, as a patron of learned men, and the threatened incursion of the Danes, who were just then beginning their long career of pillage and slaughter in Ireland.

However, in A.D. 811, we find Dungal in France. In that year he addressed a remarkable letter to Charlemagne on the two solar eclipses which were said to have taken place in the previous year, A.D. 810. He is described at this time as a *recluse*, that is, one who led a monastic life in solitude;

[1] Inver Becne was the ancient name of Bangor Bay; the islands near the shore, in one of which is an ancient graveyard, are now called the Copeland Islands—the name of the foreigner who enjoyed the lands of Bangor Abbey. Dr. M'Cormick, the last Abbot of Bangor, died in Maynooth, and is buried in Larahbrine.—See Laverty's *Down and Connor.*

he seems, however, to have had some connection with the community of St. Denis, for he evidently recognised the Abbot Waldo as his superior. From the tone of this letter we can also infer that the Great Charles honoured the Irish monk with his intimacy and confidence, and the monarch seems to have the highest opinion of Dungal's learning. He accordingly requested the Abbot Waldo to ask the Irish monk to write an explanation of the two solar eclipses, which are said to have happened in A.D. 810. It is well known that Charles took a great interest in the advancement of knowledge, and was himself a diligent student. Hence he was anxious to understand that portion of divine philosophy, of which Virgil sang—

"Defectus solis varios lunaeque labores."

Moreover, although there certainly was a solar eclipse on the 30th of November, A.D. 810, visible in Europe, it was alleged by many persons that there had been another eclipse in the same year on the 7th of June, if not visible in Europe, yet certainly visible in other parts of the world. This last point especially seems to have staggered the scientific faith of the royal scholar, and hence he appealed to his friend Dungal for an explanation.

The letter of Dungal in reply is exceedingly interesting. It is addressed to Charles, and is entitled, "Dungali Reclusi Epistola de duplici solis eclipsi, anno 810 ad Carolum Magnum." We have read it over carefully. It is written in excellent Latin, and shows that the writer was intimately acquainted with many of the classical authors, especially with Virgil and Cicero. But we cannot guarantee its scientific accuracy in all points. He starts with an explanation of the celestial sphere according to the Ptolemaic system, and hence some of his statements seem very strange to those acquainted with the Copernican theory only of the heavenly bodies. In the main, however, his explanation of the eclipses of the sun and moon is accurate enough.[1] "The Zodiac," he says,

[1] Quantum igitur spatii lata dimensio (Zodiaci) porrectis sideribus occupat, duabus lineis limitatum est, et tertia ducta per medium ecliptica vocatur, quia cum cursum suum in eadem linea pariter sol et luna conficiunt, alterius eorum necesse est evenire defectum; solis si ei tunc luna succedat, lunae si tunc adversa sit soli. Ideo nec sol unquam deficit nisi cum tricesimus lunae dies est; et nisi quinto decimo cursus sui die, nescit luna defectum; sic enim evenit ut aut lunae contra solem positae, ad mutuandum ab eo solidum lumen, sub eadem lineae inventus terrae conus obstat, aut soli ipsa succedens, objectu suo ab humano aspectu lumen ejus repellat. In defectu autem sol ipse nihil patitur . . . luna vero circa proprium defectum laborat non accipiendo solis lumen cujus beneficio noctem colorat.—*Migne's Patrol.*, No. 105, page 454.

"or space through which the planets revolve, is bounded by two lines," which he takes care to explain are imaginary. "A third line drawn between them is called the ecliptic, because when the sun and moon during their revolution happen to be in the same straight line in the plane of this ecliptic, an eclipse of one or the other must of necessity take place; of the sun, if the moon overtake it in its course—*ei succedat;* of the moon, if at the time it should be opposite to the sun. Wherefore," he adds, "the sun is never eclipsed except the moon is in its thirtieth day; and in like manner the moon is never eclipsed except near its fifteenth day. For only then it comes to pass that the moon, when it is full, being in a straight line with the earth opposite to the sun receives the shadow of the earth; while in the other case, when the moon overtakes the sun (is in conjunction), by its interposition it deprives the earth of the sun's light. Therefore when the sun is eclipsed, the sun itself suffers nothing, only we are robbed of its light; but the moon suffers a real loss by not receiving the sun's light through which it is enabled to dispel our darkness." We think it would require an intermediate exhibitioner to give as lucid an exposition of the cause of the eclipse as was given by this Irish monk of the ninth century, and we are quite certain he would not write it in as good Latin.

As for determining the exact dates of the eclipses of the sun, and, therefore, the possibility of having two in the year A.D. 810, Dungal cannot undertake to compute them, not having near him Pliny the Younger, and some other necessary works. However, the thing is quite feasible, and many ancient philosophers knew and foreknew—*scierunt et praescierunt*—all about these eclipses. He concludes his letter with an elegantly written eulogy of Charles the Great, imploring all Christians to join with him in beseeching God to multiply the triumphs of Charles, to extend his empire, preserve his family, and prolong his life for many circling years. The language in the original is exceedingly well chosen and harmonious.

After this time we lose sight of Dungal for several years. Charlemagne died in A.D. 814, and was succeeded by his son Louis the Pious, and on the 31st of July, A.D. 817, Louis associated with himself his son Lothaire in the Imperial Government. Lothaire, young and energetic, was crowned King of Lombardy in A.D. 821, and next year proceeded to put his kingdom in order. The warlike Lombards, though conquered by Charlemagne, and kept in restraint by his

strong arm, were a restless and turbulent people. Lothaire, believing that education and religion would be the most efficacious means to keep them in order, and consolidate his own power, induced Dungal and Claudius of Turin, as well as several other scholars of the Imperial Court, or the famous Palace School, to accompany him to Italy. Claudius, a Spaniard, of whom we shall have more to say again, was made Bishop of Turin; and Dungal opened a school at Pavia. In a short time it became famous; for the master was the first scholar in the Court of the Emperor. Students flocked from every quarter—from Milan, Brescia, Lodi, Bergamo, Novara, Vercelli, Tortona, Acqui, Genoa, Asti, and Como.[1] This was about A.D. 822, the very year, or as others say, the year after Claudius became Bishop of Turin. About the same time Lothaire himself went on to Rome, where he was crowned emperor by the Pope, Pascal I., with great solemnity in A.D. 823.

Dungal and Claudius were thus immediate neighbours. Both were ripe scholars, both held high and responsible positions; but Claudius, who had long held erroneous doctrines, now thought it safe to throw off the disguise. The wolf showed himself, and at once the Irish wolf dog sprang upon his foe. In order to understand this struggle, which was the last effort of Western Iconoclasm, we must go back a little and trace the chain of events which led up to the crisis.

The Seventh Æcumenical Council, and Second of Nice, was concluded at that city in A.D. 787. This Council, accepting the teaching propounded by Pope Hadrian I. in his letter to the Empress Irene, and her son Constantine, explained and defined the Catholic doctrine concerning the worship of images. It was distinctly declared that supreme worship was due to God alone; but that an inferior worship should be rendered to the Blessed Virgin and the saints; and, finally, that a relative worship was due not only to the sign of the Cross, but also to the pictures and images of the Blessed Virgin, of the angels, and of the saints of God. This relative worship was not, however, paid to the images on account of *their own* supernatural excellence; it was only a token of the love and honour which Christians have for the originals represented by the images.

[1] See Lothaire's Capitular, *De Doctrina*, published by Muratori. "Primum in Papia conveniunt ad Dungalum de Mediolano, de Brixia, etc., etc." So that Dungal may be justly regarded as the founder of the University of Pavia.

The acts of this famous Synod were, of course, in Greek, so Pope Hadrian had them translated into Latin, and sent a copy to Charlemagne, apparently in A.D. 789 or 790.

Unfortunately the Latin version was very faulty in many respects. Anastasius, the Roman Librarian, a most learned scholar and competent authority, declares that the translator knew very little of the genius either of the Greek or Latin language; that he made a word-for-word translation, from which it was frequently impossible to ascertain the real meaning; and hence, in his time, about sixty years later, few persons were found to read or transcribe this faulty copy. So Anastasius himself found it necessary to make a new and correct translation. The French theologians, therefore, at whose head was the keen-eyed Alcuin, found in this translation many things to censure, in which they were right, and many other things they censured in which they were clearly wrong. The result of their labours is known to history as the famous Caroline Books—*Libri Carolini*. They were published under the name of Charles himself, but Alcuin is generally regarded as the real author.[1]

The emperor was so pleased with his work that he resolved to send this treatise to the Pope himself. Meantime, however, he convened the Synod of Frankfort in A.D. 794, at which some three hundred Bishops of the Frankish Empire are said to have assembled.[2] Here, again, the great monarch, following the example, but scarcely imitating the modesty of Constantine at Nice in A.D. 325, presided in person, and resolved to prove himself a theologian. The Synod met in the great hall of the Imperial Palace. The emperor was on his throne; the bishops were seated round in a circle; an immense throng of priests, deacons, and clerics filled the hall. Rising up from his seat Charles advanced, and standing on the step of the throne pronounced an elaborate harangue, mainly on the heresy of the Adoptionists, but referring also to the errors of the last Greek Synod regarding image worship, and he called upon the prelates present to judge and decide what was the true faith.

The Council did so, at least in their own opinion, after ten days' discussion. They very properly condemned the heresy of the Adoptionists, and the condemnation was approved in Rome; but in the Second Canon they very improperly censured the Second Council of Nice, as if it

[1] The authenticity of these famous Caroline Books can no longer be questioned.

[2] The real number is unknown. See Hefélé, vol. v., p. 102.

declared that the same worship and adoration were due to the images of the saints, as are paid to the Holy Trinity. Of course the Council of Nice in their authentic acts had declared exactly the reverse. Moreover, the prelates of Frankfort added that they would give neither *servitus* nor *adoratio* to the images of the saints; and, no doubt, they were right in the sense in which they used these terms.

It seems probable that the Caroline Books, written about A.D. 790 or 791, were approved of in this assembly before they were sent to the Pope. But when Hadrian received them he very promptly and effectively refuted them. To each censure of the Council of Nice he gave an elaborate answer, in which the Pope convicts the authors of the Caroline Books, from the extracts sent to him, of grave errors in doctrine, as well as of misquotations and misrepresentations of the Fathers. He shows that they did not understand the true meaning of the Sacred Scriptures in those passages which they cited, that they attributed to the Nicene Fathers errors which they never taught, and that it was the Pope, not the French bishops, who had received authority to teach the Universal Church.

The authors of the Caroline Books richly deserved this castigation. They went so far as to declare that the Synod of A.D. 754, which ordered images to be broken, as well as the Synod of A.D. 787, which commanded them to be worshipped, were *infamae* and *ineptissimae*. God alone is, according to them, to be *adored* and *worshipped*, and the saints may be *venerated;* but no kind of adoration or veneration may be paid to the images of the saints, because they are lifeless, and made by the hands of men. It is evident the Frankish theologians did not understand what is meant by relative worship. They admit, however, that the images of the saints may be retained for adorning churches, and also as memorials of the past; but it is not lawful to worship them even by such veneration as is paid to men, *salutationis causâ*. Such is the substance of the doctrine put forward by the authors of the Caroline Books.[1] Pope Hadrian died on Christmas Day A.D. 795, and the controversy concerning image worship seems to have been lulled for some years in the West. It broke out again, however, with greater warmth in A.D. 824. In the month of November of that year an Embassy arrived at Rouen, where Lothaire was

[1] Hefélé clearly proves that the eighty-five Capitula sent to the Pope were not exactly the same as they are in the *Libri Carolini* which we have. But there was no substantial difference between them.

then holding his court, bearing letters and presents from the Greek emperor, Michael the Stammerer, to his western brother.

Michael was an Iconoclast, but not an extreme one; and wrote a very plausible letter, in which he complains of the superstitious excesses of the image-worshippers at Constantinople. He represents himself as the friend of peace and harmony, anxious to repress the excesses of both the extreme parties; and he beseeches his brother Lothaire to lend him his aid, especially by his influence with the Pontiff of the old Rome, to whom he sends several presents with a view to gain his good will and co-operation for the same laudable purpose. Lothaire, ignorant of the real facts of the case, and misled by this most deceptive document, promised his assistance to the Greek ambassadors in Rome, and resolved to aid in the good work of reconciling the extreme parties in the East. He wrote to Pope Eugenius II. to that effect, and asked his permission to appoint a conference of the prelates of his empire, with a view to sift the question thoroughly. The Pope seems to have consented to this course; and the conference met at Paris on the 1st of November, A.D. 825.

These gentlemen issued a most elaborate production addressed to the emperor, by him to be forwarded to the Pope. They begin by attacking the letter of Hadrian to Constantine and Irene, in which letter, as they allege, he ordered images to be superstitiously adored—*quod superstitiose eas adorari jussit.* In support of his doctrine he cited the Fathers, but according to them it was *valde absona* what he cited, and *ad rem non pertinentia.*

Then they attack the Second Council of Nice which gravely erred by ordering images to be worshipped, as the Great Charles had clearly proved in the books sent to Rome by the Abbot Angilbert. And Hadrian, too, in his answer to this treatise, when defending the Synod, wrote what he liked, not what he ought—quae *voluit*, non tamen quae *debuit.*

This was not enough for this Paris Conference; they had the assurance to dictate to the Pope what he was to write in reply to the Greek emperor; and to Lothaire himself they recommended what he ought to write to the Pope. On the point of doctrine they declare that nothing made by the hands of man is to be adored or worshipped; and to prove their position they quote St. Augustine, who, according to them, says that image worship had its origin with Simon Magus, and a *meretricula* called Helen!

When the Emperor Lothaire received these precious documents from the two prelates, Halitgar and Amalarius, deputed to present them, and ascertained their contents, he told them, as might be expected from a sensible man, that the letter to the Pope especially contained some things that were superfluous and more that were impertinent. He therefore commissioned Jeremias of Sens, and Jonas of Orleans, to make extracts from the report which would be more to the point and less likely to give offence in Rome; telling them, at the same time, to show every respect to the Pope, as they were bound to do; that although much might be gained by deference, nothing could be effected by exasperating the Pontiff. If, he adds, the *pertinacia Romana* will make no concessions, but the Pope is prepared to send an embassy to Constantinople, then let them try at least to induce him to allow the emperor also to send an embassy in conjunction with that of the Pope.

The emperor himself wrote a respectful and plausible letter to the Pope, urging upon him to send ambassadors to the Greek court, adding that he might send with them the two bishops who bore the report of the Paris Conference to His Holiness; and that thus he might be instrumental in restoring peace to the distracted Churches of the East.

Things were at this pass when Dungal appears upon the scene. The prelates of France were, many of them at least, not quite sound on the question of image worship; but Claudius of Turin, just about this time, brought things to a crisis.

This Claudius was a Spaniard, educated in his youth by Felix, Bishop of Urgel, in Spain, one of the leaders of the Adoptionist heretics. The mind of Claudius was infected with this as well as several other errors; but especially with the most extreme form of Iconoclasm.

Like Dungal, he seems to have been in high favour at court; but he kept his errors at that time to himself, at least in their extreme form. When appointed to the See of Turin he threw off the mask. On his first or second visitation he removed the crosses from his cathedral, he broke the images of the saints, and the holy pictures on the walls; he declaimed from the pulpit even against the worship of the saints themselves, or their relics in any shape or form; and finally, heartily denounced the pilgrimage to Rome, which even then was customary with the faithful, as unnecessary and superstitious.

These rash and violent proceedings gave great scandal to

the faithful of the diocese. They were divided into two factions; for the bishop had numerous partisans of his own, but they were in a minority; and on one occasion the prelate very narrowly escaped being torn to pieces by the mob. The wily Claudius, however, by his representations to the emperor, in which he threw all the blame on the turbulence of the superstitious Lombards, succeeded in maintaining his ground.

About A.D. 824 a friend of his, the pious Abbot Theodemir, wrote a remonstrance to Claudius on his proceedings, in which he adjured him, by the memory of their former friendship, to discontinue these odious proceedings, reminding him how unworthy it was of a Christian bishop to dishonour the Saints of God, to insult the Cross of Christ, and break the images of His saints and martyrs.

This gentle remonstrance only made the Iconoclast more furious. He wrote a reply to the holy abbot, a considerable portion of which has come down to us, and shows Claudius in his true colours.

It is entitled—"Apologeticum atque Rescriptum Claudii Episcopi adversus Theutmirum Abbatem."

It was this work brought out Dungal. He had hitherto been much pained at the proceedings of Claudius; for being then in Pavia he could scarcely be ignorant of what took place in Turin. Most of the French prelates, however, themselves more or less infected with unsound doctrine, held aloof; and even Agobard of Lyons wrote in favour of Claudius, so Dungal, although probably only a deacon, if, indeed, at all in holy orders, felt it his duty to come forward as the champion of the truth. He got his teaching not in France or Germany, but in Ireland; so he was not tainted with the errors of the Frankish theologians.

Dungal's treatise against Claudius is entitled: "Dungali Responsa contra Perversas Claudii Taurinensis Episcopi Sententias."

In the prologue of the book Dungal declares that for God's honour, and with the sanction of Louis and his son Lothaire, he undertakes to defend, on the authority of the Holy Fathers, the Catholic doctrine against the frantic and blasphemous trifling of Claudius, Bishop of Turin. Many times since his arrival in Italy he had just cause to complain, whilst he saw the field of the Lord oversown with tares, yet he held his peace in grief and pain. He can, however, do so no longer, when he sees the Church distracted, and the people seduced by deceivers. He first sets forth very clearly the points at

issue between the rival parties, and then proceeds to refute Claudius, and prove the Catholic doctrine, observing at the outset that it was astonishing insolence for any man to presume to "censure and blaspheme that doctrine and practice which for 820 years or more was followed by the blessed Fathers, by most religious princes, and by all Christian households up to the present time."

After proving that these practices were not only not forbidden, but sanctioned by God Himself in the Pentateuch, he goes on to establish this tradition of the Catholic Church, quoting most of the Greek and Latin fathers, the poems of Paulinus, Prudentius, and Fortunatus, the Acts of the Martyrs and the Liturgy of the Church. He quotes, moreover, the Apocalypse, the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, at great length, to prove the same doctrine, and alleges that it was the universal belief and practice in the East and in the West from the days of the Apostles down to his own time. The Greeks lately erred; but their errors were retracted and condemned.

It is impossible not to admire the great knowledge of Sacred Scripture and Patristic literature displayed by the author. He reasons, too, clearly and cogently; and writes in a limpid and flowing style. Indeed, we know no writer of that age who excels Dungal in Latin composition, whether in poetry or prose; and this is generally admitted by those acquainted with the Latin literature of the period. Muratori observes that this work shows that Dungal was a man of wide culture.[1] This is high testimony from such an authority. Papirius Massonus, in his address to the prelates and clergy of Gaul prefixed to the treatise of Dungal, calls him an excellent theologian—*Theologus excellens*—and Alzog declares that the sophistical reasoning of Claudius, Bishop of Turin, was refuted by Jonas, Bishop of Orleans, but much *more ably* by Dungal, an Irish monk of St. Denys, and subsequently by Strabo and Hincmar of Rheims.

Dungal's was not only the ablest, but also the first work that was written on the subject; for in it he alludes to the Synod or Conference of Paris in A.D. 825, as held two years before. So it must have appeared in A.D. 827, long before the refutations published by Jonas, Eginhard, Strabo, or Hincmar. Henceforward Iconoclasm began to lose ground in the West; and soon entirely disappeared, until revived in the sixteenth century.

[1] Sacris etiam literis ornatum, et simul in grammaticali foro ac Prisciani deliciis enutritum, ut facile legenti constabit.—See Lanigan, vol. iii., ch. 20.

As was observed before, towards the close of his life, Dungal retired to the monastery of Bobbio, to which he bequeathed his books. From Bobbio they were transferred to Milan, in A.D. 1606, by Cardinal Frederic Borromeo, and are now in the Ambrosian Library of that city. Among them were three Antiphonaries, one of which seems to have been the famous Bangor Antiphonary. Dungal, no doubt, procured these ancient rituals in order to quote them against Claudius in support of the Catholic doctrine. He appropriately dedicated the work to his countryman St. Columbanus.[1]

Columba, as Lanigan observes, was the real name of Columbanus, the founder of Bobbio, and in all probability, when Dungal calls himself an *incola* of the saint, he rather means fellow-countryman, than inmate of his monastery.[2]

We cannot stay to criticise the poetry of Dungal. His best poem is an elaborate eulogy on Charlemagne, written in hexameter. Some critics have questioned if Dungal were the author; the style, however, even of the opening lines of the poem, compared with the first lines of the epitaph which he wrote on himself leaves no doubt that the "Irish Exile" was Dungal. The smaller poems that survive, are written in elegiac metre, and display considerable taste, although not much imagination.

There is every reason to think that Dungal, who died about the year A.D. 834, was buried in the crypts of Bobbio. He sleeps well with the friendly saints of Erin; and we earnestly join in his own humble prayer, that he may live for ever with those saints in heaven, even as their dust has long commingled in their far-off graves under the shadows of the Appenines.[3]

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[1] Muratori adds, that in one of the MSS. are inscribed these words:—

"Sancte Columba tibi Scotto tuus incola Dungal
Tradidit hunc librum, quo fratrum corda beentur.
Qui leges ergo Deus pretium sit muneris, oro."

[2] Some critics have doubted if Dungal, the recluse of St. Denys, who wrote the letter on the double eclipse of the sun, were the same as Dungal of Pavia. But there is not a shadow of proof offered in support of their theory; hence, to refute it is to fight with a shadow. The unusual name, the similarity of style, the testimony of the learned, the phrase ex quo (tempore) in hanc terram (Italiam) advenerim, all point to the identity of Dungal in Paris and in Italy.

[3] "Te precor Omnipotens quadrati conditor orbis,
Dungalus ut vigeat miles ubique tuus,
Sidereum ut valeat rite comprendere Olympum
Cum sanctis vitamque participare queat."

IV.—St. Malachy.

We cannot close the history of the School of Bangor without giving a sketch of the life of its greatest abbot, St. Malachy, who may, indeed, be regarded as its second founder. We refer to him here, not because he was a great scholar or a distinguished writer, but rather because the Abbot of Bangor was the great reformer of the Irish Church in the twelfth century—a man pre-eminent for the zeal, energy, and holiness of his apostolic career in the face of the greatest difficulties and dangers. He was, says the *Chronicon Scotorum*, the man who restored the Monastic and Canonical rules of the Church of Erin; and that sentence is really a summary of his whole life.

St. Malachy—in Irish Maelmeadhog—was born probably in the neighbourhood of Bangor or Armagh in the year A.D. 1095. The family name was O'Morgair, or O'Mongair, which it is said was afterwards changed into O'Dogherty. His father was a lay professor or lecturer in the School of Armagh; but his mother seems to have come from the neighbourhood of Bangor, of which her brother, the uncle of Malachy, was afterwards titular abbot or perhaps airchinnech. The boy was thus fortunate not only in having the advantages of a famous school and a learned father; but also in attaching himself as a personal friend and disciple to the great and holy Imar O'Hagan, who then lived as a recluse in Armagh. It was doubtless under his holy guidance that Malachy acquired that fund of solid virtue which he afterwards exhibited throughout his life.

In consequence of his eminent virtues whilst still very young, Malachy was promoted by Celsus of Armagh to deacon's orders; and shortly afterwards, before he had attained the then canonical age of thirty, he was ordained a priest by the same great prelate.

Wishing to perfect himself in sacred learning, and especially in the laws and discipline of the Church, St. Malachy next went to the great College of Lismore, which was at this period under the presidency of the venerable Malchus, Bishop of Waterford, and apparently also of Lismore. St. Bernard describes him as then an old man full of days and virtues, and richly endowed with divine wisdom. He was an Irishman by birth, but had been trained in the monastery of Winchester to a more accurate knowledge and observance of ecclesiastical discipline than were to be found at that time in Ireland. Under the influence and direction of this prelate

the School of Lismore became, perhaps, the first in Ireland,[1] and St. Malachy fully availed himself of its great advantages.

On his return from Lismore in A.D. 1125, he was at once appointed to the Abbacy of Bangor. His uncle, the lay or titular abbot, gave up to Malachy peaceable possession of the ruined monastery and its wide domains, and became himself an humble monk of the new community—yes, a new community—the abbey lands were there, and a nominal abbot who enjoyed the revenues, but no church, no school, no community.[2] The ancient home of the saints had become a wilderness, the stones of the sanctuary were scattered, no sacrifice was offered on its altars.

It was the work of the Danes, who made a more complete ruin of Bangor than of any monastery elsewhere; because it was on the sea-shore of that narrow channel between Down and Galloway, which was the highway of the pirates. St. Bernard says that it was reported that in one day they slew nine hundred monks at Bangor.

Malachy now took twelve brethren with him and began to build an oratory once more at Bangor. It was finished in a few days, for it was an humble building in the Irish style —opus Scoticum—constructed of planed boards, but closely and firmly put together. Cells for the monks were built around it, and thus Bangor again began to flourish.

Then Malachy most unwillingly was taken from his infant monastery and made Bishop of Connor, that is of the entire County Antrim. At this time things were in a dreadful state in Antrim. There is no reason to question the testimony of St. Bernard. He is an independent and impartial witness, who got his information from St. Malachy and the disciples, whom he had left at Clairvaux. No doubt St. Bernard is rhetorical in style, but he is definite in statement. The natives were indocile and immoral. They neglected to go to confession, contracted illegitimate marriages, paid no tithes or first fruits. There were few priests, and no preaching in the churches. Malachy girt up his loins for the work before him. He went amongst the people on foot, accompanied with a few disciples. He admonished, he instructed, he ordained priests, he preached the Gospel everywhere. He had to endure much, but in the end he succeeded. The face of the country was soon changed, the desert bloomed as a garden, and the people that were not the Lord's became once again the chosen people of God.

[1] St. Bernard says it was "nobilior inter caeteras regni illius."
[2] See St. Bernard's graphic account.

It was during these years that Malachy went to the south of Ireland on a visit to his friend Cormac Mac Carthy, King of Cashel, and there founded the monastery which St. Bernard calls monasterium Ibracense, on land given him by King Cormac for that purpose. St. Celsus, Archbishop of Armagh, had been driven by usurpers out of his See, and was now in the south of Ireland, at Ardpatrick, in the co. Limerick, over which, as heir of St. Patrick, he claimed certain rights. Feeling his end approaching, and knowing that St. Malachy was, of all others, best fitted to succeed him in the Chair of St. Patrick, he sent him his crozier as a token of his wish to have Malachy as his successor.

But Malachy was unwilling to be transferred to the primatial See, and not without good reason. First of all he wished the translation to be made in a canonical way by the bishops of the province with the sanction of Gilbert the Papal Legate. This, however, was soon accomplished, the temporal princes also giving their cordial adhesion to the proposal. Then Malachy consented on one condition, that when things were put in order in Armagh, he might be free once more to return to his own diocese and his beloved monastery of Bangor.

Malachy now found that he had even a more difficult and dangerous task to accomplish in Armagh than had awaited him in the County Antrim.

For more than two hundred years a family of usurpers had established themselves at Armagh, and held the land and See of Armagh, transmitting it from father to son, or grandson, in regular hereditary succession. Most of them were laymen and married men; but they paid regularly ordained prelates to perform all necessary episcopal functions, keeping for themselves the lands, the nomination to the churches, and even the titles of Bishops and Abbots of Armagh.

It has been said that some of these married men were regularly consecrated prelates duly recognised by the Irish Church. There is nót a shadow of evidence for the statement, except *the name of bishop* which is given to some of them. On the other hand, we have unexceptionable testimony that these men were laymen, and that the title of bishop was given to them, although they were laymen. St. Bernard settles the question. He says that this wicked and adulterous generation were so obstinate in asserting this right of hereditary succession, that although clerics of their blood were wanting, bishops were never wanting—that is bishops who were not even clerics. Of these, he says, before Celsus there

were eight married men, learned enough but without orders.[1] "Denique jam octo extiterant ante Celsum viri uxorati, et absque ordinibus, litterati tamen." Gerald Barry tells exactly the same story—that various churches in Ireland and Wales had lay abbots.[2] He explains too, how it came to pass. Certain powerful men in the parish, who were at first the stewards of the church lands, and defenders of the clergy, afterwards usurped the ownership of the lands, and in order to secure them for themselves, their children, or their relations, they called themselves abbots and owners of the lands, leaving only to the clergy such chance offerings as they might happen to receive.

Such a system was of course the fruitful root of many evils. St. Malachy resolved to expel these usurpers from the See of Armagh. It was a long and difficult task; and frequently his life was in deadly peril. But God visibly protected him; he was patient, too, and prudent, as well as zealous; and in the end was completely successful. After three years of patient toil, he was universally recognised as Primate; and having thus banished the usurpers, he resigned the See to the care of the learned and saintly Gelasius, and retired once more to his beloved Bangor, keeping only the charge of the episcopal Church of Down.

We cannot follow St. Malachy through his subsequent glorious career. He went to Rome and was specially honoured by Pope Innocent II., who put his own mitre on his head, and his own stole around his neck in presence of his court, and appointed him his Legate for all Ireland. On his way to Rome he stopped at Clairvaux, where he had the good fortune of meeting St. Bernard, who became his dearest and most intimate friend. In him too, St. Malachy, more fortunate even than St. Columba, found a biographer who made the virtues and merits of the Irish saint known to posterity, and to the entire Church of God.

The saint also left at Clairvaux four of his disciples to be trained there under the eyes of St. Bernard himself in the discipline of the great Cistercian Order. It is to them we owe the introduction of that order into Ireland in A.D. 1142, and all the great religious houses which the Cistercians founded throughout the length and breadth of Ireland.

After his return home, armed with the plenary powers of Papal Legate, Malachy devoted himself with even more

[1] See Vita Malachiae, c. 10.

[2] "Notandum quod haec ecclesia, sicut et aliae per Hiberniam et Walliam plures, abbatem laicum habet." *Itin. Cambriae*, L. II., C. 4. A similar practice existed at the same time in the Celtic Church of Scotland.

zeal and success than before to the reformation of his own diocese, and the general restoration of ecclesiastical discipline throughout the kingdom. He was ably supported by the Irish prelates both in the North and in the South; and he would have changed the face of the Church before many years, but it pleased God to call him to Himself all too soon for Ireland. In A.D. 1148 he went to France to meet Pope Eugene III., who was then at Clairvaux. Before Malachy, however, arrived, the Pope had departed, but he was consoled by the warm welcome which he received from St. Bernard and his monks. Shortly after the Irish saint fell sick to the great sorrow of the community, but Malachy consoled them, and told them that there was no chance of his recovery, for it was God's will that he should die at Clairvaux. Feeling his strength failing he caused all the brethren to be summoned to his bedside. At once they came—St. Bernard at their head. "With longing I have longed," said the dying man, "to eat this pasch with you"—that is the holy Viaticum—"before I die, and I thank my God that my longing has been gratified." Blessing them one by one he said, "Remember me, and please God I will not forget you." So saying he rested a little; but towards midnight the community was summoned again, and while they wept and prayed around his bed, he fell asleep in the Lord, and "the Angels carried his soul to Heaven." It was at midnight between the 1st and 2nd of November, but the latter being All Souls' Day, his Feast is kept on the 3rd of November. He was canonized by Pope Clement III., about the year A.D. 1190.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SCHOOL OF CLONENAGH.

I.—St. Fintan.

"Pleasant to sit here thus
Beside the cold pure Nore."
—*Leabhar Breac.*

Several famous religious houses were in ancient days founded around the base of the Slieve Bloom mountains, and the great saints who founded them were mostly contemporaries and intimate friends. Saigher, now called Serkieran, from the name of its founder, Ciaran the Elder, was situated in the old territory of Ely, at the north-western base of the mountain, about four miles east of Birr. Exactly at the southern corner of the mountain slope St. Molua built his oratory, which was called from him Cluain-ferta-Molua, but is now known by the name of Kyle. St. Cronan's Church of Roscrea, his first oratory, close to Corville House, and the beautiful little abbey of Monahincha—Giraldus' Island of the Living—called by the Four Masters, Inis-locha-Cre—are all still to be seen in the north-western extremity of Tipperary, not more than three miles from Kyle. There on the great plain that stretches along the south-eastern base of the mountain, we find, a little to the right of the railway to Maryborough, first St. Canice's old abbey of Aghaboe, then farther on to the left, near Mountrath, is St. Fintan's Church of Clonenagh. Not far from Clonenagh is the townland of Disartbeagh, where St. Ængus used to sit by the side of the 'cold pure Nore,' and like Abraham, received visits from the angels. Still further on, not far from Maryborough to the right, are Dysartenos, to which the same Ængus gave his name, and Coolbanagher beyond the Heath of Maryborough, where he saw the angels around the grave of the old soldier who loved to invoke the saints of God. Not inviting from a scenic point of view are the marshy meadows and sluggish streams of that broad plain; but it is relieved by the great bold mountain on the left, and more than all it is crowded with memorials of the saints of God.

Clonenagh, in Irish, *Cluain Eidnech*, the Ivy Meadow, is situated about four miles south-west of Maryborough, in the

Queen's County. At one time, it is said, there were no less than seven churches there, and the fact that there are at least four distinct old grave-yards, quite convenient to each other, shows that there were at least several distinct churches around Clonenagh in ancient times. From the sixth to the twelfth century, it was not only a great school and monastery, but also the seat of a bishop, who appears to have exercised jurisdiction over the western portion of the ancient Leix (Laeghis), the territory of O'Moore.

It was indeed a secluded spot, almost surrounded by bogs, but the rounded slopes of its verdant knolls gave picturesque variety to what would otherwise be a very dreary scene. Its founder, St. Fintan, was a very remarkable man—in fact an extreme type of the asceticism of the age; yet he was greatly beloved in his own time, and his influence was felt for many centuries after his death. Clonenagh, too, derives a special interest from the fact that it was the *Alma Mater* of Ængus the Culdee, the most ancient and reliable authority we have on the history of the early saints of Ireland.

Fintan was the son of Gabhren, of the race of Eochaidh Finnfuathairt, and is said to have been born in the territory of Leinster. Leinster at that time was, roughly speaking, bounded on the west by the River Barrow, and did not include Leix. This Eochaidh was a brother of Conn the Hundred-Fighter, who came to help the Leinster King to expel the men of Munster from Leix and Ossory. For this service he received the Seven Forthartha in Leinster, in which he and his descendants settled. The Barony of Forth in Wexford was one of these districts, and still retains the name. There is a local tradition that Fintan was born near Clonenagh,[1] but this can hardly be reconciled with the express statement of his Leinster origin. His mother was Findath, probably of the same race. She was warned by an angel to retire to a secret place until after the birth of her son, who would be holy to the Lord. On the eighth day the child was baptized by a certain holy man, who dwelt in Cluain Mac Trein; and hence it would appear that it was near this place the child was born. It is supposed that the place takes its name from Trein, or Trian, son of the celebrated Dubthach Mac Ua Lugair, who rose up to do honour to St. Patrick at Tara. The Hy-Trian, his descendants by this Trian, seem to have been located at Limbrick, in the Barony of Gorey, county Wicklow, and it is not unlikely

[1] At a place now called Churchfield, where a disused churchyard is supposed to mark the site of a church built there in his honour.

that Fintan was born there about the year A.D. 525. We know that he was a little younger than Columcille, and as the latter was born about A.D. 521, Fintan must have been born a few years later.

During his youth Fintan studied under the care of the holy man who baptized him; but the place is not indicated in his life. It must have been some place not very far from Clonard, for we are told that on one occasion as Columcille was passing not far off, he stopped and invited his companions to visit the master and his pupil. Fintan already filled with the spirit of prophecy, had told his master to prepare for guests, as Columcille was coming to visit him. The master doubting the boy, and probably a little jealous of the favour shown him, sharply rebuked Fintan for his presumption; but when Columcille arrived, he rebuked the master, and told him that both himself and his place of abode would belong to Fintan for ever. This would seem to imply that this incident took place somewhere in the neighbourhood of Clonenagh.

Shortly afterwards Fintan was placed under the care of Columba Mac Crimthann, better known as Columba of Terryglass; but he had yet not founded that celebrated establishment on the shores of Lough Derg. With Fintan there were two others, St. Caemhen of Annatrim, not far from Clonenagh, and St. Mocumin, or Mochocma, who succeeded Columba at Terryglass. These were both half-brothers of the great St. Kevin of Glendalough; and very naturally were placed under the care of St. Columba, son of Crimthann, who was their first cousin. Fintan was probably also connected with these saints by family ties, as they all came originally from the same district of Leinster. At first it seems Columba wished to settle with his disciples at some place in their native territory—in finibus Lageniensium—and actually had chosen a beautiful spot for their monastery, where they hoped to live together in holiness and peace; for, says the Life, they had only one heart, and in the gladness of their united souls they cried out to their master, "Oh! it is good for us to be here." "Not so," said Columba; "God reserves this place not for us, but for one not yet born, Mobhi Mac Calde,"[1] or, as it is elsewhere, Mobhi Mac Cumalde. The true reading is probably Mobhi Mac Colmaidh, who was the son of Caeltigerna, a sister of St. Kevin, and a nephew (yet unborn) of the two brothers, Mocumin and Caemhen; but the place

[1] *Salamanca MS.*

of his Church has not been ascertained. Thereupon they left the territory of Leinster and came to the place now called Clonenagh, where they remained for an entire year without, however, founding there as yet any permanent establishment. It was surrounded by bogs, but sheltered by great oak woods festooned with clustering ivy. Great crowds of people, however, and amongst them numbers of their own friends, continued to crowd in upon the saints, and disturbed their repose, so that Columba resolved to seek some more retired place in which to serve God. They saw the wild solitudes of Slieve Bloom rising over them to the north-west, and thither Columba now directed his steps, followed by his faithful disciples. On the mountain side they met several boys who were herding cattle, one of whom, Setne, was voiceless from his mother's womb. Columba made the sign of the cross upon his mouth, and bade him tell them the place of their resurrection. Then the dumb boy spoke plainly, and told each of them where he was to die, and arise from the dead. Hereupon Columba looking down the mountain saw Clonenagh, which they had left, filled with God's angels, and he was much saddened at the sight. Upon inquiry he told them the reason—how he saw the place they had deserted filled with ministering angels, and how anxious he was that some of them should return to the holy spot. So Fintan promptly volunteered to return, and thus became the real founder of that great monastic establishment, which ever since bears his name.

Numbers of disciples now gathered round him, for the fame of his sanctity was very great. He wrote a Rule for his community which unfortunately has been lost; but we are told that it was very strict, even beyond the monastic rules of that time. His monks worked with hands and feet, digging the soil with spade and hoe, as hermits usually do. They had no cattle—not even a single heifer—and therefore no milk; they even refused to take the milk which their neighbours, pitying their poverty, used to bring them. Fintan would not allow it.

Cainnech, however, of Aghaboe, and other saints in the neighbourhood came to Fintan, and begged him to remit a little of the extreme rigour of their lives. Fintan, divinely admonished, yielded to their suggestions—remitting the severity of his rule in favour of others—but still himself adhering to his own practices of mortification.

It is no wonder that such a man was filled with the spirit of prophecy, and performed many wonderful miracles, that

were much noised abroad. One miracle is recorded, which illustrates the spirit of filial affection that prevailed in the midst of all this rigour of discipline. The saint went out to see his monks, who were working in the field. When they saw their father, like children, the half-starved monks ran up to him, and catching hold of him, they besought him to give them something better than usual for their refection, as great folk do, who visit the workmen. Fintan smiled on his children, and told them he had nothing to give them; but that God was good, and might give in his stead. Next day certain men came from Leinster, bringing to the monastery waggon loads of provisions, as much as eighty men could carry, so that the poor famished brethren, living almost entirely on herbs, got more than one good meal from these supplies.

One of the most distinguished pupils that issued from this great school was St. Comgall of Bangor. So great was the fame of Clonenagh at this period that Comgall came all the way from Dalaradia to place himself under the guidance of its holy abbot. As Clonenagh was founded about the year A.D. 548, when Fintan was not more than twenty-five years of age, Comgall can hardly have arrived there earlier than A.D. 550, and in that case the master was probably eight or ten years younger than the disciple—a not unusual occurrence in those days. Comgall at first felt all the severity of the discipline at Clonenagh, and was greatly tempted to abandon his purpose; but by God's grace, and the advice of Fintan, he persevered, and then found his soul filled with great spiritual joy. He remained some years at Clonenagh, where he formally received the monastic habit, though he was not yet admitted to Holy Orders. By Fintan's advice he then returned home to found the celebrated monastery on the southern shores of Belfast Lough, which will be for ever connected with his name.

On another occasion, a certain cruel and heartless king, Colman, son of Cairbre, the ruler of North Leinster, kept in bonds a noble youth, Cormac, the son of Diarmaid, king of Hy-Kinsellagh, with the intention, it appears, of putting him to death. Fintan, who was himself connected with the royal race of the Hy-Kinsellagh, set out with twelve companions for Rathmore, where Colman then lived and kept his prisoner. This is more likely to be Rathmore, about four miles east of Naas, where the great rath still exists, than Rathmore, east of Tullow, in the county Wicklow. In the *Salamanca MS.*, the place is called *Rathmoin*, and there is a

Rathmoon close to Baltinglass, which possibly may have been the scene of the miracle. When Colman heard of Fintan's approach, he locked his gates, and doubled the guards over the prisoner; but it was all in vain. The gates opened of themselves to admit Fintan, and the terrified guards ran off to tell their still more affrighted master, who quickly consented to release young Cormac. One of Colman's sons wished to slay the late captive before he could get away; but Fintan threatened him with Divine vengeance, a threat that was speedily fulfilled, for he was slain before the end of a month, whilst Cormac, the captive, became a monk, and ended his days in peace and holiness in the monastery of Bangor. It may be that he was a fellow-student of Comgall at Clonenagh, and was thus induced to go to the monastery of his old fellow-student. We find, indeed, that an intimate friendship and intercommunication existed between these two monasteries; and very frequently the monks of Clonenagh paid a visit to St. Comgall at Bangor, by whom they were always most kindly received.

On another occasion Fintan was sojourning at the monastery of Achad-Finglass, most likely founded by himself at Idrone, in the County Carlow. The old church of Agha, about four miles east of Old Leighlin, probably marks the site of this monastery. A holy bishop, called Brandubh, of the Hy-Kinsellagh, came to ask permission of the saint to be allowed to end his days at Clonenagh. The saint readily consented, but advised the bishop rather to remain where they then were, and where the rule was not so strict, and would not be so severe as at Clonenagh. The bishop followed Fintan's counsel, but induced him to promise that in case Fintan died first, he would soon come to meet him, and bring his soul to heaven. Fintan promised, and kept his word; for three weeks after his own death, he came with seven spirits, clothed in white, to bring to heaven the holy soul of the venerable bishop. May not this Agha monastery be that religious house founded by Columba and his three disciples in the territory of the men of Leinster before they came to Clonenagh?

"No one," says the writer of his Life, "can describe the charity, meekness, humility, patience, abstinence, watchings, and other virtues of this blessed man." He constantly watched over his community with the most tender and devoted care. He was always ready to succour the afflicted, and to protect the oppressed; his was a name which good men loved, and bad men feared throughout all the territory

of Leinster. Towards the close of his life he chose one of his own monks, named Fintan Maeldubh, as his successor, and 'placed him in his chair.' Then calling all the members of the community around him, he raised his hands to heaven, and solemnly gave them his blessing. After which he received the "Sacrifice," and went to sleep in the Lord. He died on the 17th February, about the year A.D. 592, some time before the death of St. Columba in A.D. 597.

A young man from Leix went to Iona, and when there asked St. Columba's advice as to the choice of a spiritual director, when he should return home. Columba recommended Fintan as the best and holiest director he knew. We are told, however, that *shortly after* this young man's return to Ireland, Fintan was called to his reward; which shows that he must have died at Clonenagh before St. Columba died at Iona. He was buried at Clonenagh; but there is now no trace of his tomb.

St. Fintan has been called by many old writers the Father of the Irish Monks, and he has been likened in his manner of life to St. Benedict, the great founder of western monasticism—at least on the Continent of Europe. He was not, indeed, the oldest, nor even the most celebrated of the Second Order of Irish Saints, who devoted themselves to the monastic life. But he founded his monastery when very young; his own life was extremely ascetic; and he had amongst his novices and disciples several of the most celebrated founders of religious houses in Ireland. In this way it came to pass that as Finnian of Clonard was the tutor of the Saints of Ireland, so Fintan came to be described as the Father of the Irish Monks. And as Clonard was looked upon as a great school, so Clonenagh, like Aran, came to be regarded during the life of its holy founder as a kind of noviciate for the training of monks, many of whom went to Bangor, and elsewhere; and thus diffused through Erin his discipline and his spirit.

The most remarkable scholar of Clonenagh was St. Ængus, the Culdee.

II.—St. Ængus.

Ængus was a student at Clonenagh during the prelacy of the Abbot Melaithgen or Melaithgenius.

The materials for a Life of St. Ængus are very scanty. We have no original Life, and only two documents that tell us anything about him—the Scholiast's Introduction to his

writings, and a poem in praise of the saint, written by a namesake, apparently not very long after his death. From these two sources we gather the following facts:—

Through his father, Oengoba, son of Oblen, he derived his descent from Coelbach, King of Ireland, who belonged to the royal race of the Dalaradians of Ulster. He was probably born in the neighbourhood of Clonenagh, about the middle of the eighth century. From his earliest youth he seems to have been trained to sanctity and learning in the monastic school of Clonenagh, which, as we have seen, was then ruled by the learned and pious Melaithgen. Under this holy master the young Ængus made very great progress. He not only became, as his writings prove, an accomplished scholar, but also a model of every virtue. He seems to have been devoted to ascetical practices even from his earliest youth; and he loved to spend most of his time in prayer and solitude. Hence he came to be called by excellence the Culdee, that is, the *Ceile De*, or servant of God. He was probably the first to whom this appellation was given, as a kind of surname in recognition of his great sanctity and self-denial. Afterwards the name was given to other ascetic solitaries, who, though not a religious order in the proper sense of the word, still formed communities of anchorites living apart, but yet frequently meeting in the same church for devotional purposes, and recognising a common superior to whom they were duly obedient. Later on numbers of the secular clergy formed themselves into somewhat similar communities, and came to be known by the same name. They were in reality, however, what is known as Canons secular, that is a body of secular clergy, living apart, but subject to a common rule, which was generally the rule of St. Augustine.

The *Ceile De* of the earlier period divided his time between prayer, manual labour, and literary employment, if he were a man of learning and ability. He was never a burden to others, for he and his brethren contrived to procure from their little farms not only their own scant and meagre fare, but also the means of hospitable entertainment for the poor and the stranger.

Ængus seems to have spent many years in this kind of solitary life, living alone in his little cell, and finding sustenance in the roots of the earth, or the produce of his garden. His first cell was probably at Disert-beagh, which is not more than a mile from Clonenagh, and likely got its name from having been the desertum, or solitary abode of the saint. He had not yet forsaken his beloved community of Clonenagh on

the banks of the infant Nore; and he loved them dearly to the end, if we may believe his poetical namesake in the *Leabhar Breac*—

> "Pleasant to sit here thus
> Beside the cold pure Nore,"

And then follow the stanzas which, Mr. Matthew Arnold declared, show as fine a perception of what constitutes propriety and felicity of style as anything to be found in a Greek epitaph—

> "Ængus out of the assembly of Heaven,
> Here are his tomb and his bed,
> It is hence he went to death,
> On Friday to the holy Heaven;
> It is in Cluain Eidnech he was reared,
> It is in Cluain Eidnech he was buried,
> It is in Cluain Eidnech of many crosses
> He first read his psalms."

But Disert-beagh was not lonely enough for Ængus—it was too near the great monastic school, and doubtless his solitude was often disturbed by truant youth, or inquisitive strangers. So he put his books in his satchel, took his staff in his hand, and made his way as best he could through the bogs and morasses, where the railway now runs, until he came to the place called after him, Dysert Enos or the Desert of Ængus. It is about eight miles from Clonenagh, and two to the south-east of Maryborough on the slope of a broken ridge of bluish gray limestone, that relieves to some extent that dreary and featureless plain. The present grave-yard, surrounding the roofless Protestant Church, probably marks the site of the primitive oratory founded by Ængus; and shows that though dead to the world, like most of his countrymen the self-denying ascetic had an eye for the natural beauty of a picturesque landscape. It afforded him too what he no doubt prized much, a distant prospect of his beloved Clonenagh, beyond the swampy moorland, under the shadow of Slieve Bloom.

In this lonely retreat Ængus practiced the severest penitential observance. He made three hundred genuflections every day; and moreover recited the entire psaltery. But not in ordinary fashion; he divided his self-imposed office into three parts. Fifty psalms he said in his cell; fifty more he recited in the open air under the shade of a spreading tree that embowered his little oratory; the last fifty, if we can credit his biographer, he repeated with his neck chained

to a post, and his body half plunged in a huge tub of cold water.

Penance like this showed that Ængus was a saint; so in spite of his efforts to conceal himself the world soon found him out, and strangers began to disturb him once more. Before all things he loved to be alone, and so once again he resolved to make his escape from men, and hide himself for ever from their foolish admiration and applause. This time he resolved to adopt another plan, and strove to escape from the crowd not so much by shunning their presence, as by concealing his identity.

It is doubtful if Ængus when setting out knew what was to be his final destination. He left his cell at Dysart Enos, trusting solely to the guidance of Providence; and Providence never deserts those who put their trust in God.

Shortly after setting out on his journey, as we should now say towards Dublin, Ængus entered a way-side church to pray to God, and ask His guidance and protection. This was probably the first church which he met on his way; it is now called Coolbanagher, about four miles from Dysart Enos, beyond the Heath of Maryborough, and not far from Portarlington. There he saw a vision of angels hovering around a newly-made grave. He asked the priest, who served the little church, whose was that new grave. The priest told him it was the grave of a soldier who had served God faithfully for many years. Then Ængus asked him was he in the habit of practising any special mortification, or any peculiar devotion. The priest knew of nothing special, or unusual, in his case, except that he made it a constant practice every day to invoke the intercession of all God's saints, whom he could call to mind. This incident made a very deep impression on Ængus. He *saw* how meritorious it was to invoke the saints; and so he resolved thereafter, if he could find time and place, to compose a metrical catalogue of the saints, which devout souls might more easily remember and recite for their own spiritual welfare.

Afterwards Ængus went his way, and at length came to St. Maelruain's monastery at Tallaght, near Dublin, then, and almost ever since, a favourite home of religious men. He was quite unknown to the inmates of the monastery, so, concealing his name and learning, he sought admission into the community as an humble lay-brother. His pious request was readily granted; but, of course, the novice was put to the meanest and hardest work in the monastery. He reaped the corn in the field; carried it to the barn on his back;

threshed it; winnowed, dried, and ground it in the mill for the use of the brotherhood. He wore the poorest rags he could find during his rounds of daily toil; his hair was so unkempt that it was as if the ears of corn grew in it; his hands were horny with the flail, and his face black with sweat and dust. So he lived unknown to all, labouring with his hands, but praying to God in his heart.

At length it pleased Providence to uncover this shining light, so that it might be seen by men. A truant scholar of the monastery, who was either unable or neglected to learn his lesson, fearing to present himself before the abbot in class, took refuge in the barn where Ængus was working. He sympathised with the poor boy, bade him lie down in the straw, and rest himself, and that all would be well. The boy did so, and soon fell fast asleep in the barn. When he awoke refreshed, Ængus asked him to repeat the lesson; he obeyed, and partly, no doubt, by the instructions, and partly by the kind encouragement of the good monk, he completely succeeded in mastering his lesson. Ængus then told him go to the school, but to say nothing of what happened in the barn. The boy went to his class, and astonished his master by having his lesson perfectly—which seems to have been in his case quite an unusual occurrence. The abbot, suspecting something, made inquiries, and insisted on learning the whole truth. Then the boy confessed what took place in the barn, and how the lay-brother had gone over his lesson with him. The truth at once flashed upon the mind of Maelruain; he had probably heard of the disappearance of Ængus from Dysart Enos, and now felt certain that the hard-working lay-brother was no other than the great scholar of Clonenagh. So he went at once to the barn, and embracing Ængus most tenderly, reproached him for so long concealing himself from the community. Ængus humbly asked pardon of the abbot, which, of course, had been already granted, and was at once received into his most intimate friendship—a friendship that endured until Maelruain's death.

The abbot now resolved to utilize, for God's glory, the great learning and talents of the distinguished scholar, whom Providence had bestowed on the community of Tallaght. Ængus, on his part, was most anxious to co-operate with Maelruain; and so these two holy men set about the composition of those works which have contributed so much to the glory of God, and of the ancient Church of Ireland.

The *Martyrology of Tallaght* was probably their first work: and is supposed to have been the joint production of

Ængus and Maelruain. If so, it must have been written before the year A.D. 792, when Maelruain died. It is described by O'Curry as a catalogue in prose of the saints of Erin, and their festival days, with brief notices in some instances of their fathers and of the churches which they founded. It is considered to be the oldest of our Irish Martyrologies; and according to Michael O'Clery—no mean authority—it furnished the materials for the great poem called the *Felire*, or Festology of the Saints, which Ængus susbequently composed. Nor is it difficult to explain O'Curry's objection to this hypothesis—namely, that it contains the names of several saints who lived longer than Ængus himself—as, for instance, of Blathmac, who was martyred in Hy by the Danes in A.D. 823, and Felimy MacCriffan (Crimhthainn) King of Munster, who died in A.D. 825—for these names may have been added by a later hand, or by the first copyist. The oldest copy of this Martyrology is found in the *Book of Leinster*, but Brother Michael O'Clery made a more complete copy, which is now in the Burgundian Library at Brussels. It was borrowed from the Belgian Government in 1849, and copied for Dr. Todd by the late lamented Eugene O'Curry. The same text was translated and published, with notes, by Dr. Mathew Kelly, of Maynooth, in 1847.

The most celebrated, however, and by far the most valuable of the writings of Ængus is his *Felire*, or Festology of the Saints. He conceived the idea of this work from the vision of Angels which he saw in the old Church of Coolbanagher, over the grave of the poor soldier, who used to invoke the saints of God. Doubtless, as an aid to the memory, it is written in verse, and in what O'Curry pronounces to be the best and purest style of our language—the Gaedhlic of the eighth century. The same authority declares that it is the oldest and the most important of all our Martyrologies. One of the best copies is that contained in the famous compilation called the *Leabhar Breac*, or Great Book of Duniry, in the county Galway. In the preface or introduction to the work there is a short notice of the writer, and of the time, place, and purport of his composition.

The time of its composition was during the reign of the monarch Aedh Oirnidhe, who reigned from A.D. 793 to 817, so that though planned during the abbacy of Maelruain, it was not written until after his death. It appeared probably about the year A.D. 800, with the approbation of one of the greatest scholars of the time, "Fothadh of the Canon."

O'Curry conjectures that at this period Ængus had left Tallaght and returned to his first cell at Disert-beagh, near Clonenagh. Aedh, the King, just at this time made an incursion into Leinster, and pitched his camp not far from Monasterevan, in the Queen's County. It seems that up to this period the clergy were compelled to follow the native princes in battle, and even sometimes took an active part in the conflict. This, however, was altogether against the Canon Law; and on the present occasion Conmach, the Primate-Archbishop of Armagh, and his clergy protested against the practice, and appealed to the king to allow them to return home and confine themselves to the discharge of their spiritual functions. The king took this remonstrance in good part, and as they were encamped in Leix, offered to refer their complaint to the decision of Fothadh, his own poet, tutor, and adviser. Fothadh thus appealed to, gave his decision in favour of the clerics and against the king, and being a poet gave it in rhyme. His decision thus given, exempting the clergy from military service, was known as the Canon, and he himself came to be called Fothadh-na-Canoine.

Fothadh showed the stanzas in which he expressed his decision to Ængus, who entirely approved of it both as to matter and form. Ængus on the same occasion showed his own poem on the Saints of Erin to Fothadh, for he was fully sensible of the great importance of securing for his own work the approbation of the royal Bard. That approval was warmly and generously given, accompanied with a strong recommendation to the faithful generally to use the poem in their public and private devotions.

The *Felire* is divided into three parts: the first part is introductory to the body of the work, and consists of five quatrains, invoking in very beautiful language the gift of heavenly wisdom from the King of the White Sun, that the poet may, with a pure heart, fitly celebrate the praises of the royal hosts of the great and good all-righteous King. He then alludes to the consolation which he himself found in celebrating the praises of the saints. He describes the various torments which the soldiers of Jesus suffered, and which they endured with joyful heroism. Now they enjoy their reward for ever with Mary's Son; while their bodies here below are enshrined in bright gold. Herod and Pilate are then contrasted with Christ, Nero with Peter and Paul, Pilate's queen with the Virgin Mary. Earthly power and glory are fleeting in comparison with the love of 'Mary's

Son,' and earthly princes are less than the lowly soldiers of Jesus. Tara has perished, but Armagh is still crowded with the sons of wisdom. King Laeghaire's glory is gone, but Patrick's name still lives and will live for ever.

The body of the work contains 365 quatrains, in which the writer celebrates on every day the praises not only of our principal Irish saints, but also commemorates several saints of the Universal Church. The text is interlined with a very ancient gloss and commentary, as well as with notes fixing the sites of the churches of several of the saints referred to. This gloss and the accompanying notes, whilst adding much to the difficulty of editing the work itself, render it an invaluable aquisition to the historian and archæologist.

In the third part the author recapitulates his poem, explains its construction and arrangement, directs the faithful how to use it, and apologises for the fact that of necessity he could only introduce the chiefs and princes of the saints into his poem. Yet he spared no pains to make it as complete as possible, consulting for the foreign saints, Ambrose, Jerome, and Eusebius; and for the Irish saints, he not only consulted "the countless hosts of the illuminated books of Erin," but he himself travelled throughout the entire country visiting their churches and collecting the local traditions regarding them. Lest, however, any might be jealous for being omitted, he invokes them in this third part under certain general heads—patriarchs, prophets, virgins, martyrs, etc., etc.—so that not a single one of the heavenly host at home or abroad can complain of the want of some reference to his or her memory. It is not too much to say that the *Felire* of Ængus is on the whole the most valuable of the Irish ecclesiastical treatises that have happily been preserved down to our own times.

Another valuable work which we owe to the indefatigable industry of Ængus is the collection of *Pedigrees of the Irish Saints*—the oldest, and therefore the most authentic collection that we possess, and enriched moreover with valuable topographical notes and references to many of our ancient churches. The fifth part of this work is the *Book of Litanies*, which has been published in the third volume of the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*. It affords conclusive proof of one fact, that the invocation of the saints was not only a well recognised, but quite a common form of devotion in the early Church of Ireland. Indeed there is scarcely a single folio of any portion of the writings of Ængus that does not afford conclusive evidence of the same fact.

The last work of Ængus is the *Saltair-na-Rann*, which Eugene O'Curry describes as "consisting of 150 poems or the history of the Old Testament, written in the finest style of the Gaedhlic language of the middle of the eighth century." Probably it got its name from its resemblance, at least in number, to the Psalms of David. It is, according to the same authority, altogether a different work from the comparatively modern poem of the same name in the British Museum.

In the year 1880 the *Felire, or Metrical Calendar of Ængus*, edited and translated by Dr. Whitley Stokes, was published by the Royal Irish Academy. In a paper read before the Academy so early as 1871, and prefixed to this work, Dr. Stokes asserts that Ængus cannot have been the author of the *Felire*; that similar linguistic reasons prove that he cannot have been the author of the *Saltair-na-Rann*, and that there is not a particle of trustworthy evidence to show that Ængus ever wrote either the *Pedigrees of the Irish Saints*, or his celebrated *Litany of the Irish Saints*. Dr. Stokes is a conscientious and painstaking writer, but with a love of originality in his views. We carefully examined the reasons which he gives in favour of these very original views, and we must say we thought them exceedingly hollow. As to his linguistic reasons for asserting that the *Felire* and the *Saltair* could not have been written before the close of the tenth century, we may confidently set the opinion of an Irish scholar like Eugene O'Curry against that of Dr. Whitley Stokes, whose knowledge of Irish is purely book knowledge. There is not a single linguistic form in the MSS., which he alleges to be later than the eighth century, that cannot be explained by the well-known custom of the copyists modernizing the language of the MSS., so as to make their copies more intelligible to those for whom they wrote.[1] We have already explained how in a similar way the names of a few saints, and of the author himself, might have been added to the *Felire* by a copyist who wished to pay honour to a favourite saint of his own church. Flimsy reasons of this kind manifestly cannot outweigh the explicit testimony of the Scholiast's Introduction—written before the twelfth century in very ancient Irish—that these were the works of Ængus, and giving us the time, the place, and the circumstances of their composition, with the few facts that are known to us concerning the life of the writer.

[1] "All transcripts," says Skene, "show the orthography and forms of their period" of transcription.—*Four Ancient Books of Wales*, p. 184.

It is very likely that Ængus died in his beloved retreat at Disert-beagh; but, according to the metrical Life, he was buried at Clonenagh. He had laboured long and travelled far to illustrate the history of the saints of his native land; and now that long day's work was done, and he lay down to sleep in the bosom of the dear and holy scenes of his childhood. He knew that the pious brotherhood of Clonenagh would not forget to chant for many a year the requiem for his soul's repose; and that the 'pure cold Nore' of his youthful love would breathe its gentle murmurs near his grave for ever. But his voice has not been stilled by the flight of centuries—even now he speaks to us on earth in his writings, and he prays for us amongst the choirs of angels and saints in heaven.

Clonenagh suffered so much during the Danish wars that it gradually fell away from its ancient importance, and in the twelfth century sank to the rank of a parochial church. At present it is only a green mound associated with a historic name.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SCHOOL OF GLENDALOUGH.

I.—St. Kevin.

"By that lake, whose gloomy shore
Skylark never warbles o'er,
Where the cliff hangs high and steep,
Young St. Kevin stole to sleep."

—*Moore.*

Glendalough—the Valley of the Two Lakes—is, for a religious and cultivated mind, one of the most interesting spots in Ireland. Nature has made it wild and beautiful; religion has hallowed its scenery with the holiest associations; the genius of song has lit up its dark lakes and mountains with all the radiance of romance. It is one of those places the very sight of which raises the mind from mean and sordid thoughts to the contemplation of what is beautiful and good.

This will be felt all the more by those who are acquainted with the holy and self-denying life of the founder of Glendalough. His career is peculiarly interesting and attractive; for he was a man of the most amiable disposition, and yet of the most austere virtue; a lover of nature and a teacher of men, with the emotional soul of a poet, and a conscience of angelic purity. We are told that the wild birds loved to alight on his shoulders, and that the savage beasts fawned at his feet. He felt himself most at home in the midst of the wild majestic scenery of his mountain valley, where he loved to commune with Nature and with Nature's God. We are told in his Life that his eyes and ears were always open to the sights and sounds around him—that the birds made sweet music in his ears—that the toil of his austere life was lightened by listening to the gentle murmurs of the wind through the leaves of the trees around his cell.

Kevin—in Irish Coemghen, or the Fair-begotten—came of the royal stock of Leinster both on his father's and mother's side. His father, Coemlug, was seventh in descent from Messincorb, the common ancestor of the Dal Messincorb, who himself was son of Cucorb, a king of Leinster in the beginning of the second century. Coemell, his mother, was the daughter

of Cennandan, a chief of the Dal Cormac, so called from Cormac Caech, who was a brother of that Messincorb already alluded to.

Coemghen was born A.D. 498, for we are told that he was one hundred and twenty years old when he died A.D. 618. The place of his birth is not given in his Life; but it was somewhere in the county Wicklow, the south-eastern corner of which, around Rathdrum, seems to have been the patrimony of his family. It was a family of saints; for Kevin had two brothers and two sisters, whose names are in the Calendar. One of the brothers was Caemhan of Ard-Chaemhain, near Wexford; the other was Mocuemin, or Nathchaemh, the cousin and successor of St. Columba of Terryglass, in Lower Ormond. The sisters were St. Coeltigerna, mother of St. Dagan of Inver Daoile, in Wicklow, and Melda, the mother of the younger St. Abban, who was born about the year A.D. 520. Then, again, Coemghen's paternal uncle was St. Eugenius, Bishop of Ardstraw, the principal patron saint of the diocese of Derry.

The family, too, seems to have been remarkable for personal beauty as well as for sanctity of life—all its members, male and female, being described in their very names as 'beautiful' or 'fair-begotten.' Young Coemghen of Glendalough grew up to be a youth of remarkable beauty, so that his good looks became a source of great danger and temptation to the boy, as we shall presently see.

The child was baptized by a priest called Cronan, not by an Angel, as has been sometimes foolishly said. It is stated, however, in the saint's Life in the *Salamanca MS.*, that an Angel under the appearance of a beautiful boy, met the child when it was being carried to the font, and blessed the infant —a fact which is not at all improbable.

At the early age of seven the child was placed under the care of St. Petroc, a learned and holy man who came from Cornwall, and hence is called a Briton in the *Life of St. Kevin*. Petroc came to Ireland in A.D. 492, and devoted himself to the study of Sacred Scripture, as well as to the instruction and edification of his neighbours in Wicklow, both by word and example. He afterwards returned to his own country, where he continued the same course of saintly life. His monastic school in Cornwall became a great centre of learning and holiness, and was known as Petroc-Stowe, which afterwards came to be corrupted into Padstow—its present name.

Under the care of this venerable master young Coemghen

remained for twelve years, until A.D. 512, when he was transferred to the guidance of his uncle, St. Eugenius, afterwards founder and bishop of Ardstraw. He had studied some years in Britain in the great monastery of Rosnat which by some writers is placed in Wales, but by others, with much more probability, is identified with Whithern in Galloway. Eugenius, after his return to his own country, in conjunction with St. Lochan and St. Enna, founded a monastic school at a place called Kilnamanagh, in his native territory of Cualann. There is a townland called Kilnamanagh in the parish of Glenealy, north-east of Rathdrum, in Wicklow; and it was here, doubtless, that Coemghen lived under the care of these three saints, making, we are told, daily progress in virtue and learning.

St. Eugenius, though he had studied in the schools of Britain, was probably not much older than his nephew. He was now, it seems, desirous to preach the Gospel in the native territory of his mother, who came from the North of Ireland, and he was anxious to appoint young Coemghen to succeed him at Kilnamanagh. Thereupon Coemghen, fearing to be raised to this post of honour and responsibility, fled from his uncle's monastery to the desert of Glendalough, and hid himself in the remotest recesses of that wild mountain valley.

There was it seems another reason, too, which has been much distorted by poetic licence, that induced him to fly from his native district. The genuine story is told in his Life, and is very different from the popular and poetic account. Coemghen was a very handsome youth, and his good looks won the affection of a beautiful girl of his own age, whose sorrow was great to find her love not only unrequited, but unnoticed. On one occasion she even followed the gracious boy, when he went with his brothers to the woods, and finding him alone exerted all her blandishments to win his heart. The young saint, tormented instead of softened by her proffered caresses, which he had tried in vain to repel, resolved to give her a lesson for the future. He had flung himself half-naked into a brake full of nettles, and now gathering a handful, he scourged the girl with the burning nettles on her face and arms. "The fire without," says the author of the saint's Life, "extinguished the fire within." Her heart was touched with the grace of penance. She humbly asked Coemghen's pardon for all she had done to tempt him, and besought him to pray to God in her behalf. Such prayers could not but be heard; and so we are told that she became a sincere convert, consecrating her virginity

to God, and faithfully following all the years of her life the counsels and spiritual guidance of St. Coemghen. To scourge the fair Kathleen with nettles for the good of her soul is a very different thing from flinging her into the lake.

Before Kevin retired to the recesses of Glendalough, he was ordained priest by Bishop Lugaidh, or Lugidus. Some persons think it was by his advice that Coemghen sought that lonely retreat.

In order to understand the subsequent events in the life of St. Coemghen, or, as we may now call him, St. Kevin, it is necessary to have some idea of the topography of Glendalough.

The valley is something more than two miles long, and about three quarters in average breadth. It runs from east to west, slightly trending towards the north at its western extremity. Towards the east it gradually opens into the valley of the Avonmore; but on the other three sides it is completely enclosed by lofty and precipitous mountains. To the south, or left hand, looking westward, are the mountains of Derrybawn and Lugduff, the latter especially rising in steep and gloomy grandeur, like a great wall, from the floor of the valley. On the north or right hand are the two mountains of Brockagh and Comaderry—neither so bold nor so steep as Lugduff; Comaderry, however, rises to the height of 2,296 feet, while Lugduff is only 2,140 above the level of the sea.

There are two lakes in this dark valley, one called the Upper, or western lake, which is the larger and gloomier sheet of water lying under the gigantic shadow of Lugduff, whose cliffs rise sheer from the water to the height of 1,000 feet. The Lower, or eastern lakelet, is smaller and brighter in its aspect, and leaves a foot passage on either side between its shores and the mountains to the north and south. At the extreme western end of the valley a mountain torrent dashes down a steep ravine into the lake, forming a fine cascade, which may be seen from the eastern shore of the lake. There is another mountain stream that rushes down between Lugduff and Derrybawn on the south, forming a grand waterfall called Pollanass, escaping from which its waters enter the Upper Lake at its south-eastern extremity. Fed by these two streams and numerous rivulets, the Upper Lake sends out its surplus waters down the valley in a considerable stream called here the Glenealo River, which rushes eastward over the broken ground until it takes rest for a while in the Lower Lake. Emerging thence, and still flowing eastward for half a mile, it unites with another stream called the

Glendasan River, which flows down the back of Comaderry mountain. For about a quarter of a mile before uniting, these two streams flow almost parallel through the valley, and then suddenly bending towards each other, send their united waters still eastward to join the Avonmore at Larah, towards the eastern extremity of the Valley of Glendalough. The delta, formed in the valley by the Glenealo and Glendasan rivers, was the site of the 'City' of Glendalough, and there still the principal ruins are to be found.

When Kevin fled from Kilnamanagh and its dangers, he penetrated to the very heart of this wilderness, and took up his abode in its most inaccessible retreats. The writer of his Life gives a most accurate description of the spot which he chose for his place of abode. "It was a valley closed in with lofty and precipitous mountains, and in the western part of this valley towards the south he found a lake enclosed between two mountains."[1] On the shores of this lake he lived for seven years the life of a solitary, without fire, without a roof, and almost without human food. "On the northern shore his dwelling was in a hollow tree; but on the southern shore of the lake he dwelt in a very narrow cave, to which there was no access except by a boat, for a perpendicular rock of immense height overhangs it from above." This is St. Kevin's Bed on the face of Lugduff, overhanging the southern shore of the Upper Lake, whose deep waters wash the base of the rock 30 feet beneath. Even from the lake the path is steep and difficult, but not dangerous. Very few, however, have the steadiness and courage to descend to the cave from the overhanging cliffs above.

The cave itself is only about four feet square, and not high enough to stand upright in. But there is a smaller hollow within where the saint might lay his head and snatch his few hours of brief repose. It was a dizzy height, and a hard bed; but we cannot judge of the saints of God by our own worldly and selfish standard. And for one who loved God and His glorious works, as St. Kevin did, there were never wanting, by day or night, sights and sounds to fill his mind with manifold ideas of the wondrous attributes of the great Author of all. The majesty of these dark mountains, the changing glories of these lakes and streams, the voices of the falling waters, the roaring of the storms through the wintry hills, Arturus and the Bear rising over the lofty crest of Comaderry and for ever silently sweeping round the

[1] "Cujus (vallis) in occidentali parte versus meridiem extensum inter duos montes repperit stagnum."—*Salamanca MS.*

changeless pole, the morning sun flooding the dark valley with light—a pale reflection of the splendour around the Great White Throne—these were the sights that met his eyes, and the voices that spoke in his ears during the days and nights that he spent on the rocky floor of his narrow cell. He spoke to no man, but he communed with God and Nature—his body was on the naked rock, but his soul was in heaven. It was during these years that the birds and beasts came to know and to love the gentle saint, who lived as Adam did in Paradise. He had made for himself a hut of boughs on the northern shore of the lake, where he spent much of his time, and we are told that the birds used to come and alight on his hands and shoulders, and sing for him their sweetest songs; and that the trees were like Æolian harps whose melody lightened the toilsome routine of his life. As for his food, "no man knows on what he lived during these years, for he himself never revealed it to anyone."

But now it pleased God to make known the virtues of his servant to his fellow men. A shepherd discovered the saint's retreat, and told far and wide of the holy man who had led for so long the life of an angel in the desert. Crowds of persons made their way to the heart of the mountains, and St. Kevin could no longer be alone. It was revealed to him that he was destined to be the father of many monks, and he submitted to the will of Providence.

Still he was at first unwilling to go far from his beloved cave in Lugduff. So they built him a cell—a circular bee-hive hut of stones—close to the southern shore of the lake; and near at hand his disciples also built him an oratory on a rock projecting from the base of Lugduff into the lake, hence called *Tempull-na-Skellig*. This was the "clara cella quae Desertum Coemghini appellatur."[1] But that beautiful and celebrated oratory is now, like the saint's cell, almost a heap of ruins—the sight-seers are even worse than the Danes, and fifty years of tourists in the mountain valley have caused more ruin to these venerable monuments than centuries of civil strife. Not far from *Tempull-na-Skellig*, and on the same southern shore of the Upper Lake, there is another ruined church and church-yard, known in the guide books as *Rifearta* Church; that is, the 'royal cemetery' (*righ-fearta*) of the O'Toole kings. They were not the original rulers of this district; but after the Norman Conquest they retired from the plains of Kildare before the invaders, and held these valleys

[1] Others think it was the *Reefert* Church, as it is now called.

and mountains as a stronghold of freedom against the 'strangers.'

But this place became too small for the multitude of the saint's disciples, who now dwelt around his little church—it was inconveniently situated, too, and very difficult of access. So God's Angel appeared to Kevin, and commanded him to go and build his monastery at the eastern shore of the smaller lake, about half a mile further down the valley.

"If it was God's will," said Kevin, "I should prefer to remain until my death near this place, where I have laboured in His service." "Nay," said the Angel, "if you dwell where I say, many thousands of happy souls will have their resurrection there, and go with you to the heavenly kingdom." Then the Angel led the saint, after he had spent four years at Lugduff, to the eastward of the smaller lake, and marked out the site of his church and monastery; and "there he built that celebrated monastery of the Valley of the Two Lakes, which was the mother house of many others."

And there, too, he lived as of old in the practice of the most rigid austerity. "He was clothed in the coarsest garments; his bed was the bare ground; he broke his fast at evening on a meal of herbs and water; he kept constant and prayerful vigils often in the open air; and so he lived a long time in the monastery, as he used to live in the desert, until at the earnest entreaty of many holy men he consented at last to live like his monks in the ordinary monastic way." It is evident that the saint was most reluctant to give up those habits of extreme asceticism which he had adopted in the desert; and he only yielded in deference to the entreaties of other venerable men who feared to lose so precious a life.

It is not to be wondered at that large crowds of disciples came to the monastery of this great servant of God, and were anxious to place themselves under his guidance, so that Glendalough became a seminary of saints and scholars, who went forth from its halls to found other monasteries, and rule other churches. In fact, it became quite a 'city' in the desert, whose citizens were "cives sanctorum et domestici Dei," clothed with human nature, but living like the household of God in heaven.

At this period Kevin must have been still a comparatively young man, certainly not exceeding forty years of age. For all these events are narrated in his life as if happening before he left Glendalough to pay a visit to the holy abbots, Columba, Comgall, and Canice, who met the saint of Glenda-

lough at the celebrated hill of Uisnech (now Usney) in Westmeath. This visit is represented as having taken place only a few days after the death of St. Ciaran at Clonmacnois, which happened in A.D. 544, so that the large monastery of Glendalough was probably founded about A.D. 540, when the saint was 42 years of age. The hill of Uisnech was from time immemorial a celebrated place of meeting, being situated in the centre of Ireland, and, though belonging to Meath, it was considered neutral ground, with the privilege of sanctuary during these meetings. It is probable these holy abbots, Columba of Kells and Durrow, Comgall of Bangor, Canice of Aghaboe, were met together for the transaction of some weighty matters arising from the accession of the new king of Tara, Diarmaid Mac Cearbhaill, and they invited to their meeting the already famous abbot of the great Leinster monastery. In the Life of Kevin it is said that he went to establish, or confirm, a league of brotherly friendship with these saints; and so much was he respected that Columba stood up at his approach, and remained standing until he arrived. And when the ruder multitude (plebs) censured the great Columba for acting thus in deference to an unknown stranger, Columba warmly replied:—"Foolish men! why should not I stand at the approach of that servant of God, in whose honour God's Angels in heaven will yet rise from their thrones?"

After his return to Glendalough he presided over that great monastery and school for 60 years more, leading still the same heavenly life, training others by word and example to walk in the paths of holiness, and confirming his teaching by the performance of many miracles. But as was well said by one of his disciples, his own life was the greatest miracle of all. Special mention is made of two of his favourite disciples—St. Berach, who himself afterwards founded a great monastery at Cluaincairpthe, since called Tarmonbarry, on the banks of the Shannon, and Mochoroy, a Briton, who was for many years a loving disciple of the saint and founder of the Church of Delgany. He enjoyed the great privilege of giving the Viaticum to Kevin, when the holy old man was about to be called away to his reward. St. Kevin died on the 3rd of June, A.D. 618, at the great age of 120 years, and was buried by his sorrowing children in his own church at Glendalough.

The memory of St. Kevin is greatly revered, not only in Wicklow but in all parts of Ireland; and he seems to hold a place in popular affection next after the great patron saints of Ireland, Patrick, Bridget, and Columcille.

Some writings have been attributed to the saint, amongst others a Life of St. Patrick, but without sufficient evidence. He was certainly the author of a very celebrated monastic Rule, which unhappily is no longer extant. It would be invaluable as exhibiting the special bent of his mind in the formation of the religious character. It was in this that his great influence made itself felt during the long years of his life. It was by this means he stamped his own character on the minds of his disciples, and made Glendalough famous during subsequent centuries as a nursery of holy and learned men. His monastery was for the East of Ireland for many ages what Aran of St. Enda was for the West—a great school of asceticism, a novitiate for the training of the young saints and clergy of Erin in virtue even more than in knowledge. It was also his noble ambition to elevate the standard of ecclesiastical knowledge, and make the cloister not only the home of all virtue, but an asylum of the liberal arts. This was all the more necessary in a turbulent and semi-barbarous age, when the strong hand made its own laws. In this respect the seclusion of Glendalough, as well as the sanctity of its founder and of its holy places, rendered it a most secure asylum down to the advent of the Danes, and even after their departure down to the time of the Anglo-Normans.

II.—Ruins at Glendalough.

The existing ruins in the ancient city of Glendalough may, as we have observed, be divided into two groups—those at the shore of the Upper Lake, to which we have already referred, and those at the junction of the two rivers and east of the Lower Lake, which constitute the city proper. This group of buildings was enclosed by a *caiseal*, or strong stone wall, which not only served the purposes of defence, but also marked the limits of the *clausura*, or enclosed space, which females were not allowed to enter, nor the monks to leave without permission. Within this enclosure are the ruins of the following buildings:—(1) the cathedral; (2) the round tower; (3) *Cro Coemghin*, or St. Kevin's kitchen; (4) the Church of the Blessed Virgin.

The wall of the cashel has now almost entirely disappeared; but the magnificent gateway by which it was entered, after crossing the bridge of the Glendasan river, still remains. "This gateway was very nearly a square, being sixteen feet between the side walls and sixteen feet six between the perforated or arched walls."[1] It was built of mica slate—the

[1] Petrie—*Round Towers*, p. 451.

stone of the district—except the arches and pilasters, which are built of large chiselled blocks of granite. The two arches are of equal height—five feet to the chord and ten to the soffit. A tower arose originally over this double arch, but it has now quite disappeared. There can be no doubt that the gateway tower and cashel were coeval with the completed monastery, and date from the beginning of the seventh century.

The nave of the great church or cathedral, and the round tower are, in Petrie's opinion, coeval, and also belong to the early part of the seventh century. He bases his opinion mainly on the character of the masonry, which in the tower is perfectly similar to that of the round tower of Kilmacduagh. There is historical evidence that the great Church of Kilmacduagh was built by Guaire Aidhne, about the year A.D. 610. The masonry of this church is so similar to that of the tower at Kilmacduagh that they must be regarded as of contemporaneous construction. The magnificent tower of Glendalough is still 110 feet high; with its conical cap it would have been originally 132 feet high. The door-way is at present ten feet from the ground, and is perfectly similar in construction to the door-ways of the ancient churches in the valley—in this, that they are all constructed of chiselled blocks of granite, while the walls are built of the rubble masonry with the stones of the district. The door-way is five feet seven inches high, two feet wide at the sill, and one foot ten inches at the arch, which is cut out of the stone—a feature characteristic of our earliest churches. The nave of the great church which is of the same date (the chancel is in the later ornamented style), and of perfectly similar masonry, was 55 feet in length by 37 in breadth; the chancel seem to have been a later addition

The building called St. Kevin's Kitchen, with its belfry tower and high pitched stone roof, is perhaps the most interesting building at Glendalough, and was, there is no longer reason to doubt, like Columcille's House at Kells, the oratory and dormitory of the saint. It is evident, upon close examination, that the chancel and sacristy annexed to it, as well as the belfry, were later additions. It was originally a simple oblong 30 feet long and a little more than 22 feet wide; the side walls are 11 feet in height, whilst its height to the ridge of the roof is 31 feet. The lower apartment was an oratory arched with stone, the high pitch of the stone roof leaving space for the croft, or upper chamber, which was at once the cell and sleeping apartment of the

saint himself—the oratory beneath was what would now be called a private oratory. The belfry is a small round tower, with conical cap, at the western end of the building.

"Our Lady's Church" is situated a little to the west of these buildings already described, which are in close proximity to each other. It is said to have been the first church built by the saint, eastward of the smaller lake; and its architecture confirms this tradition. The door-way is of singular beauty, and of the most primitve type. It is figured in Petrie's great work, and exhibits all the characteristic features of the earliest doorways. The architrave, however, is ornamented with a plain double moulding; and a cross, saltier-wise, is carved on the soffit of the lintel. St. Kevin himself was buried within this ancient church, which he had dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary.[1] His grave was shown in the last century, but it seems that it is now covered over with rubbish from the falling walls. This is also called the Ivy Church, for its walls are festooned with that charitable creeper which flings so much beauty around decay.

This group of buildings was all erected during the life-time of the saint, or shortly after his death. There were, however, two other edifices further down the valley to the east, of a more ornamental character and of later date.

'Trinity Church' is about a furlong eastward of the 'City' proper, standing alone close to the road on the left from Larah to those buildings which we have just described. It has, or rather had, a chancel with a very beautiful semi-circular chancel arch, and also a round tower, which Petrie thinks was built so late as the thirteenth century when the valley of the saints had become "a nest of robbers and murderers." Still further to the east near Larah bridge, and about a mile from the 'City,' was the Priory of St. Saviour, or as it is sometimes called, the Monastery. It is now almost a heap of ruins; portions, however, of the pilasters supporting the chancel arch still remain. The nave of this church was 42 feet long by 26 in breadth; the monastic buildings seem to have been annexed to the north side of the church, but cannot now be traced. Its most interesting feature, however, was the elaborate carving in low-relief on the bases and capitals of the piers (at one side only) that supported the chancel arch. The character of the ornamentation would seem to point to the

[1] Petrie says there were no such early dedications to the B. V. Mary; but the Life of Carthach of Lismore shows that he built and dedicated a church in honour of the B. V. Mary.

end of the eleventh, or the beginning of the twelfth century, as the probable date of this once beautiful building. The little oratory within the cathedral cemetery, called the "Priest's House," which has now completely disappeared, but of which drawings are preserved, also belonged to the Romanesque period. It was called the 'Priests' House,' according to Petrie, because it was reserved for the burial place of the Roman Catholic clergy of the surrounding districts.

Within the cemetery, which surrounds the cathedral and is much overcrowded with graves, was the famous yew tree, said to have been planted by St. Kevin himself; but it has now entirely disappeared. It is said that some of its branches were lopped off to make furniture, and that the ancient tree then gradually withered and decayed.

In close proximity to St. Kevin's Kitchen there were anciently several other buildings, all traces of which have now quite disappeared. Mention is made of Cro-Chiarain or St. Ciaran's House, and also of the church of the "Two Sinchells"—Regles an da Sinchell—the patron saints of Killeigh in the King's County. These saints were friends and contemporaries of St. Kevin, and probably resided for a while in the 'Houses' which they or their disciples had constructed in the holy valley. The remains of numerous ancient crosses and tombstones have been discovered during the recent restorations, and are now better cared for than they were heretofore.

III.—St. Moling.

Many celebrated scholars were trained in Glendalough from the time of St. Kevin to St. Laurence O'Toole. The See of Glendalough, too, occupied a highly honourable position amongst the bishoprics of Leinster, sometimes claiming the place of honour next to Kildare itself. Yet there is no evidence that St. Kevin himself was raised to the episcopal dignity; and we may fairly assume that if he were a bishop the fact would not have been passed over in silence by the writers of his Life. But the fame of the monastery and schools became so great during the life of the holy founder, that his successor and nephew, St. Molibba, was consecrated bishop, and probably during the lifetime of St. Kevin himself. The subsequent prelates are styled sometimes 'bishops,' and sometimes 'abbots' of Glendalough; and in one instance, at least, that of the abbot Cormac, who died in A.D. 925, the same person is styled bishop and abbot.

It was during the abbacy of Molibba that the school of Glendalough produced a distinguished pupil, whose name is well known in Leinster, that is, St. Moling, the patron and founder of St. Mullins.

St. Moling was one of the most celebrated of the holy and learned men who were trained in Glendalough during the lifetime, or shortly after the death of the founder. His name is still preserved in the parish and barony of St. Mullins, on the left bank of the Barrow, in the extreme south-west of the county Carlow. Moling's first name was Dairceil or Tairceil. He came of the royal race of Cathaoir Mor, a celebrated king of Leinster in the third century of the Christian era. His father's name was Faolain, whence he is sometimes called Mac Faolain, and his mother Eamhnat, is said to have been a Kerry woman. Though sprung from the Ui Deagha, on the left bank of the Barrow, he was probably born in his mother's country; and hence he is sometimes called Moling Luachra, from the mountain district in Kerry, where he was either born or fostered amongst the friends of his mother. The date of his birth is not known; but as he died in A.D. 697, it was probably some time in the early part of the same century.

Few particulars of his early life are preserved, except certain miraculous stories, which we need not refer to here. It is expressly stated, however, that he spent some time in the monastery of Glendalough, which was not very far from Hy-Kinsellagh, and was then the most celebrated establishment in Leinster. As St. Kevin died about A.D. 618, young Moling cannot have seen much of that great saint, if indeed he ever had an opportunity of meeting him at all. But the spirit of Kevin was there—his Rule and his discipline flourished in Glendalough; and hence in any case we may regard St. Moling as his disciple. It was most probably at Glendalough that the young saint acquired that great knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures which he afterwards manifested, as well as those exalted virtues which bore such lasting fruit on the banks of the Barrow.

The place where he founded his cell and monastery was then called Achadh Cainidh; but the name was soon changed into *Teach Moling*—the House of Moling—since corrupted into St. Mullins. He chose for his home a beautiful spot on a gentle eminence overlooking the noble river, which at this point mingles its waters with the rising tide between the green meadows and rich groves that crown its swelling banks. A small stream here joins the Barrow, and Moling built his

monastery on the high ground, between the junction of the river and the stream. His own cell he built lower down, close to the river, for he loved to be alone with God as much as possible, although he frequently visited his monastery, and allowed his monks to confer with himself whenever it was necessary.

He had, too, that love of useful labour which pre-eminently marked the great Benedictine Order. Laborare est orare. To labour is to pray—when the labour is sanctified by its motive and its object. Moling wished to grind the corn for his monks, and for this purpose, with his own hands, he dug a mill-race from the stream already referred to, in such a way as to convey the water more than a hundred yards from the river, even through high ground, in order to get a fall for the water to turn the mill-wheel near his monastery. He kept a curragh, too, on the river, near his own cell, and was always ready to ferry strangers across the broad river, who came to pray and do penance at the monastery. During all this time his food was herbs and water; and according to some accounts—probably in imitation of St. Kevin—he lived a long time within a hollow tree.

His austerities and his virtues soon attracted around Moling a great number of disciples, so that a large community was formed under his guidance and direction. The ruins of four ancient churches are still to be seen on the slope of the hill overlooking the Barrow and the streamlet, some of which were certainly built in his time. It is said, too, that a portion of the mill-stone of Moling's mill was found in the stream, and that the mill-race which he dug out can still be clearly traced.

St. Aidan, called also Mo-Eadan, which has been shortened into Moedog and Moque, the celebrated Bishop of Ferns, died A.D. 632. It is said that he wished St. Moling to be his successor, and that the princes and clergy of Leinster invited Moling to become the Bishop of Ferns. Reluctantly the saint complied with their wishes—for he loved Teach Moling much—and preferred to spend his life there in solitude, attending only to himself and the direction of the chosen souls, who placed themselves under his direction. But God willed it otherwise; and Moling became, at least for some years, Bishop, or High-bishop of Ferns—for at this period a certain kind of precedence was claimed for Ferns over the other bishoprics of Leinster. It is by no means certain, however, that Moling became Bishop of Ferns in immediate succession to Aidan in A.D. 632. If so he must have afterwards resigned

his See, which is highly probable, and thus made room for other bishops of Ferns, whose names are mentioned in connection with that See during the seventh century, and during the lifetime of Moling himself. It cannot, therefore, be determined whether he became Bishop of Ferns in A.D. 632 or 691—the former is, however, the more probable date.

Moling procured for his tribesmen one signal temporal advantage—the remission of the celebrated cow-tribute, called the Borumha, which was levied by the King of Tara in Leinster every three years. It was an oppressive tax, originally inflicted for a great crime committed by the King of Leinster in A.D. 106, and was productive of much bloodshed, and mutual hatred between the men of Leinster and the Hy-Niall. Now King Finnachta the Festive had already twice exacted the tribute, and was coming to levy it a third time. The Lagenians resolved to fight rather than to pay; but first of all it was deemed expedient to get St. Moling to use his great influence in their behalf to have the tribute remitted. The saint succeeded beyond their expectations, although, it is said, he made use of an equivocation to effect his purpose. Failing to get a promise of the absolute remission of the tribute, he asked the king to grant him a stay of execution until *luan*. The king promised to grant this stay. Now *luan* means Monday; and so the king understood it, but it also means the Judgment Day, in which sense Moling understood[1] it, and insisted on the fulfilment of the promise in that sense. The king feared the saint, and moreover was unwilling to be deemed a pledge-breaker, so he was constrained to remit the tribute for ever. The remission, however, was a most unpopular act with his own northern subjects; and it is not unlikely that the story of the equivocation was invented by the king's friends, who wished to please the saint, and yet to throw the odium of this unpopular measure on one who was much better able to bear it than Finnachta. Even the wise Adamnan is represented as counselling his royal master to assert the legal claims of the great Hy-Niall race to which he himself belonged; and he is said to have blamed the king for yielding so weakly to the Leinster saint. The remission was made about the year A.D. 693; and the cow-tax was never levied in Leinster afterwards.

St. Moling is said to have been a great scholar, and a great writer. More ancient Irish poems, several of which are still extant, have been ascribed to St. Moling than to any

[1] See page 342, where the equivocation is put in another way.

other of our Irish saints,[1] with the exception, perhaps, of Columcille. Some of these have reference to that Borromean Tribute of which we have already spoken; others purporting to be prophetical, give a list of the kings of Erin, their battles, victories, and death. In consequence of these and several other prophetical poems, St. Moling has been set down as one of the four great prophets of Erin. The others are St. Patrick, St. Columcille, and St. Berchan of Clonsast. One of Moling's prophecies foretells the coming of the Anglo-Normans to Ireland, and the 'conquest' of the country by Henry II. Some of these poems are manifest forgeries written after the event. They were ascribed to St. Moling, because he was pre-eminently a holy man, who enjoyed in his own time the reputation of a prophet amongst all the people.

Keating had in his possession a work which he calls the *Yellow Book of St. Moling*, but which has since been unfortunately lost. Hence we know nothing of it beyond the name. It was probably begun by St. Moling and afterwards continued by his monastic successors as an authentic record of local and national events, like the *Annals of Tighernach*, or the *Chronicon Scotorum* at Clonmacnoise. Colgan observes that St. Moling had a great devotion for St. Kevin, and constantly invokes that saint in his poems and prophecies. He was probably privileged to see during his boyhood the venerable Kevin at Glendalough, and must have been greatly impressed by that saintly master. St. Moling died towards the close of the seventh century.

Notwithstanding its remoteness, the Danes frequently ravaged Glendalough during the ninth century; and again repeated their ravages during the tenth and following century. There could be no peace for the monks of St. Kevin whilst the fleets of foreigners were on the Boyne, the Liffey, and even at the mouth of the Bray River—if it be the *Inner-na-mbarc* referred to by the Four Masters in A.D. 836, as O'Donovan conjectures. Still the sanctuary retained at least to some extent its ancient fame even during these troubled times, for Cormac Mac Cullinnan before his death in A.D. 907, bequeathed to Glendalough an ounce of gold and an ounce of silver, as an offering to secure the prayers of the community. It contained 'learned men' and 'anchorites,' as we know, during this century, for the death of one of them is recorded by the Four Masters in A.D. 953 (*recte* 954); and

[1] See O'Hanlon, Volume vi., page 714.

the death of several other anchorites is noticed by the Masters in this same century. They were probably the same as the *inclusi* of whom we read later on—each of them living in his own little cell, or 'kitchen,' which was at once his house and his oratory. One of them was also what was called 'Head of the Rule' at Glendalough, and died in A.D. 965. The death of a lector or reader in theology is also noticed the previous year; both bore the surname of O'Manchan, and were probably members of the same family.

But it was not the Danes alone who wasted the abbey-lands and destroyed the sacred edifices. Native Irishmen now followed their bad example both at Glendalough and elsewhere. In A.D. 983, "the three sons of Cearbhall, son of Lorcan, plundered the termon, or abbey-lands of Coemghen; but the three were killed before night through the miracles of God and Coemghen." No one can regret their fate; it was an example and a warning greatly needed in those rude and lawless days. Five times during the next thirty years St. Kevin's sacred city was plundered and destroyed by the Danes;[1] yet it was still a venerated and much frequented shrine during the whole of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In A.D. 1095 died the Brehon O'Manchan, Comarb of St. Kevin, and a most celebrated judge. He was doubtless a member of the same distinguished family, which had already given many abbots and anchorites to Glendalough.

Noble ladies, too, we find, used to go on the pilgrimage to Glendalough; for in A.D. 1098, Dearbhforgaill, daughter of Tadhg Mac Gillaphadraig, and mother of Murtogh and Tadgh O'Brian, died in pilgrimage at Glendalough. The same year Mac Maras Cairbreach, a noble priest and learned senior, died in the sacred vale; but whether on his pilgrimage or in his own monastery is not stated. In A.D. 1127, the abbot Gilla Comghall O'Toole was slain by the men of Fertuathal; he was doubtless a member of the same family as the illustrious Laurence O'Toole, the greatest glory of Glendalough after its founder, of whom we must give a more particular account, for he was the last canonized of the countless saints of ancient Erin.

The Four Masters in A.D. 1085 record the death of "Gilla na-Naomh Laighen (the Leinster-man), noble bishop of Gleann-da-locha, and afterwards head of the monks of Würzburg." The celebrated monastery of Würzburg in Germany, called in Latin Herbipolis, was founded by

[1] See Archdall.

St. Killian. There is still preserved in the library of its university a famous MS. called the *Codex Paulinus*, or *Codex of the Epistles of St. Paul* in Latin, with copious glosses, both marginal and interlinear, in the Irish language, which were largely made use of by Zeuss, in the composition of his *Grammatica Celtica*. This MS. is hardly of the time of St. Killian himself. Zeuss thinks it was written either by Marianus Scotus, or more probably brought from Ireland by one of the learned pilgrims, who crowded the Scoto-German monasteries at that time. He makes special reference to Gilla na-Naomh, Bishop of Glendaloch; and it may be that he was the writer of this Codex, which still proves to the learned world how carefully the Scriptures were studied in our Irish schools, and how the Irish language was cultivated by our native scholars during the 'darkest' of the Middle Ages.

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CHAPTER XVIII—(*continued*).

THE SCHOOL OF GLENDALOUGH.

St. Laurence O'Toole.

"And, Thou, O mighty Lord, whose ways
Are far above our feeble minds to understand,
Sustain us in these doleful days,
And render light the chain that binds our fallen land.
Look down upon our dreary state;
And through the ages that may still roll sadly on,
Watch Thou o'er hapless Erin's fate.
And shield, at least from darker ill, the blood of Conn."

—*Clarence Mangan.*

Something like this was the prayer of St. Laurence O'Toole when he was dying in a foreign land. He was the last of our saints; and he was also the associate and intimate friend of the last of our kings. At one time both had high hopes that the demon of civil strife might be banished from the land; and that Celtic learning and Celtic art would find their highest development under the protection of a strong government and a united people.

Together they drew a sword, that could not save, in defence of hapless Ireland. Together they were forced to bow the knee in homage to the Norman king. But St. Laurence did not forget his old master in his new loyalty. He was faithful through all his misfortunes to the unhappy Roderick O'Connor; and it may be truly said that he met his noble death striving to obtain Henry's pardon for the discrowned king, and "to render light the chains that bound his fallen land." The saint's career, from every point of view, is full of interest; and therefore we make no apology for tracing his history at some length.

It is fortunate that in the case of St. Laurence, or Lorcan O'Toole, we are not left to tradition or imagination to enable us to ascertain what manner of man he was. We have an accurate and authentic Life of the saint, rich in all details, and written by one who was in every way qualified for the task. The writer was a member of that community at Eu, in whose bosom St. Laurence found a home and a grave; and he must have had ample and authentic information at his disposal. For the Life was written shortly after the

saint's death; its author must have seen and probably conversed with Laurence himself; and, doubtless, he made the acquaintance of the clergy who accompanied him from Ireland to Normandy. Above all, he had at his command the official documents, which were transmitted from Dublin to Rouen, at the request of the Bishop and Chapter of that Cathedral, and which were drawn up by the Bishop of Kildare and the Prior of Christ's Church by command of Henry de Loundres, Archbishop of Dublin, for the process of the saint's canonization.

Laurence O'Toole, both by father and mother, came of the noblest stock of Leinster. His father, Murtough, was hereditary prince of the Hy-Murray, a race that inhabited the fertile lands of south-eastern Kildare (which still belongs to the diocese of Dublin), until they were driven into the mountains of Wicklow by the Normans. His mother was the daughter of O'Byrne, the ruler of north-eastern Kildare, who shared the same fate; for both were driven from the plains into the mountains, where they maintained a sturdy but turbulent independence, down to a period within the memory of men still living.

The young Lorcan was baptized at St. Brigid's famous shrine in Kildare, by the hands of the bishop of that ancient see, who seems to have been in some way connected with the family of the saint. We need not dwell on the alleged prophecies of the saint's future greatness—too often these prophecies were composed after the event. A few years at most after the birth of the child, Dermott M'Murrough, of infamous memory, became king of Leinster, and, as Gerald Barry testifies, he was a tyrant from the beginning, a cruel oppressor of the nobles, a man whose hand was against every man, and who had every man's hand against him. The father of the young Lorcan being suspected or defeated by the tyrant, was forced to give his youngest child as a hostage to M'Murrough. Sometimes these hostages were treated with great cruelty; and if any violation of faith, real or imaginary, took place, were not unfrequently put to death with circumstances of the greatest atrocity. M'Murrough was a savage, and treated the child savagely. He had him at the tender age of ten led away in bonds; he caused him to be sent into a desert, stony land, somewhere probably to the north of Ferns, and there the child was left almost without food, until he was nearly starved to death, and his clothes were reduced to rags; so that, as the author of his Life tells us, he had nothing to shelter him from the biting north winds

of winter. It was the discipline of the Cross which sometime or other God prepares for those whom he destines for a high degree of sanctity, that they may thus learn the best of all lessons—the lesson of patient endurance at the foot of the Cross.

When his father heard of the sad plight to which his poor son was reduced—knowing that prayers would be fruitless with such a man—he fortunately made prisoners of twelve of M'Murrough's followers, and then gave the tyrant to understand that if his son were not released, he would take summary vengeance on the captives. The threat was effective; M'Murrough could not afford to lose his followers. So he agreed to give up the boy to the Bishop of Glendalough on condition that his own followers were at once released.

It was fortunate for young Lorcan that the chances of war brought him to Glendalough, for it was the crisis of his life. His captivity was, after all, a blessing in disguise, since it ended in thus bringing him to the holy city of St. Kevin. In spite of the ravages of the Danes, and of other spoilers like Dermott M'Murrough, the lamp of learning still burned brightly in the mountain valley, and the virtues of St. Kevin were still cultivated, at least to some extent by his monastic children. There were, it is true, from time to time burnings at Glendalough, and deeds of violence were perpetrated even under the shadow of its holy mountains. But the learning and holiness acquired by St. Laurence in its cloisters—for it was his only school—is the clearest proof that both sacred and profane studies were there cultivated in comparative peace, and that the churches of Glendalough were crowded with holy and learned monks until the Norman spoilers came, when it was made a desert, which afforded refuge only to the robber and the outlaw.

Young Lorcan was at once placed under the protection of the bishop; and when his father came to bring him home, the noble boy asked permission to remain for ever in the family of St. Kevin, and forego his hopes of an earthly and, in those days, a very brilliant inheritance. The father gladly consented; and thus, at the early age of twelve, young Lorcan was given over to God, and like Samuel, was brought up in the temple of the Lord, serving day and night before His altar. His whole time, like that of his young companions, was given to prayer and study. It was his highest privilege to be allowed to attend at the altar, to train his young voice to sing the praises of God with the

monks in the choir, and prepare the requisites for the Holy Sacrifice, especially the spotless host, and the wine, and the limpid water from St. Kevin's well. He was assiduous in attendance at all the lessons of the lectors, that is the readers in Divinity and Sacred Scriptures, who were attached to the monastic school, and delivered their lectures in a somewhat free and easy, but very effective, sort of way. In rainy weather they assembled in the church, or the abbot's house, or the reading room; but when the sun shone the professor and monks strolled about, or sat down under the shade of St. Kevin's yew, while the teacher expounded the sacred page, or read the lives of ancient saints, or went through the canons of the Church, explaining how the law was violated, how transgressors were punished, and how the truly repentant after condign penance were reconciled. It was not so elaborate a system as we have at present; but it was admirably suited to the wants of the time. It certainly produced great prelates and great saints; and beyond all doubt it was more healthy for soul and body to hear the Word of God explained in the bracing air of Glendalough, under the shadow of its majestic mountains, than to be cooped up in a dusty hall, where one could hardly ever catch a ray of the glorious sun struggling through the murky atmosphere.

Lorcan was a diligent and keen-witted scholar. He was, says the writer of his Life, "Fervens in audiendo, sagax in repetendo, prudens in discernendo, sollicitus audita tenaci memoriæ commendare." No good quality of a perfect student was wanting. He was not merely an attentive but an eager listener—fervens in audiendo. He went carefully and wisely over what he had heard or read—sagax in repetendo. This improved his natural talents, and made him a youth of keen and penetrating judgment—prudens in discernendo—and the knowledge which he acquired he stored up, not in a confused heap, but with system and order, which helped to strengthen his retentive memory, and enable him to have his knowledge ready for use—sollicitus audita tenaci memoriæ commendare.

For thirteen years he spent his life in the service of God, in the improvement of his mind, and the acquisition of sacred knowledge. They were probably the happiest years of his life; his young heart, pure and free from care, was given to the only love that begets perfect happiness, the love and service of God. Then it came to pass that the abbot of Glendalough, the comarb of St. Kevin, died; and, young as he was, the unanimous voice of the clergy, and of the people,

called for Lorcan as his successor. He was only twenty-five —too young, indeed, in ordinary circumstances to be placed at the head of a great community; but his virtues, his learning, and his prudence far exceeded the measure of his years, and so they placed him, reluctant as he was, at the head of the great establishment of St. Kevin, probably about the year A.D. 1153, when we read that the abbot Dunlaing Ua Cathail died.

We cannot stay to recount his wisdom, his zeal, and, above all, his great charity in his new post. The abbey lands were wide; the family of St. Kevin was very large; the duties of the abbot very onerous; but we find young Lorcan discharged all these duties with complete success. Above all, his charity to the poor was remarkable. A time of great scarcity had come upon the people in all that mountain region, and great numbers would, undoubtedly, have perished of cold and hunger, but the abbot found means to be generous to all—no appeal was made to him in vain; no one left the gates of the monastery hungry. When necessary he gave the scanty meal from his own table to feed the starving people. Perhaps it was that he was too profuse of the property of the monastery, or because in the common need he made all give a share to the poor, but it is certain that at this period in his own religious family there were false brethren who calumniated their abbot, whispering evil things against him. Yet he bore all with perfect patience, and took no measures to vindicate his own character, until his enemies, from very shame, were forced to confess that they did injustice to their blameless abbot.

Shortly after the see of Glendalough became vacant and the eyes of all were turned on Laurence as the most suitable person to assume the mitre. But the pious abbot this time absolutely refused; they made him a religious superior against his will; but he would not become bishop at any rate; and that for two very good reasons—first, because he had not yet attained the canonical age; and secondly, because in his humility he thought himself unable to bear so heavy a burden.

But Providence reserved him for greater things.

Shortly after the archiepiscopal See of Dublin became vacant by the death of Gregory in October, A.D. 1161. Next year the abbot of Glendalough was chosen to succeed to the vacant See, and was consecrated in Christ Church Cathedral by the Primate Gelasius, attended by several other prelates and abbots from various parts of the kingdom. The choice

of Lorcan to fill the See of Dublin is a singular proof of the great esteem is which he was held by all classes of his countrymen, both clergy and laity. For the citizens of Dublin were mostly of Danish origin, and had small sympathy with the natives. Hitherto their prelates were either of foreign extraction, or Irishmen, who had been trained and educated in England. They were consecrated too by the Archbishops of Canterbury; and they invariably took an oath of obedience and subjection to the see of Canterbury.

But the election of Lorcan inaugurated a new era. He was Irish of the Irish; trained and educated at home, as far as we know, exclusively within the shadow of the Wicklow Mountains. He was consecrated by the Primate of Armagh, and of course he was neither asked, nor if asked, was he a man to promise obedience to the see of Canterbury, which certainly had no claim *de jure* to the obedience of any Irish prelate. Nor did any prelate after him consecrated for any Irish see promise or pay any such canonical obedience to any prelate except the Pope. So that in the person of Lorcan the Irish Church was finally emancipated from this dependence on the Primate of all England, which in after days, had it continued, might have been the means of causing the shipwreck of our country's faith.

Laurence was consecrated Archbishop of Dublin—Glendalough was not yet united to the Archdiocese—in the year A.D. 1162. In the same year we find that there was a Synod of the Irish prelates held at Clane in the co. Kildare, at which twenty-six bishops and several abbots are said to have assembled for the reformation of abuses, and the enactment of salutary discipline. The Primate Gelasius presided; and it is highly probable that many of the same prelates assisted at the consecration of St. Laurence in Dublin.

At that time the city seems to have been greatly in need of some moral reformation; and the holy prelate at once girt up his loins for the difficult task.

He began with the clergy; for he knew that the people would readily follow their good example. He persuaded the secular clergy of the Cathedral Church to form themselves into a kind of religious community. With the sanction of the Pope they adopted the rule of life followed by the Regular Canons of Aroasia—a reform that had been introduced into the diocese of Arras in France some eighty years before. The Archbishop himself adopted the same rule of life, and became a living model of its perfect observance for all his clergy. We fortunately have accurate details regarding his manner

of life at this period; and beyond all doubt it was, as the lessons read on his festival declare, a life of marvellous austerity.

Beneath his episcopal dress he wore the habit of a Canon Regular, but, unlike the others, next his skin he wore a coarse hair shirt night and day; and as if that was not enough to mortify his flesh, he had himself frequently scourged, often no less than three times in the day, by an attendant who knew how to keep the scourging secret. He dined in the same refectory with the other canons, and, as with St. Augustine and his clergy, whilst the body was refreshed with food, the spirit was nourished by spiritual reading. He was most abstemious too at all his meals, and never tasted meat. On Friday his only food was bread and water; and sometimes on that day he absolutely abstained from all food—feeding his soul, however, with meditation on the passion of Christ. Yet he was hospitable as became a great prelate, and had banquets rich and abundant prepared for his guests. He even pretended on these occasions to take a share of the good things provided for the strangers, and coloured his water with a little wine, lest his own abstinence might prevent them from fully enjoying the bountiful hospitality prepared for them.

He was assiduous in prayer, and before all things anxious to promote the beauty of God's house, as well as the splendour and regularity of Divine worship. Here, too, the example of the holy prelate must have exercised a very powerful influence both on the clergy and on the people. We are told by the writer of his Life that he was a constant attendant at all the offices of the Church, when not visiting his diocese; and not content at presiding at the daily offices, he regularly got up at midnight to recite matins and lauds with his canons; and when they retired to rest after the office was completed, he generally remained behind in the choir, before the miraculous crucifix of Christ Church, sometimes standing, or sitting, or kneeling, but always praying; so that he often continued reciting the psaltery until the morning dawned, and then he would go out to the cemetery to say a prayer for the dead before retiring for a few hours' brief repose. Yet in all things which might win popular favour or applause, he loved to hide even his good works, lest they might beget self-esteem or hypocrisy.

Such a life was sufficiently rigorous, but it was not enough for this man of God. His nephew Thomas, whom he greatly loved, became Abbot of Glendalough; and then the holy pre-

late having one in whom he could confide, used to retire to his beloved mountain valley at the approach of Lent, in order to give himself up to a forty days' retreat in the desert. All the saints of God loved solitude, and longed to fly from the haunts of men. They seem to have been especially anxious to select for their place of retreat those secluded spots where the sights and sounds of nature might be most apt to raise their minds to God. Hence we find them in the islands of the great sea, or of some lonely lake; or they retired to the majestic solitude of some mountain valley, where no mean or sordid thoughts could cross their minds; nay, rather everything around them helped to raise their souls to heaven. It was in this spirit—the spirit of a noble generous soul that Laurence used to leave the city and go out to meet and commune with God in the solitude of the mountains of Wicklow. It was the same Spirit of God that brought Moses to Nebo, and Eliseus to Horeb. Therefore it was that St. Gall sought the inmost recesses of the Alps, and St. Kevin the deepest valleys of the Wicklow mountains. So Laurence, like another Kevin, took up his abode not with his nephew in the monastery at the bottom of the valley, but in the bosom of the hills—in the very cave where St. Kevin himself spent his earliest penitential years. There St. Laurence dwelt in the grotto in the face of Lugduff, under the mountain's brow, overlooking the gloomy lake, to which access could be gained only by a boat, or by a ladder planted in the lake itself. Twice a week his nephew brought him a little bread and water to support life, and ascertained his wishes or commands in all things concerning the government of the diocese. If urgent business called him, he went at once from his retreat; but this rarely happened. Whilst there he saw no one but his nephew. His bed was the rock; his canopy the sky; his lamps the midnight stars that shone above the summit of Comaderry mountain. He was there in cold and hunger, in storm and sunshine, alone all the day and all the dreary night. Yet he was perfectly happy, for he lived with God. The saints are not alone in these solitudes, they are watched by angels; the light of heaven is around them; the glow of perfect love is in their hearts; God speaks to them in all the voices of the mountains, and they see Him in all the majestic sights before their eyes. He spoke by day and night to Laurence, as He spoke to holy Job of old.

But what useful purpose does this extreme austerity serve? We can only answer very briefly that it serves two things—first, it serves to emancipate and ennoble the soul in its con-

flict with the flesh; second, it serves to assimilate us with Christ crucified. We with our selfish hearts, our sordid ungenerous souls, cannot understand the saints of God; we cannot realize how God speaks to them, and comforts them, and feeds them like the ravens in the wilderness. Yet this bishop was a man like ourselves, a man whose life was cast on evil days, and who lived in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation.

Yes, the prelate was a Saint and an Apostle; but the people were sensual and wicked; they would not hearken to his word, nor turn away from their evil courses. Danish Dublin at this time was not a model city, nor a truly Christian city. It was still, in many ways, half pagan; or if they had faith, they certainly had not works. The Archbishop was sorely grieved; he forewarned them, like another Jeremias, of the wrath to come. He told them, what even human sagacity might perceive, that every kingdom divided against itself must fall; that an evil day was in store for them, as well as for the wicked and perverse generation that was over all the land. God had sent them prophets, and they would not hearken; apostles, but they would not be converted. "So the day is at hand, and thy house will be laid desolate." It was even at their doors—a day of wrath and vengeance—and yet a day of justice and mercy, because their bitter chastisement was yet their salvation.

Shortly after the arrival of the Norman freebooters in the year A.D. 1169, Dermott M'Murrough and Maurice Fitzgerald made their first attack on Dublin. On this occasion the citizens kept within their gates, and the enemy was not strong enough to take the city. But the midnight sky was red with the glare of burning homesteads through all the valley of the Liffey; and when the plunderers departed, scarcely a living thing survived in all that fertile region.

Next year the attack was renewed in force, and this time it was directed against the city itself. The citizens had great reason to fear the vengeance of M'Murrough, for they had put his father to a cruel death in the midst of their city, and had shamefully buried him with a dog. Now M'Murrough, with the Normans led on by Strongbow in person, was thundering at their gates. The city, too, was badly prepared for a siege, and there were traitors within the walls; so the citizens resolved to make the best terms they could, and surrender the city. The Archbishop was asked to negotiate the terms of surrender; but even whilst he and the Earl were in conference outside the walls of the city, Milo de

Cogan, and some of the more lawless spirits, burst over the walls, and attacked the town. They burned, robbed, and slaughtered as usual, so that the streets were filled with the dead and dying. Then it was that St. Laurence proved himself a true pastor. Rushing from the false parley, he entered the city, and snatched from the brutal soldiers the palpitating bodies of their victims. A hundred times he interposed his own body to ward off the fatal stroke from others. He went about through the slippery streets in his episcopal robes, with the cross in his hands, imploring the merciless foe for Christ's sake to stop the horrid carnage; and when he could do no more, he gave absolution to the dying, and helped to bury the heaps of dead. It was a fearful foretaste of what his native land was destined to endure in the future.

But the Archbishop was not only a true pastor, but a true patriot. He knew that the first adventurers were simply robbers, some of whom were afterwards imprisoned for daring to effect a hostile landing in Ireland, without the licence of the king, at the invitation of a traitor. So he stimulated the slothful king, Rory O'Connor, to action; he implored the native princes to give up for a while their insane divisions, to unite against the common foe, and come to the aid of the Capital. These efforts were partially successful. Some thirty thousand Irish soldiers under the supreme command of Roderick himself beleagured the city from Dalkey to Clontarf, whilst the ships of Hasculf the Dane crowded the river, and watched the river-gate. It was the supreme moment of Ireland's destiny. Had the Irish been soldiers, or even men, they might have annihilated their foes. But they were neither. After a two months' siege, in which the garrison was reduced to the verge of starvation, Milo de Cogan made a desperate sally with a few hundred soldiers, and routed the hosts of the Irish, almost with a shout, as boys frighten away the flocks of birds from the fields in spring.

The Archbishop doubtless saw clearly enough from what he witnessed on that occasion, that the Irish soldiers had no discipline, that their leaders had no union amongst themselves, and that such a heap of uncementing sand, as the event proved, would have no chance of withstanding the mail-clad warriors, who were victorious on every battlefield in Europe. So when the king himself came over towards the close of A.D. 1171, Laurence O'Toole, with the rest of the Irish prelates, followed the example of the kings of the West, and South, and East, who had all submitted to Henry

without striking a blow. Herein, too, he proved himself a true patriot, although submission must have cost him a bitter pang. He had seen enough to prove that resistance was utterly hopeless, and that his duty to God and to the people was to yield to a power which he could not oppose. So we find his name amongst the prelates who assembled at Cashel in A.D. 1171, or the beginning of A.D. 1172, to enact such disciplinary laws as the deplorable state of the times had rendered imperatively necessary for the reformation of morality and the reform of discipline. From the Pope's reply to the Synodical letter of this Council we can readily infer, what indeed we might naturally expect from the disturbed state of the times, that very grave abuses prevailed at this period in various parts of the country—abuses which it was a blessing to have reformed almost at any cost.

Yet the great Archbishop was devotedly loyal to his own sovereign, Rory O'Connor, and continued to be faithful to him to the end, even when he became a crownless king, forsaken by his own subjects, and despised and imprisoned by his own sons. Indeed it is not too much to say that Laurence lost his life in the service of that worthless king, whose misfortunes he had done so much to alleviate.

In A.D. 1175 Rory O'Connor finally and formally gave up all claims to the kingdom of Ireland, and was content to accept his own hereditary kingdom of Connaught as a fief from the English monarch. The treaty is still extant; and we find the name of Laurencius Dublinensis as Chancellor for the unfortunate King of Connaught. He even went over to London in person in company with the Archbishop of Tuam, and the Abbot of St. Brendan's, Clonfert, to negotiate the treaty for his old and beloved monarch. Such fidelity to fallen princes is rare, and is highly honourable to the great prelate of Dublin.

Towards the end of the year A.D. 1178 Alexander III. convoked for the first Sunday of the following Lent a General Council to meet in Rome, in order to heal the deplorable wounds which the Church had received from a schism of some twenty years' standing. The Letters of Convocation did not arrive in Ireland until near Christmas; the journey to Rome was toilsome and perilous, especially in the winter season; yet the good Archbishop at once prepared to obey the voice of the Pope as the voice of God. He started immediately after Christmas, and crossing over to England was, with the Irish prelates, his companions, very rudely treated by the king. Before they were allowed to

cross to France the jealous tyrant compelled them to swear that during their stay in Rome they would do nothing derogatory to the dignity of the English crown. But in spite of every obstacle they succeeded in making their way to Rome, and were present at all the sessions of the Council. It is a proud thing to find the names of six Irish prelates amongst the signatories of that great Council—a larger number than came from England and Scotland together—and at their head stands the name of Laurence, Archbishop of Dublin.

But Laurence did more than attend the sessions of the Council. He opened the eyes of the Pope to the true state of affairs in Ireland, and not only secured many privileges for his own Church in Dublin, but also insisted on the Pope recognising and safeguarding the liberty and independence of the Church in Ireland. Unfortunately our information on this question is very scanty. However we are inclined to think that, when it is said St. Laurence secured the liberty of the Church in Ireland, it means not only that, like Thomas à Becket, he took measures to protect it against the encroachments of the civil power, but what was at least of equal importance, he preserved it from all dependence on the See of Canterbury. It was only two years before in A.D. 1177 that the Scottish prelates and abbots were forced to swear obedience to the Archbishop of York as their metropolitan. The same crafty policy would no doubt be also attempted in Ireland; and although we cannot prove it, we are convinced in our own mind that it is to St. Laurence O'Toole we owe the spiritual independence of the Catholic Church in Ireland.

The Pope conceived a very strong regard for St. Laurence; he conferred on him the high and special honour of Apostolic Legate in Ireland; and the independence of the Irish Church, having thus been once formally recognised in Rome, could not afterwards be easily undermined. But we must hasten to the end. Laurence came home to Ireland; his stay, however, was very brief, when he was again compelled to travel to England in the interest of Rory O'Connor, the discrowned king. Several abortive attempts were made to get rid of the English influence in the West of Ireland; Rory, or at least his sons, were implicated in these designs, and Henry, who only wanted an excuse, threatened to depose the old king, and confiscate all his territories to the Crown. Rory was alarmed, and what was worse, he was helpless. His own sons had turned against him; so in his misery he implored the Archbishop to be his mediator with

the king. He had no one else to rely on, and the Archbishop did not disappoint him. Again he left the shores of Ireland on a mission of charity; and doubtless his eyes were not dry as he gazed on the lessening summits of the far-off Wicklow mountains, and thought of the many happy days he had spent in the wild solitude of his beloved Glendalough. When he arrived in England Henry could not, or would not, see him; moreover, he forbade the prelate to return again to Ireland, and he himself sailed away to Normandy. For three weeks the Archbishop was kept as a sort of prisoner in the monastery of Abingdon, when, resolving to dare all in order to accomplish his purpose, he made up his mind to find out the king beyond the Channel. He embarked at Dover; but a fever had already laid hold of him, so that when he landed, he was unable to travel. He struggled onward, however, for a little until he came to the brow of the hill which overlooks the church and monastery at the little town of Augum or Eu, on the borders of Normandy. Enquiring the name of the place, he learned that it was the Church of the Canons Regular of St. Victor, a branch closely allied to his own. Thereupon he cried out—"Haec requies mea in aeternum, hic habitabo quoniam elegi eam."

Arriving at the monastery, he first paid a visit to the church, and after spending some time in fervent prayer before the altar, he was carried to the hospice. The scene that followed is touching in the extreme, and is taken exactly from the Latin Life written by a brother of the Order. After reposing a little he sent for the Abbot Osbert, and made his confession with great sorrow and humility. But still his mind was not easy; for the task for which he crossed the sea was unaccomplished, and he was no longer able to plead in person before the king. Then he called one of his attendant clerics, David by name, the tutor of Rory's son, who was to be given as a hostage to Henry for his father's loyalty. "Go," said he to David, "find out King Henry, tell him I am dying, and ask him in God's name to forgive the King of Connaught, and receive him again into favour." David bowed his head, and set out to find the king. He was favourably received, for his story made a deep impression on the king, whose hard heart was softened by the sufferings of the Archbishop in the cause of his sovereign. He granted the boon, and pledged his royal word that he would receive Rory again into favour. So David, after four days, returned to the dying prelate, who anxiously awaited his arrival, and told of

his success. Then St. Laurence called David to him, made him sit close by his side, for he was almost unable to speak, and laid his head upon the bosom of the priest to imply that he was now satisfied, and that he would die in peace.

Shortly after, his mind being now at ease, he received the Viaticum with the greatest devotion, and then begged to be anointed. Some one of the bystanders suggested that now, as he had received all the sacraments, it were well if the Archbishop made his will. Raising his eyes to heaven he made use of these solemn and memorable words:—"I declare before God that I have not one penny under the sun to dispose of—not one penny"—he was a religious, a Canon Regular; he professed poverty and he kept his vow. Whatever he possessed he gave to the poor; indeed he never possessed anything at all. No sooner was it got than it was gone again. Happy the priest who at his dying hour can make the same declaration with the same truth. Then his thoughts wandered back to his native land—that native land which he loved so wisely and so well, which he tried in vain to save, and which he now saw torn with internal dissensions and trampled under foot by foreign foes—and he dying far away, and leaving no one behind him to guide his people or heal his country's wounds. These bitter thoughts sank deep into his heart; and in anguish of mind he exclaimed—alas! we know how prophetically—"Heu populo stulte et insipiens, quid jam facturus es—quis sanabit aversiones tuas? Quis medebitur tui?" Ah, foolish and misguided people, what will now become of thee? Who will cure thy dissensions? Who will heal thy wounds? He longed to be dissolved and to be with Christ; yet for the sake of his perishing flock he would still remain. But the end was now at hand. With dim eyes he kept reading a MS. copy of the Seven Penitential Psalms which he had brought to him; and when he could read no more, orally or mentally, about twelve o'clock on Friday, the 14th of November, the glorious Confessor closed his eyes in a peaceful, happy death.

The body of the holy Confessor was buried in presence of Cardinal Alexis, the Papal Legate of Scotland. But it remained in its place of burial only four years and six months, when the many wondrous miracles wrought at his tomb caused the remains of St. Laurence to be transferred, and with great solemnity enclosed in a crystal case before the high altar of the church.

Shortly after, at the urgent request of the Canons Regular and the faithful of Eu, a petition for the canonization of the

holy servant of God was sent to Rome by the Archbishop and Chapter of Rouen, to which diocese the church of Eu belongs. The Pope, Honorius III., ordered the usual investigation to be made by the ecclesiastical authorities. As St. Laurence came from Ireland shortly before his death, it became necessary to have an official report concerning the life of St. Laurence from that country. The task was committed by the Pope to Henry de Loundres, Archbishop of Dublin; but he being absent in England on affairs of State, commissioned the Bishop of Kildare and the Prior of Christ's Church to collect the necessary depositions and transmit them to Rome. After the usual process with legal proof of the practice of heroic virtues during life and miracles after death, Honorius III., in the tenth year of his pontificate, in a Bull issued from Reate, solemnly enrolled St. Laurence O'Toole amongst the canonized saints of the Church. It was the year of our Lord A.D. 1225 that the latest of our saints was thus formally canonized.

It is the greatest glory of the School of Glendalough to have produced such a man—so learned, so holy, so faithful to his king and to his country in the hour of trial. When shall we see his like again? And who will deny that the Church which produced such men as St. Laurence and St Malachy was sound at the core in spite of many faults and abuses?

After his death the School and Monastery of Glendalough gradually fell into decay, until at length the holy valley of St. Kevin became little better than a nest of robbers and murderers.

CHAPTER XIX.

SCHOOLS OF THE SEVENTH CENTURY.

I.—The School of Lismore, St. Carthach.

"I found in each great church, moreo'er,
Whether in island or on shore,
Pity, learning, fond affection,
Holy welcome and kind protection."

—*King Aldfrid's Poem on Ireland.*

The Munster Schools were of somewhat later origin than the monastic schools of the North; but during the seventh century some of them became very celebrated, especially the great School of Lismore, which was second only to that of Clonmacnoise. It was founded by St. Carthach about the year A.D 636, and soon became the chief seminary in the South of Ireland.

St. Carthach, its founder, was born about the middle of the sixth century in that remote district of West Kerry, which also gave birth to St. Brendan of Clonfert. He was sprung, too, from the same race as Brendan, for his father Firaull, son of Fingin, derived his descent from the renowned Fergus Mac Roy, the northern hero, so celebrated in romantic legend and bardic song. His mother, Findmaith—the noble-fair one—is said to have been the daughter of another Fingin, who was chieftain of Corcoduibhne, in the same County Kerry. This lady was twice married, and by the second marriage became the mother of St. Cuanna of Kilcoony, and probably of other saints also.

The infant was baptized by a priest called Aidan,[1] who gave him Carthach as his baptismal name; but the future saint was more commonly called Mochuda, which seems to have been a pet name given to the boy by his teacher St. Carthach the Elder.[2] The Elder Carthach at this time, about A.D. 570, lived at his monastery at the foot of Slemish (Slieve Mis) on the right bank of the river Mang, not far

[1] See Life in the *Salamanca MS.*

[2] It is likely that his first name was Cuda, and that he got the name of Carthach Junior in honour of his master.—*Martyrology of Donegal.*

from Castlemaine. His younger namesake had just attained the age of twelve, and was according to the writer of his Life, a handsome youth, whose bright face and winning ways made him a great favourite with all who knew him. As yet, however, he had received little or no training either in virtue or learning. Like St. Patrick at the same age, he was employed in herding his father's swine on the banks of the river, when it chanced that he came near the monastery of St. Carthach. Just then he happened to hear the monks pouring forth the solemn strains of sacred psalmody, and was filled with such rapture that he remained all night near the holy place without food or shelter. When asked by his parents where he had spent the night, he told them; and added that he was ready to leave all and join that sacred choir of white-robed monks. His parents gladly consented, and sending for the Bishop Carthach, they handed over the boy for the service of the Lord.

The bishop trained the youth in sacred learning, and saw him daily, to his great joy, make even greater progress in virtue, so that after some years he ordained him priest. The holy prelate then after a short term of trial gave him permission to found a monastery of his own at a place called Killtulach, which is described as between Slemish mountain and the river Mang—not far it would seem from Castlemaine, on the right bank of the river. This was about the year A.D. 590; so that we may assign the date of his birth to about the year A.D. 560.

It was very usual at this period for young monks to travel to different monasteries, and spend a period in each in order to perfect themselves in sanctity and learning. Bangor had acquired great fame under the rule of St. Comgall, and so Carthach went to visit his kinsmen in the far north, and make himself still further acquainted with monastic discipline under so great a master. After staying some time at Bangor he returned home to Kerry; but once more went northward to the extreme limit of Munster to pay a visit to St. Molua of Clonfert Molua, whose monastery was situated at the roots of Slieve Bloom at the place now called Kyle. It still forms a part of the diocese of Killaloe, though quite close to the frontier of the ancient Meath.

Shortly afterwards we find him at the great monastery founded by Colman-elo, and called from him Land-elo, now Lynally, quite near to Tullamore, and only three miles from Rahan, where the saint was soon to found an establishment of his own.

It is evident that it was St. Colman-Elo who advised St. Carthach to found a monastery near his own in the territory, not of Munster, but of Meath—in fact it was near the site of some of our most famous battles, which the sons of Heber and Heremon fought for supremacy on this border land. The name *Raithain* signifies *filicetum*, or the Ferney Land; and it was not more than three miles from Lynally, the ancient Land-elo, which is derived by some from *ealla*, meaning an ancient grove or wood.

St. Carthach lived at Rahan for nearly forty years,[1] and at Lismore, certainly not more than two years; yet his name is generally connected with the latter, and hardly ever with the former monastery. Perhaps it was because the men of Meath treated the saint so badly after his long and laborious career at Rahan. Indeed, it is quite evident, that it was jealousy—jealousy which the Hy-Niall monks, probably of Durrow, near Rahan, felt at the success of St. Carthach—that prompted them to expel the saint and his scholars from the dear old convent, where he had lived so long. There are few things less creditable to the Southern Hy-Niall, both princes and priests, than their conduct on this occasion. It is manifest that Carthach by his piety and learning had gathered around him a great monastic school at Rahan. For not to speak of boys and servants, the Life in the *Salamanca MS.*, tells us that he had gathered round him some 847 monks, who supported themselves and succoured the poor by the labour of their own hands, and with their holy founder served God together—unanimiter—with one mind and in one spirit. "Their toil," says the Life, "was severe, but the fire of charity lightened the burden of this labour, so that to none of them did it seem heavy" (Vita I., sect. 15). It is said, too, that Carthach himself was raised to the episcopal dignity in Rahan.

Now, the 'native clerics,' says the Life, of the Hy-Niall race, were jealous of this success, and instigated by Satan, they resolved to drive the southern monk from their territories. The Kerryman, of course, though a saint, was, no doubt, annoyed by these proceedings of the men of Meath. It was indeed hard to be borne, for his was a holy, a useful, and an inoffensive life. He had spent forty years amongst them. His soul clung to the place, because he fondly believed, as it was the scene of his labours, so also it would be the place of his resurrection. He had built for himself and his monks a very beautiful church, the ruins of which are still to be seen. He had established a famous school, and

[1] Constantine, a British king, was vice-abbot of Rahan, some time between 588 when he was converted, and 596, when he was martyred in Kintyre. See Forbes' *Calendars*, page 311.

crowds of young men had placed themselves under his direction, and were, doubtless, tenderly attached to their master. He was near the monasteries, too, of some of his dearest friends, who dwelt around Slieve Bloom. And now they were going to drive him from his home, and his monks, and his friends, at an age too when the strength of his arm was weakened, and the vigour of his mind diminished.

It was a wanton and a cruel eviction, for which Prince Blathmac, son of Aedh Slaine, seems to have been primarily responsible. The Annalists denounce this expulsion; but they seem afraid to mention openly the authors of the crime. The *Ulster Annals* (A.D. 635), call it the 'effugatio' of Carthach from Rahan, which is not merely a flight but an expulsion. The Four Masters say that he was 'banished' from Rahan, and date it as taking place in A.D. 631; but both the *Chronicon Scotorum* and the *Annals of Ulster* give A.D. 635, at Easter, which is in all probability the true date.

The *Life of St. Carthach*, however, assigns the real motive for thus evicting the saint. The clergy of the district moved by jealousy at the success of Carthach, resolved to expel the 'stranger' from their province; and Blathmac, then ruler of that territory, was persuaded to carry out this wicked purpose. Can it be that the Columbian monks of Durrow were envious at seeing the fame of their own establishment eclipsed by the greater renown of Rahan? It is not at all unlikely, although it is not expressly stated; for the Life attributes it simply "to some of the native clergy of that province." Elsewhere it is said that the expulsion of Carthach is one of the three evil things for which certain 'saints' of Erin were responsible—the other two being the shortening of St. Ciaran's life, and the banishment of Columcille to Iona. We entirely sympathise with this traditional sentiment. If any of the 'saints' were responsible for driving away the venerable old man from his monastery at Rahan, they must have done penance for the deed before they could deserve the name. It was a cruel and an evil deed; and although Providence brought much good from the evil by the foundation of Lismore, there is some reason to fear that it broke the old man's heart, and brought down his grey hairs in sorrow to the grave.

When the edict went forth that Carthach and his monks were to be driven from Rahan, we are told that he departed reluctantly. "Leave this city with your monks," said the chiefs of Meath, "and seek a settlement in some other

country."[1] "I wish to end my days here," said Carthach, "for I have served God many years in this place, and now my end is nigh. Therefore, I will not depart, except I am compelled, lest men think me inconstant of purpose. I am ashamed to become a wanderer in my old age." After some hesitation the men of Meath plucked up an ignoble courage; and it is said that Blathmac himself took the hand of the saint, and led him forth from his monastery.

The poor old man was not equal to long journeys; and so slowly and regretfully he travelled southward, having turned his back for ever on the jealous and ungrateful men of Meath.

The first night he stopped with St. Barrind (or Barrindeus) of Drumcullen, in the barony of Eglish. The name is still retained as that of an old parish church, about four miles north-east of Parsonstown. Drumcullen is about three miles east of Eglish old church at the foot of the mountain. It cannot be more than ten miles from Rahan, and thus marks the extent of the first day's journey.

But the saint was now in his native Munster, and could proceed with greater leisure and more security. The second night he rested in the famous old monastery of St. Ciaran of Saigher. This was one of the cradles of Christianity in Ireland. If we may accept the statement in the *Life of St. Ciaran*, he was directed by God's Angel to go to a well in the middle of Ireland, and found his church at the place where his bell would ring of itself. The saint obeyed, and travelled onward until he came to the place now called Bell Hill, near the fountain Huaran. There his bell tolled, and close at hand he founded his church, at Saigher, now called Seir Ciaran, which is not more than two miles south of Drumcullen, under the western shadow of the mountain. There was every reason why St. Carthach the Younger should rest at Seir Ciaran. His old master, St. Carthach the Elder, to whom he owed so much, had been once bishop of that ancient See, in succession to Ciaran himself. It was about the year A.D. 540, before Carthach the Younger was born, for it appears that it was after leaving Seir Ciaran, about A.D. 560, that Carthach the Elder came to his native Kerry, and there met with his younger disciple of the same name.

There was reason why Carthach should love that old monastery, under the shadow of the morning sun when rising over Slieve Bloom, where his beloved master had spent so

[1] O'Hanlon's *Lives*, page 263, Vol. v.

many years, and where the first-born of the Celtic Saints of Erin had gone to his rest.

It was a short stage from Seir Ciaran to Roscrea—some seven or eight miles ; but Roscrea had become even then, in A.D. 635, so famous a retreat for saintly men, that it could not be passed by without a visit. There was no town of Roscrea there at the time ; all the low-lying lands were constantly flooded, and formed the *Stagnum Cre* frequently mentioned in the Lives of the Saints of that district. The *Ros,* or wooded promontory, on which St. Cronan founded his monastery, rose up from these flooded lowlands At first he established himself at Seanros, a wooded hill in Corville Demesne, where his church is still to be seen ; but afterwards, about the year A.D. 606, he founded a second monastery on the Ros of Lough Cre, the site of which is now occupied by the Catholic Church of the town of Roscrea. It is probable that he was dead before the visit of St. Carthach ; but all the same, his monastery and his spirit were there on the great Munster highway.

Leaving Roscrea the saint seems to have made his way to the royal rath of Failbhe Flann, King of Magh Femhin, as he is called in the *Annals of Ulster.* Magh Femhin was the fertile and picturesque plain stretching from Cashel to Slievenamon on the east, and on the south to the Knockmealdown Mountains, which separated it from the territory of the Desii. It was a rich and fertile land, watered by swelling rivers, and bounded towards the south and east by bold and savage mountains.

Failbhe Flann, the ancestor of the MacCarthys, was then king at Cashel, and kindly received Carthach, who showed his gratitude by curing the king's son of a sore eye. The king offered Carthach a site for a monastery in his own territory of Magh Femhin ; but Carthach knowing that this was not God's will in his regard, declined the prince's generous offer, and resolved to go further southward. It is likely that the saint met at the court of Failbhe that prince's son-in-law, Maeloctraigh, Chief of the Desii of Waterford, who offered to Carthach a large territory beyond the mountain (of Knockmealdown), where he might establish himself and his brother monks in peace beside the Great River, and without any fear of further disturbance during the brief span of his remaining life.

The saint gladly accepted this offer, and stopping for a brief rest at Ardfinnan, which was destined for another saint later on, he crossed the rugged hills that rose up before him,

probably by the pass leading southward from Clogheen, and coming down the southern slopes of the hill he saw stretched before him that beautiful valley through which the Blackwater forces its way from Lismore to Cappoquin. "Here shall be my rest, for I have chosen it," exclaimed the saint, and crossing, not without miraculous aid, it is said, the swelling waves of the Avonmore, he crept up the wooded heights that overhung the southern bank of the stream, and sat down on Magh Sciath—the Plain of the Shields—close to what Keating calls Dunsginne—the great rath surmounting the height to the east of the present town of Lismore.

Many writers have asserted that there was a monastery at Lismore before St. Carthach's arrival there. Mention is certainly made of the death of Lugaid of Lismore in the *Ulster Annals*, A.D. 591; and the Four Masters record the death of Neman, Abbot of Lismore, in A.D. 610. In A.D. 634 the *Annals of Ulster* tell us that Eochaidh of Lismore died. O'Donovan thinks these entries refer to Lismore on the Blackwater; it is more probable, however, that the reference is to Lismore—an island near Oban in Scotland—where an Irish saint called Molua or Moluag had founded a famous monastery much celebrated in later times.

Assuming with the *Ulster Annals* that Carthach came to Lismore after Easter of the year A.D. 635, he cannot have lived there more than two years—and probably died on the 14th of May, A.D. 637. The *Ulster Annals* fix his death in A.D. 636; but from the statements in his Life we gather that he must have spent at least two years at Lismore. We are told that on his arrival there he at once proceeded to mark out the site of his monastery, surrounding it as usual with a strong fence and ditch. Thereupon the holy virgin Coemell, whose cell was not far off, came to see the saint, and finding him at work she inquired what the saint and his monks were doing. They replied that they were building for themselves a small habitation—*Lios-beg*, it would be in Irish. "Not so," replied the virgin saint; "this place will be called Liosmor," "which," says the writer of the Life, "means in Latin atrium magnum," or Great Hall; "and her prophecy," adds the author, "was verified by the event. For Lismore is now a large city, half of which is an asylum where no female is allowed to enter, for it is full of cells and other monastic buildings, and a great number of holy men always dwell there. For they come there in great numbers, these saintly persons, not only from every part of Ireland, but also from England (Anglia), and from (Britannia) Britain." This distinction

between Anglia, or Saxon land, and Britannia, or the country from the Clyde to the Severn inhabitated by the native Britons, shows that this Life was written at a very early date —probably in the seventh or eighth century.

Having founded his monastery, the saint wished to retire from community life for some time to prepare himself for death by undivided communion with God. The great fame of Carthach was attracting numbers of monks and students to this new foundation, so that he was frequently disturbed by this great influx of pious visitors. Labour and old age too were telling on his emaciated frame, and he knew that the end was not far off. Then he retired to a lonely cave, which was under the monastery, and there for one year and six months gave himself up to the service of God in solitude. The monks, however, especially the older ones, were still allowed to visit their beloved father; and he seeing the difficulty they had in reaching the high ground on which the monastery was built, resolved to return to the community once more. So the brethren came to carry him up the steep ascent, and now they had reached the middle of the ravine, when the old man seeing a ladder reaching up to the open heavens told the brethren to lay him on the ground and administer to him the last sacraments. Tenderly and piously they did so, "and having partaken of the sacrament of the Lord's Body and Blood and given his last injunctions to the brethren, he bade them all a tender farewell, and giving to each of them the kiss of peace he died in their arms on the day before the Ides of May," in the year A.D. 637, which seems to be the true date.

Like St. Ciaran of Clonmacnoise, Carthach spent only a very short time with his monks in this monastery that was afterwards to become so famous. He laid, however, the foundations of the spiritual edifice as well as of the material building. During his long residence at Rahan, he wrote a Rule for the guidance of his monks, which no doubt was the same that was adopted at Lismore. Many of the monks of Rahan, too, when expelled by the Hy-Niall, accompanied their beloved father to Lismore. These were no doubt the holy 'Seniors,' who used to visit him in his cell in the lonely valley; and who ruled the community after his death in the same spirit and in obedience to the same Rule.

Many striking miracles are recorded in the *First Life of St. Carthach*, to only one of which we shall make reference here.

When Carthach and his companions were coming to Lismore—the place given by the prince of the Desii. "where

they might live on the fruits of their own labour, and serve God in peace, without becoming a burden to anyone"—they saw from the high lands a great impetuous river, swollen by the tide of the neighbouring estuary, barring the way, so that there was no means of crossing to the southern bank. Then, whilst the others were in doubt what to do, Carthach, with his friends, Colman-elo and Molua (of Kyle), bent their knees in earnest prayer to God, and lo! the waves were divided on the right hand and on the left, opening a passage for the saints to cross over on dry ground. And so these true Israelites, with hymns of praise to God, crossed the bed of the Avonmore, and came to Lismore, as it was afterwards called—the place which God himself had prepared for them. The word *lis*, anciently *les*, properly signifies the mound surrounding the buildings, and also by a secondary signification, the space enclosed within. Here it includes both—the defending mound and the enclosed space which contained all the ecclesiastical buildings—the church, the cells, the refectory, the stores and other necessary adjuncts to a great monastery. In those early days these buildings were of rude materials and simplest structure; but all the same they were the choice abodes of learning and holiness.

The most interesting literary monument connected with Lismore is the Rule of St. Carthach. It is one of the eight Monastic Rules of our early Church still extant in Dublin manuscripts, and, in the opinion of O'Curry, is certainly authentic. The language, the style, the matter, are all such as might be expected from the person to whom they are attributed at the time it is supposed to have been composed. We know, too, from other sources that these saints really did compose what are called Monastic Rules, and hence, when we find these Rules in ancient MSS. bearing their names, we are not justified in rejecting their authenticity without some tangible reason.

It is to be regretted, although it is an additional proof of their authenticity, that almost all these ancient rules have been written in verse. The construction of these verses is very intricate and artificial, and as a consequence, the matter was, to some extent, sacrificed to the form—we lose in precision what we gain in harmony.

The Rule of Carthach, or Mochuda, is much more than a Monastic Rule in the ordinary sense. It gives precepts for the spiritual guidance of almost all classes of persons. The entire poem, as translated by O'Curry, consists of 135 four-lined stanzas. The first eight of these stanzas contain a general

exhortation addressed to all Christians, urging on them the observance of the great law of charity, as well as of all the other commandments of God.

The next nine stanzas are addressed to 'Bishops,' and contain some judicious and wholesome admonitions. The Bishop is responsible to Christ, and must be a vigilant shepherd and an orthodox teacher, checking the pride of kings, resisting evil-doers, and conciliating the lay multitude. He is to be skilled in Holy Scripture, for if he is not a learned man he is only a step-son of the Church. He is bound to condemn all heresy and crime, for it is certain that on the Day of Judgment he will have to answer not only for his own faults, but for the sins of those under his government.

Then the Rule for an abbot is prescribed. It is a noble office to be 'Chief of a Church,' but the holder must be worthy of it, and set his subjects a good example by his own deeds. He is to exhort the aged, and to instruct the young; to reprove the silly, and censure the disorderly—but in all patience, modesty, and charity. He must be constant in preaching the Gospel, and "in offering the Sacrifice of the Body of the great Lord upon the altar." Otherwise he will be the enemy of God, and cannot become the Heir of the Church of God.

The "priest," as distinct from the abbot, is enjoined to lead a truthful, laborious life, and to offer up worthily the Body of the King. His learning should be correct, and he should be accurate in the observance of the rule and of the law. When he goes to give Communion, at the awful point of death, he must receive the confession without shame and without reserve.

The 'soul's-friend' is admonished not to be a blind leader of the blind, but to teach the ignorant, to receive their confessions, not their alms, candidly and devoutly; and not lead them into sin in imitation of himself. If he has not Mass on every day, he will, at least, on Sunday and Thursday, to banish every wickedness far from him.

Still more minute prescriptions are given to regulate the conduct of a "monk." All the faults he is to avoid, and all the virtues he is to practise are described in great detail; but as they really contain nothing new, we need not further refer to them here.

The special duties of the *Cele De*, or Culdee, are also defined, and, if we may judge from this Rule, they were not 'recluses' living alone, nor yet monks, supporting themselves by the labour of their hands in the fields; but regular clergy,

living in community, engaged in the celebration of Mass, the recitation of the Divine Office, the instruction of the ignorant in the church, and the teaching of the novices and students in their schools. The statements, however, are so vague that, to some extent at least, they would apply to all the clergy, whether secular, regular, or monastic.

"The order of the Refectory" is prescribed with great minuteness, but as we have already referred to this subject, we shall not deal further with it here. Taken in all its parts this Rule of St. Carthach is a highly interesting, and most important monument of the early Irish Church.

II.—St. Cathaldus of Tarentum.

The great glory of the School of Lismore was St. Cathaldus. Like many other Irishmen, who left home and died abroad, he has been almost forgotten by our native writers. But the country of his love and of his adoption has not been ungrateful to Ireland. With one accord all foreign writers, following the testimony of Tarentum itself, proclaim that Cathaldus, its second apostle and patron saint, was an Irishman and a scholar of the great School of Lismore.

Lismore is far away from Taranto, as it is now called. It was a city of ancient Magna Graecia, frequently hostile to Rome, and at the best of times yielding only a reluctant obedience to the Queen of the Seven Hills. She preferred Pyrrhus and Hannibal to the Curii and Scipios. Seated on the southern sea that looks towards Greece, its cultured and pleasure-loving inhabitants had more affection for their ancient mother-land than for their stern mistress by the Tiber. Even in the days of the Empire they were more loyal to Byzantium than to Rome. Strange that this Greek-Italian city, situated in the very heel of Italy, should get its apostle from a Munster monastery. Yet such is the fact, to which its own writers bear unanimous and grateful testimony.

The *Life of St. Cathaldus* has been written by two Tarentines—the brothers Bartholomew and Bonaventure Morini—of whom the former wrote his account of the saint in prose, and the latter in poetry. Both being citizens of Taranto, were acquainted with all the traditions of the place in reference to their patron saint, and, moreover, formally appeal to the testimony of the ancient public records of the Church and of the city in all those things to which these ancient records could bear witness, and also to the Office for the Feast of St. Cathaldus, which was published at Rome in the year A.D. 1607, by the Cardinal Archbishop of Taranto,

with the sanction of the Holy See. The brothers Morini shortly afterwards wrote the Life of the Saint. The poetic Life by Bonaventure Morini was first written in eight books; and is greatly and justly praised for the elegance of its Latin style. Bartholomew Morini gives a briefer, but more authentic narrative in prose, which he hoped would help to make known beyond the bounds of their own city the labours, and virtues, and miracles of the saint, whom his brother had already celebrated in verse, and whom Providence had sent from the remotest shores of Ireland (Hibernia) to be the patron and protector of their native city. Unfortunately we have, as I observed before, no account of St. Cathaldus in our domestic Annals; and we must, therefore, follow the guidance of those foreign writers, who, whilst unanimous as to the place of birth and education of our saint, so render the uncouth Irish names in the Latin tongue, that it is very difficult to identify the persons and places to whom they refer. The substance of their account is as follows:—

Cataldus, or Cathaldus, which is the Latin form of Cathal, a very common Irish name, "came from Hibernia, which is an island beyond Britain, in the western sea, smaller in area, but fully equal to it in fertility of soil and productiveness of cattle; whilst in the warmth of the land, in the temperature of the climate, and the salubrity of the air, it is even superior to Britain."

Some say, continues Morini, that Rachau was the Irish city in which he was born, because in many books he is called Cathaldus of Rachau; but the writer rather thinks his native town was Cathandum, which by a change of letter would be Cathaldum, the town of Cathal. He was, he thinks, called Cathaldus of Rachau, because he was bishop of that place in Ireland; but the name Cathaldus he got from his native town, so that the saint's name would be a patronymic.

It is very difficult to ascertain where these two places were. Colgan, a very high authority, seems to think that Cathaldum or Cathandum was Baile-Cathail (*i.e.*, Ballycahill) in Ormond, which was the birthplace of the saint, and that Rachau was the foreign way of expressing Rahan, the original monastery and See of St. Carthagh, and of which Cathaldus might have become bishop on the expulsion of its holy founder by the Hy-Niall. On the whole, we think this is a probable explanation, and not inconsistent with the facts narrated in the Lives both of St. Carthagh and of St. Cathaldus.

For all the accounts agree that the native place of Cathaldus was in Momonia, or as some call it, Mumenia, which in the Office of the saint is changed by mistake of a letter into Numenia. But the reference is clearly to Munster, in Irish Mumhan, which is usually latinized Momonia, or more accurately, perhaps, Mumonia. There are three townlands in North Tipperary called Ballycahill, one of which gives its name to the parish of Ballycahill, west of Thurles, in the barony of Eliogarty. Seeing that this church took its name from Bally-Cahill, it is highly probable that the village itself got its name from a saint who was a native of the place, and under whose protection, too, the church of his native village would naturally be placed. There is every reason to assume that Cathaldus was of the royal blood of the Munster kings, and that he lived not very far from Lismore; both of which circumstances would very well apply to Ballycahill. Cashel, the royal residence of the Munster kings, is about twelve miles further south; and Ballycahill itself was on the highway from north to south Munster, the very road that Carthagh and his monks would follow in their flight from the North to the court of Failbe Flann at Cashel, on their way to Lismore.

His father's name was Euchus, and his mother's name is rendered Achlena or Athnea. Euchus is an attempt at latinizing the Irish Eochaidh. Achlena was a not unfrequent Irish female name, which was borne by the mothers of St. Fintan and St. Columbanus. More likely, however, the original name was the Irish form Ethnea—a very common name—which the Tarentines, with their Greek tastes, would very naturally render Athnea in Latin.

As to the date of the saint's birth there is more difference of opinion. The Morini, who speak, however, doubtingly, seem to think the saint was born in the reign of the Emperor Adrian, and came to Tarentum during the reign of Aurelius, or Antoninus Pius. In this, however, they appear to have merely made a conjecture, having no ancient authority to follow. They were anxious to make this second foundation of the Tarentine Church after St. Peter and St. Mark, who were said to have first preached the Gospel there, as ancient as possible. It is evident, however, even from their own narrative that a much later date must be assigned to the advent of Cathaldus to Tarentum. For he came there on his return from Jerusalem, where with his companions he had been to visit the Holy Sepulchre of our Lord. But the Holy Sepulchre was not discovered until the time of St. Helen, in

A.D. 336, after which this pilgrimage became common in Christendom, so that we cannot assign by any possibility this early date to the mission of Cathaldus at Tarentum.

Of course, too, the history of the Irish Church is entirely inconsistent with so early a date for the apostolate of this Irish saint. For we are told that he studied and taught at Lismore; that he was Bishop of Rachau; that he preached the Gospel successfully in Ireland before he left for the Holy Land—facts which more clearly mark the seventh than the second century as the period during which he lived and flourished.

The young Cathal, who seems to have been born about the year A.D. 615, grew up in holiness and grace before God and men; and, according to the author, was whilst yet a youth sent to study in the great monastic school of Lismore (Lesmoria). It was, as we have seen, founded by St. Carthach in the year A.D. 635. Indeed, Morini's account of our saint at Lismore would seem to imply that he was a professor there as well as student, for he tells us that the fame of his learning and virtues attracted many disciples to the new college,[1] and what is more, raised up against himself some powerful enemies. He not only taught in the schools, but he preached the Gospel most successfully in all the country of the Desii, working many miracles too, and building churches—one of which dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, is specially mentioned in his Life as the glory of Lismore. The author even exaggerates his labours, for he adds, that no one was left throughout all Ireland whom Cathaldus did not instruct in the saving truths of the Gospel.

Now the king (of Munster no doubt), was jealous of the great popularity of the saint, and fearing that Cathal, relying on the good will of the people, might aspire to the throne, he

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[1] In the Office of St. Cathaldus it is stated that:—

Adolescens liberalibus disciplinis eruditus ad eam brevi doctrinæ excellentiam pervenit ut ad ipsum audiendum Galli, Angli, Scoti, Theutones aliique finitimarum aliarum regionum quam plurimi Lesmoriam convenirent.

Morini tells in elegant verse of the same influx of students to Lismore from most of the countries of Europe.

Celeres, vastissima Rheni
Jam vada Teutonici, jam deseruere Sicambri;
Mittit ab extremo gelidos Aquilone Boemos;
Albis et Arverni coeunt, Batavique frequentes
Et quique colunt alta sub rupe Gebennas . . .
Certatim hi properant diverso tramite ad urbem
Lesmoriam, juvenis primos ubi transigit annos.

sailed to Lismore, intending to seize and imprison the saint. But God protects His own. This evil-minded prince was warned by two Angels in a vision not to touch Cathaldus at his peril; but rather to make him successor to Meltrides, the regulus of the Desii, who had inflamed by evil counsel the king's mind against Cathaldus; and lo! whilst the king was narrating this vision in the morning to his counsellors a messenger came to announce the sudden death of this Meltrides, the king's evil counsellor. The king, now filled with terror, asked pardon of Cathaldus, who was then a deacon, and was going to make him ruler over the Desii; but Cathaldus modestly refused the honour, preferring to serve God in religion. Thereupon he was made bishop, and the king assigned him mensal lands around Lismore, in the territory of Meltrides, and he became not only bishop, but even an archbishop, with twelve suffragan sees subject to him as metropolitan! The facts here seem much exaggerated, but were probably quite true in substance.

Meltrides seems to have been that prince of the Desii, who gave Lismore to St. Carthach in A.D. 635. His death is recorded under date A.D. 670. If Cathaldus were a deacon, in A.D. 670, he can hardly have been a disciple of St. Carthach, who died thirty-three years before. Colga, son of Failbe Flann, was King of Munster at this period, for his death is noticed, in A.D. 674 by the accurate *Chronicon Scotorum*. It is not unlikely then that Cathaldus, the professor of Lismore, who was supposed to be aiming at the crown of Munster, was a member of the rival line sprung from Fingin, the elder brother of Failbe Flann. Fingin died in A.D. 619, leaving the crown to Failbe; but of course his sons would have a better claim than Failbe's, when they grew up to man's estate. These two princes, Fingin and Failbe Flann, were respectively the heads of the great rival families of Munster, the O'Sullivans and M'Carthys; and although the latter rose to greater power, the former was, it is said, the senior branch of that royal stock, and retained their lands in the Golden Vale down to the advent of the Anglo-Normans, when they were driven to the mountains of Kerry. It was Colga, therefore, King of Munster, in A.D. 670, who caused Cathaldus the deacon to be elected Bishop, and not only endowed his See of Rachau with the lands of the Desii, but also subjected to his authority all the Bishops of the South, whose sees were within the kingdom of Cashel. In this way we can explain the statement in the Life that Cathaldus was made an archbishop with twelve suffragan prelates subject

to his authority. Colga would lend himself all the more readily to this project, because there would be now less danger of Cathaldus, after he became a bishop, aiming at the crown of Munster.

But where was the See of Rachau? We cannot agree with Colgan that it was Rahan. Rahan was in Meath in the territory of the Southern Hy-Niall, and we may assume it as certain that the spirit of jealousy, which in A.D. 635, drove St. Carthach from Rahan would never tolerate the appointment of this Munster prince as bishop in any part of Meath. It is, of course, still more improbable that the same jealous rivals would consent to give him metropolitan jurisdiction over the princes and prelates of their own race.

From the narrative in the saint's Life, if it can be relied upon, it is quite evident that Rachau was not far from Lismore, that it was in the territory of the Desii, and like the see of Sletty, it may, for a while, have attained to a certain pre-eminence in Munster in consequence of the learning and virtue of Cathaldus. Still it is very difficult to ascertain the exact locality of this 'city of Rachau.' There was, as we know from the Four Masters, a mountain in this district, about six miles north of Dungarvan, which was called Slieve Cua, now Slieve Gua. There must have been an old church in the district also, for there is a parish called Slievegue; and if there was a rath named from the territory, it would be Rath-cua, or Rachau, as any Irish scholar will readily admit. There was a pass through the valley beneath Slieve Cua, which, as it led from Magh Femhin into Decies without the Drum, was in ancient times the scene of many a bloody battle. We are inclined to think that Rachau of the saint's Life is simply another form of Rath-cua, which was doubtless the ancient name of the residence of the family of Cathaldus, who were probably the rulers of the district. The old church might have once had the same appellation, although so far as we know it is now lost. After the departure of Cathaldus, this church would lose its pre-eminence like many another church in Ireland which was once the seat of a bishop, and at present does not rank even as a parochial church. Clonenagh is an example, as we have seen when treating of its history. However, we merely offer this as a conjecture, for we can find no reference to the church or district of Rachau in our domestic Annals.

After Cathaldus had ruled the See of Rachau for some years, with his brother Donatus and several companions, he went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem—a journey that it was by

no means unusual for the fervent saints of Erin to accomplish even at that early period. On their return from Palestine, their vessel was wrecked in the Gulf of Taranto, not far from the city of the same name.

Taranto, the classical Tarentum, was an ancient and famous city, beautifully situated on the northern shore of the bay. It was founded by a Spartan colony of young men, who left their native country because they were branded with the stigma of illegitimacy. But they selected a beautiful site for their city, under the shadow of the Iapygian hills, and surrounded by the sun-lit waters of that spacious bay. The climate was delightful, the air bracing and salubrious; for the summer's heats were tempered by the sea breezes, and the mountains sheltered them from the biting winds of winter. The hills were clothed with olive trees and vineyards, which were specially prized; the wool of their sheep was of the finest quality; the inner harbour was filled with shell-fish; and their honey was equal to that produced by the bees of Hymettus. Horace, in a well-known Ode, extols its mild winter and lingering spring; and declares that its rare products and smiling bowers woo him to make his sojourn in that happy land.[1]

But its inhabitants, even in the days of Pyrrhus, were said to be an effeminate and licentious people, more devoted to the pleasures of peace than to the arts of war. They had heard the Gospel from the lips of the Apostles St. Peter and St. Mark; but during the disturbances succeeding the fall of the Western Empire, they became once more practically pagans. Such was the state of things when Cathaldus and his companions were wrecked on the shore of the Tarentine Gulf.

When the Irish bishop saw this beautiful city thus given over to pleasure and to vice, like St. Paul at Athens, his spirit was moved within him, and in burning language he implored the inhabitants to return to the service of the God whom they had forgotten. He performed also many striking miracles in the sight of all the people, healing the sick, and even it is said, raising the dead to life. It happened at this

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[1] Ille terrarum mihi praeter omnes
Angulus ridet, ubi non Hymetto
Mella decedunt, viridique certat
Bacca Venafro.

Ver ubi longum, tepidasque praebet
Jupiter brumas, et amicus Aulon
Fertili Baccho minimum Falernis
Invidet uvis.

time that there was no bishop in the city; so the Tarentines besought the Irish saint to become their bishop, and promised to obey his commands, and follow all his counsels. Reluctantly he consented, in the hope that he might thus be able to win them back to the service of God. His efforts were crowned with complete success. Once more Tarentum became a christian city in reality as well as in name; and Cathaldus was venerated as the second apostle and patron saint of the city.

Cathaldus spent some years in his new see; then feeling his end approaching, the saint once more exhorted the people and the clergy, in language of the most tender affection, to be true to the profession and practice of the Christian faith. He died, shortly after, in his city of Tarentum, towards the close of the seventh century, on the eighth day of March, which is his festival day. The holy remains, by which many miracles were wrought, were buried in a marble tomb, which up to this day is preserved in the sacristy of the Cathedral of Tarentum. For a long period the identity and position of the tomb were unknown, until the time of the Archbishop Drogonus, by whose orders the old cathedral was restored. The workmen in excavating the old walls came upon the marble tomb; and the Archbishop having been sent for, caused the tomb to be opened, when the sacred relics were discovered, with a golden cross on which the name of Cathaldus was inscribed. So Archbishop Drogonus, full of joy, caused the holy relics to be translated, and the tomb itself to be rebuilt close to the high altar of the new Cathedral Church, where they are preserved with great honour down to the present day. In the year A.D. 1150, Archbishop Giraldus caused the holy relics to be enclosed in a silver shrine, richly adorned with gold and jewels. A large silver statue of the saint was also erected in the church, and a portion of the skull was placed within the figure. The feast of the Invention of the saint's Relics is celebrated on the eighth day of May, and the Translation is kept on the tenth of the same month. Both these festivals, as well as the Natalis of the saint on the eighth of March, are celebrated with much pomp by the Tarentines even to the present day. The silver-gilt cross found within the tomb is hung around the neck of the silver statue of the saint, and on the cross may still be seen, engraved in characters quite legible and distinct—CATHALDUS RACHAU, which identify so conclusively the prelate of Lismore and Tarentum with the sacred relics that were discovered by Archbishop Drogonus.

Certain writings have been attributed to Cathaldus by Colgan, and others; but it is difficult to regard them as genuine.

There is a short treatise, given by Colgan, containing an account alleged to be taken from the Records of the Church and City of Tarentum, of the principal miracles of the saint. It is a very striking enumeration of most wonderful cures effected through the intercession of the saint, and bears intrinsic evidence of authenticity—at least such is Colgan's opinion.

There is also extant a prophecy attributed to the saint, which he uttered shortly before his death, and which was by his order, if not by his own hand, inscribed in certain leaden tablets, and hidden within a column in the Church of St. Peter without the eastern walls of the city. It is said that in the year A.D. 1492, the saint appeared to a certain deacon of Tarentum, by name Raphael Crurera, and commanded him to tell the Archbishop that he would find in the said church the figure of a boy painted on the column with the hand pointing out the spot where the leaves of the leaden record containing the prophecy would be found. The Archbishop sought the place indicated, and found the two sheets of lead inscribed with the prophecy. But the whole thing looks very like a forgery concocted for political purposes.

III.—Other Scholars of Lismore—St. Cuanna.

It does not appear that St. Cathaldus was ever Abbot or Bishop of Lismore, although he was certainly a student of that great seminary. St. Carthach appears to have been succeeded in the government of Lismore by St. Cuanna, who is said to have been his uterine brother. As Cuanna, or at least one who bore that name, was also the author of an ancient book of Annals, he is worthy of special mention in this place. Colgan is of opinion that St. Cuanna, the Abbot of Lismore, is the same as that Cuanna, who has given his name to Kilcooney, near Headfort, on the shores of Lough Corrib; and he thinks it highly probable that he was also the original author of the *Book of Cuanach*, cited in the *Annals of Ulster*. It is not quoted after A.D. 628; and we know that St. Cuanna of Lismore died about A.D. 650, so that this fact of itself lends some probability to Colgan's view. The facts of his history, however, will clearly show that Cuanna of Lismore was the founder of Kilcooney, near Lough Corrib.

St. Cuanna of Kilcooney was born near the eastern

shore of that lake, for he is described as founding a church in his native district.[1] His mother, Findmaith, was a near relation of St. Brendan, and appears to have been also the mother of St. Fursey, and of St. Eany, who also founded churches on the Corrib shore. In that case Findmaith was the second wife of Fintan of Ard-fintan, near Headfort, who is said to have been a nephew of St. Brendan. We know that both St. Brendan and St. Carthach belonged originally to the same district in the west of Kerry, and that both were sprung from Fergus Mac Roy. We know also that many of the tribesmen both of Carthach and Brendan migrated to West Connaught about this period, and that the father of Fursey was amongst them. It may be that his wife afterwards got married to another Kerry chieftain, and this would explain how Carthach and Cuanna were uterine brothers, although one was born at Tralee and the other near Lough Corrib.

About A.D. 590 Cuanna went to the school of St. Carthach, at Rahan, where he remained many years. Then he was sent about A.D. 620 to found a monastery "in the delightful land of the Ui-Eachach, in the south of the woody Inisfail." Afterwards, however, he returned home to Lough Corrib and founded Kilcooney. The "Fragment of his Life," in the *Salamanca MS.* then tells how he was carried off into Connemara, but God's angels took charge of him, and brought him over the lake in safety, floating on a flat stone, to his own side of the lake. Then it was he resolved to found his Church of Kilcooney, or Kilcoonagh, of which the remains are still to be seen in the old churchyard not far from Headfort. There is also the stump of a round tower close at hand, which shows the ancient importance of the place.

Great numbers of saints and monks from all parts of Ireland were soon attracted to Kilcooney by the fame of its learned and holy founder. In fact we are told that on one occasion no less than 1,746 of these holy men assembled in conference in a beautiful meadow near the church, and there entered into a league of holy friendship with each other—surely a beautiful spectacle before angels and men in that rude and barbarous age.

It seems that it was after the death of his brother, St. Carthach, in A.D. 636 or 637, that Cuanna was called to preside at Lismore. The kin of the founders always got a preference when rulers were elected for these ancient

[1] See *Salamanca MS.*, page 931.

monasteries, and his near kinship with Carthach was, together with his virtues and merits, the main reason of this election. It is certain, however, that he was Abbot of Lismore, for two of our ancient calendars describe him as such, and in the notes to the *Felire* of Ængus he is similarly described. He died about the year A.D. 650.

The School of Lismore continued to flourish under him and his successors, attaining, it seems, the zenith of its celebrity towards the opening years of the eighth century under St. Colman O'Leathain.

St. Colman O'Leathain flourished as Abbot and Bishop of Lismore from A.D. 698, or A.D. 699 to 702; and during this brief period he became very celebrated. He was the son of Finbarr, of the race of Hy-Beogna, the hereditary princes of Ibh Liathain—a district extending from Cork to Youghal, and nearly corresponding with the modern barony of Imokelly. He was a pupil of Lismore during the incumbency of St. Hierlog, or Jarnlach, as we find it in the *Ulster Annals*, the same as the Hierologus of Colgan.[1] Lismore had now become so celebrated that the Irish princes, tired of the world, began to seek peace and penance in its sacred shades. The first of these princes, of whom we read, was Theodoric, or Turlogh, King of Thomond, of the celebrated Dalcassian line. His father Cathal died in A.D. 624, so that this prince must have ruled over his native territory for many years. He is celebrated, too, as the father of St. Flannan, the founder of the See of Killaloe. Theodoric came secretly to St. Colman, and flinging off his royal robes, and renouncing his crown, placed himself amongst the humblest disciples of that saint. Though now an old man, he would not consent to be idle, but insisted on earning his bread with the labour of his hands, like the monks around him. The road to the monastery from the low ground was steep and uneven, so Theodoric, whose strong arms so often wielded the sword of Thomond in battle, got his sledge and hammer, and spent his time breaking stones to repair the road. With such zeal did he work that the streams of perspiration poured down from his body to the ground, and it is said a sick man was healed by washing in these waters of holy and penitential toil. With Colman's permission he returned to his kingdom to protect it from its enemies, whom he seems to have crushed as easily as he did the stones, and he then returned again to die in Lismore.

[1] Such is Colgan's opinion; but Skene's opinion is more probable, that Jarnlach was abbot of the Scottish Lismore Colman was probably abbot for 40 years.

St. Colman O'Leathain is sometimes called Mocholmoc, but as Colgan points out, it is really the same name—Colman and Colmoc being both diminutives of Colum, with the term of endearment prefixed in one case—mo-Cholmoc, which is the same as 'my dear little Colman.' This great saint died on the 22nd of January, A.D. 702, and was interred at Lismore.

It has been said that Aldfrid, King of Northumbria, was a student at Lismore before he was called to the throne after the death of his brother, Ecgfrid, in A.D. 685. This statement is, however, merely a conjecture. We know, indeed, from the express statement of William of Malmesbury that Aldfrid spent his youth in Ireland, that he was trained in all the learning of our Irish schools, and that when he was called to the throne of Northumbria, he gave both sympathy and effective assistance to the Irish prelates and monks of the North in opposition to Wilfrid and his associates. It is unlikely, however, that he remained at any one monastic school during all the years of his enforced sojourn in Ireland. Armagh would be one of the nearest to a Northumbrian exile; and being the seat of the primacy, as well as a celebrated school, it would naturally attract him first. If he then came south he certainly would visit Clonmacnoise, and remain some time in its halls. The great fame of Lismore in the middle of the seventh century would doubtless attract him also; and he certainly would not leave unvisited the new monastery founded about this very time by his own countrymen in the plains of Mayo. And if we are to accept the authenticity of the old Irish poem attributed to Aldfrid, this is precisely what did happen. He went throughout the entire country from school to school, spending some time in each of them; and he testifies that he was treated everywhere with generous hospitality, and experienced at the hands of all his teachers and entertainers a kindly Irish welcome. This poem has been translated by Clarence Mangan, and the spirit of the original has been admirably preserved in the translation.

"I found in Innisfail the fair,
In Ireland while in exile there,
Women of worth, both grave and gay men,
Many clerics and many laymen.

I travelled its fruitful provinces round,
And in every one of the five I found,
Alike in church and in palace hall,
Abundant apparel and food for all."

Then he tells how he found 'in Armagh the splendid meekness, wisdom, and prudence blended'; how he found kings and queens and poets in Munster; in Connaught he found riches, hospitality, vigour and fame; in Ulster, 'from hill to glen, he met hardy warriors and resolute men'; and so on throughout all the land.

During his residence in Ireland Aldfrid acquired much knowledge, and a great love of learning and learned men. He was an intimate friend of Adamnan, the celebrated Abbot of Iona, and probably spent some time in that monastery also Another distinguished scholar, Aldhelm, Abbot of Malmesbury, dedicated to Aldfrid a poetical epistle in Latin on Metres and the Rules of Prosody, which shows that the king must have been competent to appreciate such a work. Aldhelm, in this Epistle, congratulates the king on his good fortune in having been educated in Ireland; and he knew well what the Irish scholars were, for his own master, Maildulf, was an Irishman. Aldhelm afterwards studied in Canterbury under Theodore and Adrian; and though trained by an Irishman, in one of his letters he shows himself a little jealous[1] of the greater fame and popularity which the Irish schools at this period enjoyed both at home and abroad. Maildulf[2] taught a school at Malmesbury, and from him it takes its name; but after his death it was placed in the hands of Englishmen.

IV.—Subsequent History of Lismore.

We cannot narrate at length the subsequent history of the monastery and School of Lismore. We find a regular succession of Bishop-abbots down to the advent of the Danes. But the position of Lismore on a great river not far from the sea rendered it especially exposed to their ravages; and hence, like our other great monastic schools, we find that it was repeatedly pillaged and burned during the ninth and tenth centuries. Nor was the plundering and burning altogether the work of the Danes.

As usual the native princes followed their example; and

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[1] See *Opera* Ed., Giles, p. 94. He says that the English swarmed to the Irish Schools like bees, whilst the great School of Canterbury was by no means overcrowded.

[2] He is called Mailduf by Bede; but it is merely another way of rendering the Irish name—*Maeldubh*. Bede calls Malmesbury *Mailduf urbem*, that is, Mailduf's-bury, contracted afterwards into Malmesbury. William of Malmesbury describes it as founded by *Meildulf*. "Natione Scotus, eruditusque philosophus. professione monachus." See Lanigan, Vol. iii., p. 100.

so we are told that in A.D. 978 the Ossorians plundered and burned both the town and abbey. Yet the school and monastery survived the ravages both of the Danes and natives, and were held in great veneration by the wisest and best men in Erin. Cormac Mac Cullinan, the King-bishop, loved Lismore, although he was not educated there, and in his will left a bequest of a gold and silver chalice, and a suit of silk vestments to the monastery.

We read in Archdall that there was at Lismore, as at Armagh and many other principal churches, a hermitage, where one or more anchorites dwelt enclosed in their cells, after the fashion of the primitive Egyptian saints in the Desert. St. Carthach himself had set the example at Lismore; and it seems it was regularly followed, for a small endowment in land was provided for the maintenance of these anchorites at Lismore. The death of one of the most celebrated is noticed A.D. 1040:—"Corcran Cleireach, anchorite, the head of the West of Europe for piety and wisdom, died at Lis-mor." (F.M.). Another authority tells us that such was his learning and integrity that every dispute throughout the kingdom was confidently referred to his arbitration. It was for this reason also that during the interregnum that succeeded the death of Maelsechlainn II. in A.D. 1022, he, with Cuan O'Lochain, were chosen to guide the provisional government then established, as it would seem, with the consent of both the North and the South.

During the subsequent century—a period of much turmoil and bloodshed, when there was no recognised High King of Tara, who was able to keep the provincial kings in check, many of the southern princes retired to Lismore to end their days in peace and penance. Amongst these was the brave and generous Murtogh (Muircheartach) O'Brien, the grandson of Brian Boru, whom the Four Masters themselves describe "as King of Ireland, and the prop of the glory and magnificence of the West of the world." He died after the victory of penance at Lismore, but was buried at Killaloe. In A.D. 1127 Turlough O'Conor, the bravest and most capable of his name, forced Cormac Mac Carthy, King of Desmond, to go on pilgrimage to Lismore, and put on the habit of a monk. But Cormac soon flung it off again, and once more met Turlough in the field, but unsuccessfully; for we are told that there was a great fight at 'sea' (on Lough Derg) between the fleets of the Connaughtmen and of the men of Munster, and that the former gained the victory and harried the territory of Munster.

Another noteworthy event in connection with Lismore is recorded in A.D. 1129. It is the death and burial at Lismore in this year of the good St. Celsus, after St. Malachy, the greatest man of his age. He laboured with the most constant and self-denying zeal to reform the gross abuses prevalent in the Irish Church, and to stay the fratricidal hands of the native princes, whose whole career was at this time one sad record of violence and slaughter. His life, say the *Annals*, was "a life of fasting, prayer, and mass-celebration; and after unction and good penance he resigned his spirit to heaven at Ard Patrick," in the co. Limerick. He was buried at Lismore, by his own desire, and was waked, as was fitting, with psalms, hymns, and canticles, and buried with all honour in the tomb of the bishops, on Thursday, the 4th of April, having died on the previous Monday.

So Lismore was still held in great honour, and owned large possessions for the education of the clergy and the maintenance of the poor down to the advent of the Anglo-Normans. Then in A.D. 1173 we have the significant entry that Strongbow, after wasting the territory of the Desii, "extorted a large sum from the bishop to prevent the church from being burnt," but in the following year his son completed his father's work, "and plundered Lismore;" and four years later, in A.D. 1178, we are told that the town was again plundered, and set on fire by the English forces. Whatever still remained was wholly destroyed a few years after, in A.D. 1207, when the town and all its churches were entirely consumed. Shortly afterwards, this ancient See was united to the Danish bishopric of Waterford, and the lamp of learning in its schools was extinguished for ever.

Lismore is beautifully situated on the steep southern bank of the Blackwater, overlooking the picturesque valley of this noble river, which here teems with natural beauties. In this respect Innes declares that Lismore cannot be surpassed. "The Blackwater, both above and below the bridge, which leads into the town, flows through one of the most verdant of valleys. The banks bounding this valley are in some places thickly, in other places lightly, shaded with wood. Nothing can surpass in richness and beauty the view from the bridge, when at evening the deep woods, and the grey castle, and the still river are left in the shade, while the sun streaming up the valley gilds all the softer slopes and swells that lie opposite." (*Journey*, 1834.)

Nothing, in truth, is wanting that can lend beauty and interest to this scene, which nature has so richly dowered

with all her charms. And then the grand old castle, towering over the river, recalls to the mind of the beholder all those associations that cling like the ivy to its grey historic walls.

Of the twenty churches once in Lismore not a vestige remains. The existing Protestant cathedral was rebuilt by the Earl of Cork in A.D. 1663; but his workmen destroyed every trace of the ancient church, which is alluded to as the cathedral, or great stone church of Lismore, so early as A.D. 1052. Five inscribed stones are preserved in the present cathedral. They are fragments of ancient tombstones, with the peculiar Celtic crosses, and lettered in very ancient types of the Celtic alphabet.[1] One asks a blessing for the soul of Colgen, who, according to the *Annals of Inisfallen*, was an eminent ecclesiastic, who died in Lismore in A.D. 850. The words are—BENDACHT FOR ANMAIN COLGEN. Another is simply inscribed—SUIBNE M CONHUIDIR—Suibne, son of Conhuidir, an anchorite and abbot of Lismore, who went to his rest in A.D. 854. Another still more interesting inscription asks a prayer for Cormac, a priest—OR DO CORMAC P. The letter P stands apparently for the Latin word *presbyter, i.e., priest.* He seems to have been "Cormac, son of Cuilcanan, Bishop of Lismore, and Lord of the Desii of Mumhan, who was killed by his own family, A.D. 918"—a different person from the King-bishop of Cashel, who was slain in A.D. 907. The other two merely ask a blessing for the soul of MARTAN, and a prayer for DONNCHAD, who seems to have been the person bearing that name who was assassinated within the very walls of the old cathedral in A.D. 1034.

THE CROZIER OF LISMORE was discovered in 1814 in a tower of Lismore Castle, belonging now to the Duke of Devonshire—hence it is sometimes improperly called the Devonshire Crozier. It was made, as the inscription on it records, for Niall Mac Mic Aeducan, who was Bishop of Lismore from A.D. 1090 to 1113. The artist was Nectan—also a Celtic name—and the Crozier itself is one of the most beautiful specimens of Celtic art of this character that have been yet discovered. "It measures three feet four inches in length, and consists of a case of bronze of a pale colour, which enshrines an old oak stick—perhaps the original staff of the founder of Lismore. Most of the ornaments are richly gilt, interspersed with others of silver and niello, and bosses of coloured enamels. The crook of the staff is bordered with

[1] See *Christian Inscriptions*. Vol. ii., p. 31.

a row of grotesque animals like lizards or dragons, one of which has eyes of lapis lazuli."[1] The staff seems to have been divided into compartments, which were filled in with filigree work. It is most likely this beautiful work of art was made at the monastery, and that Nectan, the artificer, was a member of the brotherhood of Lismore. The inscription is as usual in Irish, and runs thus:—OR DO NIAL MAC MEICC AEDUCAN LASAN DERNAD IN GRESSA + OR DO NECTAIN CERD DORIGNE IN GRESSA—Pray for Niall, son of Mac-Aeducan, for whom this work was made; pray for Nectan, who made this work of art.

THE BOOK OF LISMORE was found in 1814, together with the Crozier of Lismore, in a wooden box, which was enclosed within the wall of a built-up doorway in the Castle of Lismore. Both evidently belonged to the bishops of Lismore, for the castle was the ancient episcopal palace, and the box was built into the doorway for security on some occasion when the castle was being besieged by enemies, who might be disposed to appropriate these venerable relics. This castle was originally built by Prince John, in A.D. 1185; and at first was garrisoned for the Crown. It was, however, soon destroyed by the natives; but was rebuilt by the king, and became the residence of the bishops of Lismore down to the time of Miler MacGrath, who added the see of Lismore to his other ecclesiastical preferments. Afterwards, the castle sustained several sieges during the troubles that followed A.D. 1641, when it was held at different times for the Crown or for the Parliament: and it was, doubtless, during one of these sieges that both the Crozier and Book of Lismore were concealed. When discovered it had suffered much from damp, and the edges, O'Curry tells us, seem to have been partially gnawed by rats or mice. It was, however, still tolerably legible, but was, unfortunately, lent by the Duke of Devonshire's agent to a Cork *sheanachie*, named O'Flynn, that it might be transcribed; and O'Curry alleges that several folios, and in some places entire sections of the MS., were deliberately cut out by those who had the temporary custody of the book. In 1839 O'Curry made a copy on paper of all that remained for the Royal Irish Academy; but that institution vainly sought to obtain the missing portions.

It is said that these excised parts were purchased, no doubt, in good faith, by a Mr. Hewitt, who lived near Cork,

[1] *Christian Inscriptions.* Vol. ii., p. 118.

and they may, perhaps, be still secured and re-bound with the original MS.

This original was a vellum MS. said to be 900 years old. It consists principally of copies of the lives of certain Irish saints—of Patrick, Brigid, Columcille, Senan, Finnian of Clonard, and Finnchu of Brigobhan, near Cork—"all," says O'Curry, "written in Gaelic of great purity and antiquity."[1] There are also several historical and romantic tracts, and bardic accounts of several ancient battles. One treatise—a dialogue between St. Patrick and the Fenian warriors, Caoilte MacRonan and Oisin—is, says the same learned authority, especially valuable for the topographical information it contains.[2]

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[1] See *Lectures on MS. Materials.*

[2] "The Lives of Saints from the Book of Lismore" have been lately (1890) edited and translated into English by Dr. Whitley Stokes, and issued from the Clarendon Press at Oxford. The "Lives" are preceded by an elaborate critical Preface on the language and matter of the text. There is also a very complete Glossary of all the Irish words in the volume. The Dialogue has also been recently published in the *Silva Gadelica* by Mr. S. H. O'Grady.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SCHOOLS OF DESMOND.

I.—The School of Cork—St. Finbarr.

"I found in Munster, unfettered of any,
Kings and queens, and poets a-many;
Poets well skilled in music and measure,
Prosperous doings, mirth and pleasure."

—*King Aldfrid's Poem.*

Munster was always celebrated for classical studies. Even within the memory of living men it attracted 'poor scholars' from every part of Ireland; and they were received, as they were in the days of Bede and King Aldfrid, with kindly welcome and generous hospitality. In spite of the confiscations and penal laws of three hundred years, the old Celtic love of learning was still cherished in Munster, and the doors were never closed against the homeless scholar, or bard, or sheanachie. As in the days of Bede, "they willingly received them all, and took care to supply them with food, and also to furnish them with books to read, and their teaching gratis."[1] Of the Desmond schools the most celebrated, though not, perhaps, the earliest, was the School of Cork founded by St. Finbarr.

The name of the city itself is derived from *Corcagh*, which signifies a marshy place; and at the time St. Finbarr founded his church there, and for centuries afterwards, it certainly well deserved the name. Especially when the mountain floods came down the valley of the river Lee the whole right bank of the stream was converted into a vast lake called Loch Eirce or Loch Irce.[2] This valley extends from west to east, and is enclosed on either side by bold and fertile hills, now crowned with groves and villas which render Cork one of the most picturesque cities of the empire.

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[1] Liber iii. c. 27. "Erant (in Hibernia) eo tempore multi nobilium simul et mediocrium de gente Angelorum . . . . . quos omnes Scoti libentissime suscipientes victum eis quotidianum sine pretio, libros quoque ad legendum, et magisterium gratuitum praebere curabant."

[2] Mr. Caulfield seems to think that Loch Irce was the lake since called Gougane Barra; but such does not seem to have been Colgan's opinion. See *Life of St. Barre*, page iv.

The river Lee itself rises in the wild and barren mountain range which separates Cork from Kerry, and after a course of more than fifty miles, flows into the sea below the city. The river before reaching the city, divides itself into two main branches, which afterwards re-unite, thus forming an island of considerable extent, on which the city proper was originally built, and strongly fortified by walls and towers.

The Lee may be said to take its rise in the mountain lake of Gougane Barra, which is merely a natural reservoir that collects the streams flowing down the sides of these wild mountains. The name simply means 'Barra's Lone Retreat,'[1] because, as we shall presently see, the saint dwelt for some time on an island in the lake.

The facts of St. Finbarr's history are narrated in two Latin Lives which have been published by Mr. Caulfield of Cork College.[2] His baptismal name was Lochan; but as the boy grew up with beautiful fair hair he was called Find-barr; and sometimes Barra, Barre, Bairre, or Barry. He was sprung from the Hy-Briuin Ratha, who dwelt about Lough Corrib in the County Galway. His father, Amergin, being the fruit of unlawful love, left his native territory and came to the territory of Hy-Liathain in the County Cork, where his skill as an artificer secured him the patronage of the local dynast, who appears to have dwelt at Achad Duirbchon in Muskerry. This dynast is described also as *righ* of Rathend.

A beautiful young maiden was staying at the house of this kinglet, who would not allow her marry; and all unbecoming intimacy was also strictly forbidden between her and any member of the king's household. But the smith, not knowing or ignoring this prohibition, won the affections of the lady, and married her in secret. The result was the conception of Barry. When this became visible, the king was so wrathful at this contempt of his authority, that he ordered the parents to be burned to death. But the great lime-kiln, lighted to carry out this sentence, was extinguished by a violent storm of rain, accompanied with fiery flashes of lightning.

This was, of course, attributed to the fact that the child, which the lady bore in her womb, was destined by God for great things, as in truth, subsequent events proved to be the fact. Indeed, the *Martyrology of Donegal* makes a still more incredible statement, that "Barre spoke in his mother's

[1] Father Lyons says the name is derived from its being a 'shaky' place in St. Finbarr's time.

[2] London, 1864. There is an *Irish Life* in the Book of Lismore.

womb, and also immediately after his birth, in order to justify his father and mother, as his Life states in the first chapter."[1] This speaking in the womb may, perhaps, be understood in the metaphorical sense already explained.

St. Barry had for his teacher a holy man called in the *Irish Life* Mac Cuirp, or Curporius in the Latin Lives. Mac Cuirp is stated to have spent some time in Rome, and to have been whilst there a disciple of St. Gregory the Great. St. Gregory was Pope from A.D. 590 to 604, but for some years previous to A.D. 590 he had held various offices in the church; and it was probably between A.D. 575 and 590 that the Irish monk had an opportunity of becoming his disciple in the great monastery of St. Andrew, which was once the private mansion of St. Gregory.

From a master so trained for some time in Rome itself, young Barry had an opportunity of acquiring a fuller knowledge of ecclesiastical discipline, as well as sounder and wider theological views than the ordinary Irish schools could at the time afford. How long he remained under the care of this holy man is unknown; but from the active life which St. Barry led, we must infer that he began to preach and found churches whilst he was still a young man. We are told that even before he came to Cork he had founded twelve churches in various parts of the country. Amongst these we find special reference to the Church of Achadh Duirbchon near Cuas Barra, which was somewhere in the neighbourhood of the river Blackwater, and probably not far from Fermoy. For it is said that after he founded this church, he crossed the river and came to Cill Cluana, and built a church there also. Cill Cluana is supposed to be the place since known as Cloyne; this, however, we venture to think is improbable, for St. Colman, the founder of Cloyne, was a contemporary of St. Brendan, and must have flourished and founded the Church of Cloyne many years before Barry could have arrived at man's estate. There is a Kilclooney in the barony of Condons and Clangibbon, County Cork, which is much more likely to have been the Church of Cill Cluana erected at this period by St. Barry.

We are told that two disciples of St. Ruadhan of Lorrha, Cormac and Baoithen by name, travelled thither. They were directed by their own master, St. Ruadhan, to remain where the tongues of their bells would sound. To their surprise the silent bells rang out, when they had come to

[1] See 25th Sept.

Barry's Church at Cill-Cluana, and they were much grieved when they found it occupied, without, as they thought, any chance of their being allowed to remain in the place. But Barry, knowing the divine will, at once gave them his own church, and they remained there, whilst he himself went elsewhere to found new churches for the honour of God and the advantage of the people.

It is probable that Gougane Barra, so celebrated for its wild romantic beauty, was the earliest foundation of St. Barry, and that it was there during the years of his retirement that he prepared himself for that great spiritual work, which he afterwards accomplished.

This lovely lake is situated amongst the mountains on the western border of Cork, and in that very territory of Muskerry where St. Barry is said to have been born, so that he was probably familiar with it from his childhood. The savage grandeur of this mountain valley has been celebrated both in poetry and in prose by many writers; and, no doubt, Callanan's stanzas are familiar to all our readers. The lake is surrounded on all sides by an amphitheatre of lofty and rugged mountains, rising up in naked grandeur from its lonely shores. Only at one place towards the south-east is there an opening, where the infant Lee bursts through the rocky barrier of loose stones and dashes down in foaming leaps to the lower lake of Inchigheela. The lake itself covers about 90 acres. Its waters flowing down from the heathery slopes of the hills are rather dark in colour, and abound in fish; although, it is said, that trout were more numerous heretofore in these waters. Towards the south-east of the lake, which is oval in form, is the island that formed the retreat of St. Finbarr. It is deeply and beautifully green, where the broken walls do not cover the turf, and contrasts strikingly with the dark waters of the lake, and the bluish gray of the rugged precipices that frown down on the gloomy landscape. Its shores too are beautifully fringed with hoary ash trees, and a few willows that stoop to kiss the wavelets:—

> "There grows the wild ash, and a time stricken willow
> Looks chidingly down on the mirth of the billow;
> As like some gay child that sad monitor scorning,
> It lightly laughs back to the laugh of the morning."

The works of man are in ruins, but the face of nature is changeless and grand as it ever was. There is still the "zone of dark hills" that brighten in the lightning's flash,

when the rocks give back the thunder's voice in a thousand echoes. There are still the "thousand wild fountains"—in summer tiny rivulets, but in rainy weather angry cataracts leaping from rock to rock. It is true the glory of the woods that once belted these mountains is gone, and nothing now remains but the island grove, which is all the more attractive because no foliage elsewhere relieves the eye, weary with the hungry grey of the rocks and the dark brown of the heather.

But the ancient church with its solitary cells and courtyard are all in ruins—ruins, too, even in this wild retreat, that have apparently been wrought by the hand of man. The little island on which these ruins stand is near the southern shore of the lake. It is approached by a low narrow causeway, which connects it with the shore. From the causeway the pilgrim walks through an avenue of ash trees towards a terrace, which is elevated four or five steps before him. On this terrace there is an ancient quadrangular *caiseal*, which had two monastic cells built into each side of the quadrangle. These cells arched overhead were about four feet wide, ten feet deep, and eight feet high. The masonry is of a primitive character, and may be of the age of Barry himself, for we find the circular arch as early as the first quarter of the seventh century. In the centre of this courtyard there is a mound having stone steps around, and surmounted by an ancient wooden cross. This cross marks the principal penitential station, and closely resembles some of the mission crosses seen in the churchyards of our country churches. The church and monastery proper were outside this enclosure, and are now quite ruinous. They were probably coeval with the cells in the enclosure; but it is quite unusual to find them outside the enclosing wall. The quadrangular cashel, too, is quite a peculiar feature, and shows that it is of a later and undoubtedly Christian origin.

About the year A.D. 1700, a priest named Father Denis O'Mahony took up his residence in this lonely retreat, and, it is said, caused its "seven chapels" to be restored. These so called chapels were the cells already referred to, which surround the cloister. He was buried in the little graveyard on the mainland close to the causeway, where the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep. And Smith tells us that the following inscription was placed over his tomb—"Hoc sibi et successoribus in eadem vocatione monumentum imposuit Dominus Doctor Dionysius O'Mahony, presbyter licet indignus, A.D. 1700." There is, we believe, no trace of a stone

bearing this inscription to be seen at present on this spot. The tendency of the Church in our days seems to be altogether in favour of the cenobitic life; this was one of the few cases in which the ancient love for the eremitic life has again appeared in our Irish Church. At present we have neither hermits, nor recluses, as of old. Is it that the spirit of ancient asceticism has departed? Or is it that charity has grown cold? To be quite alone with God is a dangerous and difficult state of life; but it is after all the state of the very highest perfection known to theology.

It was probably after spending some time in his hermitage at Gougane Barra that St. Finbarr came, as is stated in his Life, to the lake, which in Irish is called Loch Eirce. Close to the shore of this lake he built a monastery, to which as to the home of wisdom, and the nursery of all Christian virtues, crowds of zealous disciples flocked together from all quarters in such numbers and inspired with such zeal for holiness, that the solitude around became filled with cells of monks, and thus grew into a great city. From the school which Finbarr established there, a vast number of men, conspicuous for sanctity and learning, went forth, amongst whom especially worthy of note were St. Eulangius or Eulogius—who it seems had some share in training Finbarr himself—St. Colman of Doire Dhunchon, St. Baithin, St. Nessan, St. Garbhan, St. Talmach, St. Finchad of Ross Ailithir, St. Lucerus, St. Cumanus, St. Lochin of Achadh Airaird, St. Carinus, St. Fintan of Ros-Coerach, and several other saints, whose names and churches are mentioned in the *Irish Life of Finbarr*.

The site of Finbarr's primitive church and monastery was that now occupied by the Protestant Cathedral of St. Finbarr on the south-west of the city, but all traces of the primitive buildings have entirely disappeared. An ancient round tower stood in the south-west corner of the churchyard, which has also completely disappeared. But as the round towers were generally built some ten or twelve paces from the great western entrance of the church, which they protected, the site of the ancient cathedral can be ascertained with sufficient accuracy.

In the *Pacata Hibernia* there is a very interesting map of Cork, which shows the city and its environs, as they were about the year A.D. 1600. It has been reproduced by Mr. John George M'Carthy, in a pamphlet of great value, which he published in 1869, and which gives a lively sketch of the history of Cork, both ancient and modern. The city

proper is shown on the island with its walls and towers, and its two principal streets—the Main Street and Castle Street—intersecting each other at right angles. Outside the city walls, it is all a marsh, and in the south-west corner, close to the southern bank of the stream, is shown "ye Cathedrale Church of Old Corcke," which marks the site of St. Finbarr's primitive abbey.

It is stated in the ancient Life of Finbarr that, like many other of the Irish saints of his time, he went on a pilgrimage to Rome—to the threshold of the Apostles. On his way back from Rome he paid a visit to St. David, the celebrated Bishop of Menevia, and thence we are told he returned to Cork. This would seem to imply that the monastery of Cork was founded before St. Barry's departure from Rome. Gerald Barry in his *Life of St. David* refers to this visit paid to that saint by his namesake of Cork, whom, however, he calls 'Barrocus,' and as usual he indulges largely in the supernatural, in his account of the visit.

It was, he says, the custom in those times for the Irish to go on pilgrimage to Rome in order to venerate the shrines of the Apostles. Amongst others a certain Barry (Barrocus) from the territory of Cork went to Rome; and returning from his pilgrimage he called to see St. David, which was also customary with those good men from Ireland, when going to or returning from Rome. Barry having paid his respects to the Welsh saint, was anxious to return home to his own country and flock; but the winds were contrary, and he could not cross the Channel. Now the Bishop, St. David, had a horse for his own use, and Barry, full of faith, asked and obtained the use of this horse to carry him home to Cork; and he rode the animal straight over the sea to the west. On his way St. Barry met Brendan mounted on a whale, and going to see St. David also. They saluted each other, and with mutual good wishes went each his own way, and arrived safe—one in Cork and the other at St. David's. Barry then told his monks all that had happened; so they praised God, and made a small metal statue of horse and man, adorned with gold and silver, "which is preserved to this day," says Giraldus, "in the Church of St. Finbarr at Cork, and is held in great reverence on account of the signs and miracles which have been wrought through its instrumentality."[1]

The Bollandists reject this story as an interpolation in the Life of St. David; but Gerald Barry dearly loved a story of

[1] See *Vita S. Davidis*, Lectio vi., p. 394. Rolls Series, Vol. iii.

this kind, no matter how extravagant. We may add that St. Brendan of Clonfert, to whom the reference is made, was dead before Finbarr could have been more than twelve years of age.

St. Finbarr ruled the monastery and church of Cork for a period of seventeen years before he died. Hence the monastic school had time to grow up under his own holy and prudent management; and thus, as his Life says, Cork from a solitude became a city. We are not to understand a city in the modern sense, with stone houses, bridges, and regular streets. There was no city of this kind in those days in Ireland. The 'city' consisted of the cathedral church, probably of stone, and afterwards protected by its round tower, the monastery with its group of buildings, the scattered cells or bothies of such students as crowded to hear the lectures in the schools, or in the green meadows by the river's side, and doubtless also the dwellings of the tradesmen and other work-people connected with the monastery. The Danes afterwards seem to have established a permanent colony at Cork, as they did in Dublin, and raised buildings of a more enduring and imposing character, but the monastic city was there before them, and was the real nucleus of the present beautiful city by the pleasant waters of the River Lee.

St. Finbarr died, not in his own monastery of Lough Eirce, but at Cloyne, some fifteen miles distant on the other side of the bay. It seems he went there on a pilgrimage, doubtless preparing for the end, which he felt was close at hand, for we are told that he died at the Cross of Cloyne, which was in the church of that monastery. But his loving disciples would not let his remains repose there—holy ground though it was always believed to be. They were enclosed in a silver shrine, and carried to his own monastery, on the banks of the beautiful river, where he dwelt so long. According to another account the holy remains were at once carried to Cork, and buried in his own cathedral church, beneath a monumental cross, which marked the spot. Afterwards the tomb was opened, and the sacred relics enclosed in a silver shrine, which was preserved with great veneration near the high altar; and this is the more probable account. But in later days nothing in Ireland was safe from sacrilegious hands, and we are informed in the *Annals of Innisfallen* that A.D. 1089, a fleet, with Dermot O'Brien, devastated Cork, and carried away the relics of Barre from the church of Cill-na-Clerich.

The character of this great saint is thus given in one of the Irish Lives, published by Mr. Caulfield in 1864: "His humility, his piety, his charity, his abstinence, his prayers by day and night, won for him many great privileges; for he was god-like, and pure of heart and mind like Abraham, mild and well-doing like Moses; a psalmist like David; wise like Solomon; firm in the faith like Peter; devoted to the truth like Paul the Apostle; full of the Holy Spirit like John the Baptist. He was a lion in (spiritual) strength, and an orchard full of apples of sweetness. When the time of his death arrived, after erecting churches and monasteries to God, and appointing over them bishops, priests, and other grades, and baptizing and blessing districts and people, Barre went to Cill-na-Cluana (Cloyne), and with him went Fiana, at the desire of Cormac and Baoithen, where they consecrated two churches. Then he said, 'It is time for me to quit this prison of my body, and go to the Heavenly King, who is now calling me to Himself.' And then Barre was confessed, and received the Holy Sacrament from the hand of Fiana, and his soul went to heaven at the Cross which is in the middle of the church of Cloyne; and there came bishops, priests, monks, and other disciples, when his death was announced, to honour him. And they took his body to Cork, the place of his resurrection, honouring him with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; and the Angels bore his soul with great joy to heaven to the company of the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and disciples of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

This seems to be an accurate and truthful narrative of what really happened, and shows that the enshrining took place afterwards in his own church of Cork. It appears to show, too, that the church already referred to as Cill-Cluana was really the famous church of Cloyne; but St. Colman, its founder, had been dead for some time, and St. Barry, who, according to other accounts, was educated there by Mac Cuirp, or Curporius, as he is called in Latin, always retained a great predilection for that holy ground. St. Barry's death is generally recorded as having taken place about the year A.D. 630; but the exact date cannot be ascertained.

Both during the life of St. Finbarr, and after his death, great crowds of holy and learned men continued to come to his monastery of Cork; and many of them, it seems, elected to make it the place of their resurrection. Ængus invokes "seventeen holy bishops, and seven hundred favoured servants of God, who rest in Cork with Barre and Nessan, whose

names are written in heaven." Elsewhere he invokes three hundred and fifty holy bishops, three hundred and fifty priests, three hundred and fifty deacons, and as many lectors, and ostiarii, with other saints, who, with God's blessing, rest in Lough Eirce,[1] in the territory of Muskerry. Numerous, says the annexed quatrain, as the leaves on the trees are the saints who dwell around it. "Them all I invoke to my aid through our Lord Jesus Christ."

There is no reference made to any writings left by St. Finbarr, except a copy of the Gospels, written by his own hand, which was afterwards encased, like other precious relics of our great saints, in a shrine richly adorned with gems and gold. One of the most tragic events recorded in our annals took place in connection with this shrine. It is told with many graphic details in the *Wars of the Gaedhill with the Gaill*, p. 89.

Mahoun, the elder brother of Brian Boru, by combined skill and valour had raised himself to supremacy over all Munster about the year A.D. 970. He defeated the Danes in seven successive battles, and succeeded in driving Imar, their leader, for a time from Limerick. He also took hostages from all the chiefs of Desmond, and became undisputed sovereign of Munster. Then the heads of the rival Eoghanacht clans grew jealous; and Donovan, son of Cathal, chief of the Hy-Fidhgente in the South and West of Limerick, together with Molloy, the chief of Desmond, and Imar the Dane, entered into a conspiracy to destroy the gallant leader of the Dalcassians of Thomond. Pretending friendship, Donovan invited Mahoun to his house at Bruree, and Mahoun foolishly accepted the invitation; but he safeguarded himself, as he thought, by putting himself under the protection of the clergy, and the Gospel of Barry, which was brought from Cork for the purpose by Columb, son of Ciaragan, comarb of Barry. However, when Donovan got the king in his power, he made him a prisoner; and then sent him on to Molloy, who had undertaken to have him assassinated. Molloy was waiting with the Bishop of Cork, who had no suspicion of his purpose, at Sliabh Caein, near Fermoy. It is supposed that they were standing on the eastern ridge overlooking the gap through which the road now passes from Kilmallock to Cork, a little south of the church of Kilflin. When Mahoun's escort reached the spot agreed upon, the assassin drew his sword to

[1] This clearly shows that Loch Eirce was at Cork, not in the mountains at Gougane Barra, *for they rest with Finbarr.*

slay the king at the place called Redchair, on the side of the pass opposite to where Molloy was waiting. Mahoun had on his person, for his own protection, the Gospel of Barry; but when he saw the fatal blow descending, he flung the holy shrine from him to a priest standing at some distance, that it might not be stained with his blood. At the same moment Molloy saw the gleam of the sword from the place where he was with the Bishop of Cork on the opposite side of the hill, and called for his horse, which stood ready saddled to carry him off. "What am I to do?" said the Bishop, not understanding Molloy's movements. "Cure yonder man," said Molloy, ironically, "if he is able to come to you." The horrified priest, who accompanied Mahoun, caught up the Gospel shrine, which Mahoun had flung towards him, and found it stained with the blood of the murdered man. Then in sorrow they buried the noble-souled Mahoun on the southern slope of the hill where he had fallen, and sent word to Brian Boru of the assassination of his brother. Then Brian Boru resolved on stern vengeance, and soon accomplished his purpose. The murderous conspirators were banned by the Church, and deserted by their allies. Imar and his son were slain by Brian; Donovan fell in battle; and Molloy, the actual assassin, was tracked for two years, and at length taken prisoner and slain close to that very pass where he had planned and witnessed the murder of the chivalrous Mahoun. He was buried like a dog on the northern side of that same hill where Mahoun was buried; but "the sun," says the Annalist, "never shines on his grave," and the infamy of his dark deed will hover round his resting-place for ever. There is nothing known at present of this Gospel of St. Barry, nor for some hundred years has anything been heard of it.

Nessan, a disciple of St. Barry, succeeded him in the See of Cork, and in the government of the monastery and monastic school. He, too, was remarkable for his learning and holiness, but of his personal history nothing is known. His festival day is the seventeenth of March—the feast day of our national apostle, and his death is supposed to have taken place about A.D. 651.

It is manifest that Cork continued to be a flourishing monastic school, at least down to the time of St. Ængus (A.D. 800), who speaks of it as if it were still a flourishing institution, filled with monks and scholars. In spite of the repeated devastations of the Danes, who plundered it four times between A.D. 822 and 840, we find the death of Domhnall, a scribe of Cork recorded in A.D. 874, and of

Soirbreathach, son of Connadh, "scribe, wise man, bishop, and abbot of Cork," in A.D. 891. It is evident, therefore, that even during the stormy period of the ninth century the succession of prelates was maintained in Cork, and the monastic school still continued to flourish. The proper business of the scribe was, as we have seen, to transcribe books in the scriptorium of the monastery for the use of the monks and students. The term *egnaidh*, or wise man, shows that this prelate was especially skilled as a moral teacher and adviser.

During the subsequent centuries, down to the Anglo-Norman invasion, a regular succession of bishop-abbots was preserved, and recorded in the church of Cork. But beyond the list of their names we know nothing of interest concerning them. We do not find that any amongst these later comarbs of Barry were specially distinguished either as scholars or as writers; and hence it is unnecessary to make any special reference to them here.

In the twelfth century the ancient monastery, which had fallen into decay, was refounded about the year A.D. 1134 by Cormac Mac Carthy, the celebrated King of Munster, from whom Cormac's Chapel at Cashel takes its name. Imhar O'Hagan, who died at Armagh in that very year, a most holy and learned man, had some years previously introduced a much needed reform in the monastery of Armagh by placing the monks and clergy under the rule of St. Augustine. This reform was very generally adopted throughout Ireland by such of the ancient monasteries as had survived the ravages of the Danes. It was thus introduced at Cork by King Cormac, who also in refounding the monastery required that it should always afford hospitality and refuge to strangers from Connaught, because its original founder, St. Barry, came himself from that province. In A.D. 1172, according to the Four Masters, died Giolla Aedha O'Muidhin, of the family (or community) of Errew of Lough Conn, in Connaught. He was, according to Ware, Bishop and Abbot of Cork, from A.D. 1152, when he was present at the Synod of Kells, to A.D. 1172. It was from this prelate's name Giolla or Gille, that Gill Abbey came to be so called. It was previously known as the Abbey of the Cave, or the Abbey of St. Finbarr's Cave, which was the saint's place of retirement on the south side of the river, near to which St. Finbarr's Abbey was built. This prelate was regarded as a man of great piety, and more than any of his predecessors sought to renew the ancient spirit as well as the ancient walls

of his monastery. The fact that he came all the way from Lough Conn, near Ballina, in the County Mayo, and though a stranger, was chosen to rule over this great diocese and monastery, shows that he was a man of great fame for holiness and learning. It is most likely that this Giolla Aedha O'Muidhin was that prelate of whom St. Bernard speaks in his Life of St. Malachy. Cork was, he says, then without a bishop, and there was much discord amongst the supporters of the rival candidates. St. Malachy begged them all to leave the choice to him; and they agreed to do so. Then St. Malachy chose for bishop not anyone of the nobly born of the land, but a poor man and a stranger, who happened to be on his sick bed in the city, and was a man remarkable for sanctity and learning. Malachy bade him arise in the Lord's name, and said that obedience would make him strong again. He did so, and ruled the see with much vigour until his death in A.D. 1172. The Four Masters described him as "Gilla Aedh O'Muidhin (of the family of Errew of Lough Conn) Bishop of Cork. He was a man full of the grace of God, the tower of the virginity and wisdom of his time."

II.—School of Cork—St. Colman Mac Ua Cluasaigh.

It was during the abbotship of St. Nessan in Cork, or shortly afterwards, that St. Colman Mac Ui Clusaigh, as he is called in the *Liber Hymnorum*, flourished in the school of that monastery. He is the only scholar of that ancient school, whose writings have in any shape come down to us. What we have written by St. Colman is not indeed much, but it is highly interesting, and was published for the first time by Dr. Todd in the second volume of the *Liber Hymnorum*, page 121.

Of his personal history we know nothing. His name implies that he was the grandson, or great grandson, of Cluasach; but of his history nothing else can be ascertained. It is clear, however, both from the Scholiast's preface, and from intrinsic evidence that this St. Colman was a Ferlegind, or Professor, in the School of Cork in the year A.D. 664. At that period, as is well known, a terrible pestilence devastated Ireland; it likewise extended to England, and probably to many parts of the Continent also. It carried off nearly half the population of Ireland—kings, saints, and people—without distinction. A panic spread through all the land, and all classes, who could do so, sought to fly from the plague; but their flight was vain for go where they would

the plague overtook them, and claimed its victims. An idea, however, had gone abroad that the pestilence could not extend nine waves beyond the shore of Erin, and hence we find that there was a rush to such of the islands on the coast as were supposed to be outside the infected area.

Colman and his scholars took the very prudent resolution of leaving their monastery by the marshes of Cork, and making their way to one of the islands on the coast, the name of which unfortunately is not given. But like a good and holy man, he put more faith in God's protection and blessing than in mere sanitary precautions. So he invited the school to help him in composing this hymn as a lorica or coat of mail against the pestilence, and all other dangers temporal and spiritual. It seems, too, that it was recited during the voyage, and no doubt filled the fugitives with hope and confidence in God's fatherly love.

The Scholiast in his preface tells us that Colman composed the hymn to protect himself against the yellow plague (*buidhechair*) that was prevalent in the reign of the sons of Aedh Slaine (A.D. 656-664[1]), and of which they themselves died in A.D. 664. The cause of the plague was, he alleges, the over-population of the country at the time, for so great was the number of the people, that the land could afford but thrice nine ridges to each man in Erin—nine of bog, nine of arable, and nine of wood—" and, therefore, the noblemen of Erin fasted along with the sons of Aedh Slaine, and with Fechin of Fore, and with Aileran (the Wise), and with Manchan of Liath, and with very many besides, for the reduction of the population, because of the scarcity of food in consequence of the great population." In fact, there seemed to be no alternative but famine or pestilence; and these holy men appear to have preferred the latter alternative; which was granted to their prayers, and by which they themselves also were sent to heaven.

Some say, adds the Scholiast, that St. Colman composed the whole of it; but others say he composed only the first two stanzas, and that his scholars composed the rest—that is, each man of them made a half stanza. As the original poem consisted of forty-six lines, this would give the number of scholars belonging to the school at something more than eighty; or, if the stanza be taken to mean a distich of two

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[1] In the *Annals of Ulster* the death of Diarmaid and Blathmac, sons of Aedh Slaine, is marked both at A.D. 664 and 667; the former is the true date.

rhyming lines, which seems more probable, they would number about forty-four.

"It was composed," adds the Scholiast, "in Cork in the time of Blathmac and Diarmaid, on the occasion of this great plague, which left only one out of every three persons alive in Erin. And the place where they happened to compose it was in the course of their voyage to a certain island in the sea of Erin, flying from this pestilence; because the plague did not extend further than nine waves from the land, as the learned relate."

In its present form the hymn consists of fifty-two lines, with an added prayer; but it is quite evident that it originally consisted of forty-six stanzas, and the remaining six, asking the blessing and protection of the patron saints of Erin—Patrick, Brigid, Columcille, and Adamnan, were subsequently added. The language is the very oldest form of the Gaedhlic, which has come down to us, and, as Dr. Todd remarks, "it fully confirms the early date assigned to it by the Scholiast." The metre is in rhyming distichs with fourteen syllables in each line—when we say rhyming, we mean that there is a rhyme, or at least an assonance, between the final syllables of each two lines. Here and there Latin phrases, taken from the Scripture, are introduced in the Gaedhlic lines, and made to rhyme, as the Gaedhlic lines themselves do. The author was evidently familiar as well with the Latin as with his native Gaedhlic, both of which he manipulates with considerable dexterity. The subject matter mainly consists of an invocation addressed in appropriate language to God, and to the Son of Mary, as well as to the Saints of the Old and New Testament, to protect the writer and his school from the pestilence, and from all assaults of their foes, both spiritual and temporal. The following stanza may be taken as a specimen:—

Maire, Joseph don ringnat et spiritus Stephani,
As cach ing don forslaice taithmet anma Ignati.

"Mary, Joseph, guard us with the spirit of Stephen;
May it deliver us from every difficulty to invoke the name of Ingatius."

This poem is an exceedingly interesting monument of the time in which it was written; and moreover, shows what a deep spirit of piety and filial confidence in God and His saints inspired the mind of the writer. We have finer poetry in our own days; but we have nothing that breathes a deeper and more fervent spirit of earnest devotion

III.—The School of Ross.

The monastic School of Ross, more commonly called Ross Ailithir, was one of the most celebrated in the South of Ireland. Its founder was St. Fachtna, the patron of the diocese of Ross, who is commonly identified with St. Fachtna, the founder and patron of the diocese of Kilmore. This is, indeed, highly probable, seeing that both dioceses celebrate the feasts of their respective patrons on the same day, the 14th of August, and besides, both saints belonged to the same princely race of the Corca Laighde.

The territory of Corca Laighde, which takes its name from the ruling tribe, was conterminous with the diocese of Ross, of which, as we said, St. Fachtna, was founder and first bishop. It extended in ancient times along the south-western coast of Cork from Courtmacsherry Bay to Dursey Head, and included besides East and West Carberry, the modern baronies of Beare and Bantry towards the western margin, as well as the baronies of Ibane and Barryroe on its eastern borders. Afterwards, however, this territory was greatly contracted by hostile incursions, especially by the inroads of the O'Sullivans on the west, of the O'Mahonys on the east, and thus the territory of Corca Laighde was reduced so as to include only West and a small portion of East Carberry. The race called the Corca Laighde derived their name from Lugaidh Laighe of the line of Ith, uncle of Milesius, who flourished in the second century of the Christian era. The mother of the celebrated St. Ciaran of Saigher belonged to this family. Her name was Liaghain, latinized Liadania, and she was married to an Ossorian prince called Luighneadh, of which marriage St. Ciaran was born at the residence of his mother's family, called Fintraigh, in Cape Clear Island, but the date is very uncertain. St. Fachtna was born also in the same territory at a place called Tulachteann,[1] in sight of the southern sea, but as he died young—about forty-six years of age—late in the sixth century, he cannot have been born for many years after St. Ciaran. He is sometimes called Mac Mongach, either from the name of his father, or because he was born with much hair on his head—*mongach, i.e.*, hairy.

Like Brendan and Cummian of Clonfert, he was nurtured under the care of St. Ita, the Brigid of Munster, and received from that wise and gentle virgin those lessons of piety that afterwards produced such abundant fruit. The

[1] *Acta SS.*, page 471.

whole of his family, however, must have been trained in virtue at home, for we are told that no less than seven of his brothers were enrolled in the catalogue of the Irish saints. After leaving Ita's care he went to the famous seminary at Lough Eirce, near Cork, where so many of the holy men of the sixth century received their early training.[1] The name of Fachtna (*i.e. facundus*, the eloquent), is expressly mentioned in the *Life of St. Garvan* (26th March) amongst those who crowded that domicile of all virtue and of all wisdom.

Leaving St. Barry's academy, Fachtna founded for himself the monastery of Molana, in the little island of Drirrinis, near Youghal, at the mouth of the Blackwater. Shortly afterwards, however, he returned to his native territory, and founded on a promontory between two pleasant bays of the southern sea the celebrated establishment now called Ross Carberry, but anciently known as Ross-ailithir, from the number of pilgrim students who crowded its halls, not only from all parts of Ireland but from all parts of Europe. It was admirably situated as a retreat for the holy and the wise, on a gentle eminence rising from the sea, in the midst of green fields, looking down on the glancing waters of the rushing tides, and smiling under the light of ever-genial skies. Here Fachtna "the good and wise," though still young in years, founded what is called in the *Life of St. Mochoemoc*, "*magnum studium scholarium*," a great college not only for the study of Sacred Scripture, but also for the cultivation of all the liberal arts.

Amongst other distinguished teachers who helped to make the School of Ross famous was St. Brendan, the Navigator, who later on founded the sees both of Ardfert and Clonfert. Usher tells us, quoting from an old document, that about the year A.D. 540, Brendan was engaged for some time in teaching the liberal arts at Ross-ailithir during the lifetime too of its holy founder. Fachtna and Brendan were intimate friends, for both were nurtured by the holy virgin Ita of Killeedy, and no doubt loved each other with the deep and abiding affection of foster brothers. It is only natural, therefore, that Brendan should go to visit St. Fachtna at Ross, and aid him with the influence of his name and character in starting and organising the new school.

It was at this period that an unforeseen misfortune hap-

[1] It is not easy to see how Fachtna could have visited the School of Cork, for he died young, and the school could scarcely be founded before the last quarter of the sixth century.

pened to Fachtna, which to one engaged, as he was, would become a double misfortune. By some accident he became entirely blind, so that he could neither read nor see anything. In this affliction the saint had recourse to God, and was directed by an angel to apply to Nessa, the sister of St. Ita, and then about to become the mother of that child of promise, St. Mochoemoc, through whom he would obtain his eyesight. Fachtna did so, and miraculously recovered his eyesight.

It seems St. Fachtna must have acquired great fame as a preacher, and no doubt too as a teacher of eloquence, for the surname of "Facundus," which is sometimes used instead of his own name, was given to him. He was, it appears, clothed with the episcopal dignity, and thus became founder of the diocese of Ross, which, not however without mutations, has continued down to our own times, and still ranks amongst the independent Sees of Ireland. The saint died at the early age of forty-six, and was buried in his own Cathedral Church of Ross. The holy work, however, in which he was engaged, was continued by his successors, and for many centuries Ross continued to be a great school whose halls were crowded by students from every land. St. Cuimin of Connor, describes Fachtna as the "generous and steadfast, who loved to address assembled crowds, and never spoke aught that was base and displeasing to God," in allusion to his sanctity and eloquence.

His immediate successor was Conall, whose succession to Fachtna in the monastery and See of Ross was foretold by St. Ciaran of Saigher.[1] Mention is also made of St. Finchad of Ross-ailithir, who seems to have been a fellow pupil[2] of the founder at the great School of Finnbarr at Cork. These two saints were probably tribesmen of St. Fachtna, for we are told that he was succeeded in his see by twenty-seven bishops of his own tribe, whose jurisdiction was conterminous with the chief of the clan over the territory of Corca Laighde.

> "Seven and twenty bishops nobly
> Occupied Ross of the fertile fields,
> From Fachtna the eloquent, the renowned,
> To the well-ordered Episcopate of Dongalach."

The names are unfortunately not given in our annals in this as well as in many other instances, where a succession of bishops with well-defined jurisdiction was undoubtedly

[1] *Acta SS.*, page 471. [2] See *Acta SS.*, page 607, *Life of St. Talmach.*

preserved. O'Flaherty puts the same statement in hexameters—

> "Dongalus a Fachtna ter nonus episcopus extat
> Lugadia de gente, dedit cui Rossia mitram."

Which another poet translates in this fashion :—

> "Hail happy Ross, who could produce thrice nine
> All mitred sages of Lugadia's line,
> From Fachtna crowned with everlasting praise
> Down to the date of Dongal's pious days."

During the ninth century we find frequent mention of the "abbots" of Ross-ailithir in the *Four Masters*, and we are told that it was ravaged by the Danes in A.D. 840, along with the greater part of Munster. In the tenth and eleventh centuries we find reference is made, not to the "bishops" or "abbots," but to the "airchinnech" of Ross-ailithir; and it is quite possible that during this disturbed period laymen took possession of the abbacy with this title, having ecclesiastics under them to perform the spiritual functions. Once only we find reference to a "bishop," in A.D. 1085, when the death of Neachtain Mac Neachtain, the distinguished Bishop of Ross-ailithir is recorded.

But whether it was bishop, abbot, or airchinnech, who held the spiritual sway of the monastery, and its adjacent territory, the school continued to flourish even during those centuries most unpropitious to the cultivation of learning. In A.D. 866, or according to the *Chronicon Scotorum*, in A.D. 868, we are told of the death of Feargus, scribe and anchorite of Ross-ailithir, showing that the work of copying manuscripts was still continued in its schools. But we have still more striking evidence during the tenth century of the literary work done at Ross-ailithir, for a manual of Ancient Geography, written by one of these lectors in the Irish language, is happily still preserved in the *Book of Leinster*.

The author of this most interesting treatise, as we know from the same authority, was Mac Cosse, who was *Ferlegind*, that is a reader or lecturer of Ross-ailithir. A passage in the *Annals of Innisfallen* enables us to identify him, and his history furnishes a striking example of the vicissitudes of those disturbed times :—

"The son of Imar left Waterford and [there followed] the destruction of Ross of the Pilgrims by the foreigners, and the taking prisoner of the Ferlegind, *i.e.* Mac Cossa-de-brain, and his ransoming by Brian at Scattery Island."[1]

[1] See the Paper by the Rev. Thomas Olden (in the Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, Jan., 1884), who gives the text and a translation of this geographical poem of Mac Cosse.

This entry enables us to fix the probable date of this geographical poem of Mac Cosse, which seems to have been the manual of Classical Geography made use of in Ross-ailithir, and hence so full of interest for the student of the history of our ancient schools. The Imar, referred to in the above entry, was king of the Danes of Limerick, but in A.D. 968 the Danes of Limerick were completely defeated by Mahoun and his younger brother Brian Boru. Imar made his escape to Wales, but after a year or two returned again, first, it would seem, to Waterford; issuing thence he harried all the coasts and islands of the South, and finally returned to Limerick with a large fleet and army. But he deemed Scattery Island a more secure stronghold, and having fortified it he made that island his head-quarters, and no doubt kept his prisoners there also. Scattery itself was captured from the Danes by Brian, a little later on in A.D. 976, and there Imar was slain; so that it was the interval between A.D. 970-976 that Mac Cosse was kept a prisoner at Scattery Island, and ransomed by the generosity of Brian, who always loved learning and learned men.

This poem consists of one hundred and thirty-six lines, giving a general account of the geography of the ancient world, and was, no doubt, first got by rote by the students, and then more fully explained by the lecturer to his pupils. This tenth century is generally regarded as the darkest of the dark ages; yet, we have no doubt, whoever reads over this poem will be surprised at the extent and variety of the geographical knowledge communicated to the pupils of Ross-ailithir in that darkened age, when the Danish ships, too, were roaming round the coasts of Ireland. It is not merely that the position of the various countries is stated with much accuracy, but we have, as we should now say, an account of their *fauna* and *flora*—their natural productions, as well as their physical features. The writer, too, seems to be acquainted not merely with the principal Latin authors, but also with the writings of at least some of the Grecian authorities.

In the opening stanza he describes the five zones: "two frigid of bright aspect,"—alluding, no doubt, to their snowy wastes and wintry skies, lit up by the aurora borealis—and then two temperate around the fiery zone, which stretches about the middle of the world. There are three continents, Europe, Africa, and Asia; the latter founded by the Asian Queen, and much the larger, because she unduly trespassed on the territories of her neighbours. Adam's paradise is in

the far East, beyond the Indus, surrounded by a wall of fire. India "great and proud," is bounded on the west by the Indus, on the north by the hills of Hindoo Coosh. That country is famous "for its magnets, and its diamonds, its pearls, its gold dust, and its carbuncles." There are to be found the fierce one-horned beast, and the mighty elephant—it is a land where "soft and balmy breezes blow," and two harvests ripen within the year. In like manner he describes the other countries of Asia; the *mare rubrum* "swift and strong," and Egypt, by the banks of the Nile, the most fertile of all lands. He even tells us of the burning fires of the Alaunian land, alluding to the petroleum springs around the Caspian. He names all the provinces of Asia Minor—"little Asia," he calls it—and says most accurately, that it was bounded on the west by the Propontus and the Ægean sea. In like manner he describes Africa, and derives its name from Apher, a son of Abraham and Keturah, showing that he was familiar with the Greek of the Antiquities of Josephus.[1] He then goes through the various countries of Europe, giving their names, and chief cities. The principal rivers, too, are named, and their courses fixed, as when he says that—

"Three streams issue from the Alps westward, and across Europe they appear
The Rhine in the north-west, the Loire, and the River Rhone."

Finally, he comes to Ireland, which, in loving language, he proclaims to be

"A pleasant and joyous land, wealth-abounding; the land of the sons of Milesius; a land of branching stems; the most fertile land that is under the sun."

So ends this most interesting manual of geography written by an Irish scholar, in the Irish tongue, and taught to the students of Ross-ailithir, whilst the Danish pirates were roaming round our seas, and ruling with strong hand in Dublin, Waterford, and Limerick.

Of the subsequent fortune of Ross-ailithir we know little. In A.D. 1127 the fleet of Toirdhealbach O'Conor sailed to Ross-ailithir, and despoiled Desmond, as the *Chronicon Scotorum* informs us—for it was not the Dane alone that our schools and churches had to fear—often, far too often, the spoiler was some rival chieftain, whose churches and monasteries were sure to be spoiled very soon in their turn. Then came

[1] Book I., c. xv.

the greatest of all the devastators—the Anglo-Normans, who laid waste Corca Laighde under FitzStephen, a few years after Bishop O'Cearbhail went to his rest in A.D. 1168. Since that period the school has disappeared, but the See of Ross still holds its ground, after having gone through some strange vicissitudes of union with and separation from the neighbouring dioceses of Cloyne and Cork.

IV.—The School of Innisfallen—St. Finan.

The island of Innisfallen in the Lower Lake of Killarney has been long celebrated both in song and story for its wonderful scenic beauty. It is commonly regarded as the Queen of Irish Islands, and one enthusiastic admirer has declared that it is the most beautiful spot in Europe. The monks of old were great lovers of nature, and hence, as might be expected, we find that at a very early period a monastery was founded on the island of Innisfallen. It offered many advantages to saintly men, who wished to give themselves up entirely to a life of holiness and learning. It was not merely its own sweet beauty and the glory of the lake and mountains round about, that made it a desirable place of seclusion; it had more prosaic advantages to commend it. It was near enough for convenience to the promontory of Ross, yet far enough for security; for it was surrounded by deep water and was within sight of that noble keep whose friendly owners were always the protectors and benefactors of the monks of Innisfallen. It is true, indeed, the monks had been there long before the present picturesque ruin was built, but then there was always some dun or fort on Ross Island, as it is now called, for it is a spot not only of singular beauty but also admirably situated for defensive purposes.

All our authorities agree that the monastery of Innisfallen was founded by St. Finan; but to which St. Finan it owes its origin is another question. There were many saints who bore that name, of whom two were particularly distinguished, St. Finan the Leper, and St. Finan Cam, or the Crooked. It is commonly said that St. Finan the Leper was the founder of Innisfallen. After a careful examination of his Acts as given by the Bollandists on his feast day, which is believed to be the 16th of March, we can find no evidence to support this statement, which in itself also is sufficiently improbable. It is true, indeed, that St. Finan the Leper came of the old Desmond race, for his father, Conal was fourth in descent from Ollioll Olum, the common ancestor

of all the great Munster families. But Finan belonged to that branch of the race of Cian, son of Ollioll Olum, which was settled in the portion of Bregia, called from him Keenaght, extending from Dromiskin to Dublin; and it is highly probable that Finan himself was a native, not of Ely O'Carroll, as Colgan says, but of Sord, now called Swords, where his family seems to have resided. He was called the Leper, because on one occasion when a poor woman brought to the saint her son, who was blind, deaf, and leprous from his birth, the saint prayed to God to cure the child and offered himself to bear its leprosy. His prayer was heard—the child was made whole, but the saint was stricken with the dread disease, which he endured for thirty years. St. Finan the Leper is said to have been a disciple of St. Columba, and to have been placed by that saint over his own foundation at Swords; but at what time it is difficult to determine. The saint is also said to have founded Ardfinnan on the Suir in Tipperary, which took its name from him. He is also mentioned in connection with Clonmore in the co. Carlow, founded by St. Maedhog,[1] and according to the writer of his Life, he was buried there. His connection, however, with Innisfallen in Lough Lein is very doubtful, and unsupported by any satisfactory evidence that we have seen. It is much more likely that the Inisfaithlen referred to by his biographers was the island off the Coast of Dublin, now called by its Danish name of Ireland's Eye, but which in ancient times was known as Inisfaithlen—a fact of which Colgan does not seem to have been aware. The same name was also given to the island of Beg Erin, or Begery, in the Bay of Wexford.

On the other hand, St. Finan Cam was a Kerry man by race and birth, and moreover spent most of his life in the West of Kerry, which has many places connected with his name and memory. He was born in that wild promontory of Corkaguiny (Corca-Duibhne) which is swept bare by the wild Atlantic blasts. His father Mac Airde[2] is mentioned in the Life of St. Brendan—for it seems to be the same person—as a man of considerable wealth, who made a present of thirty cows with their calves to that saint shortly after he was born. Indeed it seems highly probable from the narrative that the family of St. Brendan and St. Finan were connected by ties of consanguinity. We are told too in the Life of Finan in the

[1] *Martyr. Doneg.* April 13th.

[2] Others say he was Kenuedy, son of Maenag. Becnait, daughter of Cian, was his mother.

Salamanca MS. that St. Brendan was the first tutor of the boy, and that the latter spent seven years in Brendan's corner—contra fornacem—whilst he was learning to read and study monastic discipline under the guidance of that great master. This was probably in the early part of the sixth century, whilst Brendan was still living in his native Kerry, before he went on his Atlantic voyages, or founded any of his monasteries in the province of Connaught.

It was by the direction of the same saint that young Finan, who was already far advanced in holiness, left his father's territory, and went to Slieve Bloom, the utmost boundary of his native Munster towards the north, and there, about A.D. 560, founded the monastery of Kinnity, near Birr, at the roots of Slieve Bloom, with which his name has been ever since associated. It is a singular fact that so late as the year A.D. 907, we find that Colman, Abbot of Kinnity, *and King of Corca-Duibhne*, was slain in the fatal field of Ballaghmoon, where Cormac Mac Cullinan, and so many of his Munster nobles lost their lives.

Finan, however, returned after a brief sojourn at Kinnity to his native territory; and thenceforward we find that almost all the events recorded in his life took place in Kerry.

There is one incident mentioned, which goes far to show that this St. Finan Cam was the founder of the monastery on Innisfallen. For we are told that a boat was built on 'St. Finan's Island,'[1] and that a message was sent to Fedelmith, the King of Lough Lein, to carry away the boat. The king came with thirty men to bring the boat to the water, but they could not carry it. Then the angels of God, with Finan, carried the boat down to the Lake Lugdech. It is true this seems to refer to Finan's Island on Lough Currane, but the incident certainly shows that Finan had friendly relations with the King of Lough Lein, who in return would very naturally grant the holy man one of the islands on his own lake for a religious house.

On another occasion we find that when Finan's horse died, another steed came out of Lough Lein, and for three years drew the saint's waggon; and then at the bidding of Finan once more returned to his stable beneath the waves of Lough Lein. So the saint then probably had his own

[1] "Alio autem tempore ratis fabricatus est in insula apud S. Finanum, et missum est ab eo ad regem stagni Lein, scilicet Fedelmith, ut portaretur secum ratis." . . . "Et portaverunt ratem secum (angeli) super stagnum Lugdech."

'home' on the shore, or in an island of the lake. Once again, on a particular occasion, when Finan was living on a certain island, and his horses were on the mainland grazing, having, it seems, their feet tied, they swam to the saint's house, without loosening the bonds, and at his bidding swam back again to the shore. We find him also protecting his tribesmen of Corkaguiny against the attacks of Nechtan, King of the Hy-Fidhgente, who dwelt beyond Slieve Lougher, in the west of the County Limerick. This prince, refusing to listen to the prayers of Finan, was conquered in battle, and forced to fly from his kingdom. We are then told that he betook himself to Diarmaid, King of the Hy-Niall, which fixes the date of these events at some time between A.D. 544 and 565, the limits of the duration of King Diarmaid's reign. He returned, however, more than once to his monastery of Kinnity, where many monks lived under his rule and guidance. We find him also, towards the close of the sixth century, at an assembly of the Munster chiefs, probably at Cashel, in the time of Failbhe Flann. Failbhe succeeded his brother as King of Munster in A.D. 619; but he was, no doubt, for many years previously a prince of much influence and power. On this occasion Finan wrought some wondrous miracles before the king, and Failbhe did penance, and granted all the requests of Finan—one being to allow him 'to take a census of the population,'—it means rather to remit a tax that pressed on the people. We also find the saint nigh to Lough Lugdech, which seems to be the lake now called 'Lough Currane,' in the south-eastern extremity of Iveragh, near the Bay of Ballinskelligs. It seems to have been a favourite haunt of the saint; and the remains of his oratory are still to be seen on an island in the lake. On this occasion Finan wanted to get his horse shod; but the smith had broken his tongs, and could not hold the glowing iron. "Take it in your hands," said the saint. The smith did so, and held it without inconvenience, whilst he fashioned the shoe with his hammer! This is a fair specimen of some of the extravagant miracles attributed to Finan by the writer of his Life.

"Lough Lugdech, now," says O'Donovan, "called Lough Luigeach (Lee), or Currane Lough," is of oval form, about three miles long by two broad. It abounds with salmon and white trout, which, no doubt, often furnished a luxurious meal to the abstemious saint. On the south it is surrounded by a range of bold mountains, partly covered with woods in Smith's time,[1] but now quite bare of timber. The remains

[1] *History of Kerry*, p. 100.

of Finan's Church and cell were to be seen on the largest of three small islands in the lake,[1] when Smith wrote about 140 years ago; and he says that they keep his (Finan's) festival on the 16th of March. This is the day generally assigned to Finan the Leper in our Martyrologies—the 7th of April being the festival of Finan Cam, according to the Martyrology of Tallaght—the change may have taken place from the confusion of names, for no one says that the Leper saint ever penetrated as far to the south-west as Lough Currane. The obliquity which gave Finan the surname of 'Cam,' was in his eyes, not in his body, adds the same eminent authority.

Derrynane also takes its name from our saint; it means the oak-grove of Finan—*Daire Fionain*—the letter 'f' being aspirated, and not sounded in the compound. The old abbey, however, situated on the shore, is of mediæval origin, as its ruins tell. St. Finan's Bay, north of Bolus Head, also speaks of the saint. It is quite open and exposed to all the fury of the Atlantic billows.

St. Finan was in all probability the first founder of the oratory on the Greater Skelligs, which is directly opposite the bay to the south-west. When the Danes swarmed round our coasts, the monastery was removed from the island to the mainland, and its dilapidated walls may still be seen in the only sheltered corner at the head of St. Finan's Bay. Several holy wells also bear the saint's name, and his memory is still vivid in various parts of Kerry. In our opinion this St. Finan Cam, not St. Finan the Leper, was the founder of the monastery of Innisfallen.

V.—The Annals of Innisfallen.

There are only two entries referring to Innisfallen in the *Four Masters;* one A.D. 1144, merely records the death of Flanagan of Innisfallen, a distinguished *anmchara*, or soul's friend—that is counsellor and confessor—or as we now say, spiritual director. The other entry, however, is an earlier and far more important one. It records the death in A.D. 1009 (*recte* 1010) of Maelsuthain O'Cearbhail (Carroll) of the community or family of Innisfallen, "chief doctor of the western world in his time, and lord of the Eoghanacht of Lough Lein," who died 'after a good life.' This Maelsuthain was a very celebrated man, and in all probability the original compiler from older authorities of the *Annals of*

[1] It contains about two acres, and is called Church Island. The ruins of both church and cell are still to be seen on the island.

Innisfallen. Hence he deserves special notice at our hands. The Eoghanacht of Lough Lein, of whom he was chief, was that branch of the great Eugenian race of Desmond, whose territory surrounded the beautiful Lakes of Killarney, and included the greater part of the Barony of Magunihy. O'Donoghue of Lough Lein, whose principal stronghold was on Ross Island, was the chief of this wide territory. He derived his descent from Cas, son of Corc, King of Munster, whose elder brother, Nadfraich, was the ancestor of the great MacCarthy family. In A.D. 1015 was slain Domhnall, who commanded the forces of Desmond at Clontarf, and he was father of Donchadh, from whom the family name has been derived. The O'Carrolls of Lough Lein were sub-chieftains under the O'Donoghues, and derived their descent from a younger brother of that Nadfraich above referred to as ancestor of the MacCarthy Mor.

Maelsuthain O'Carroll was in the beginning of the eleventh century head of this sub-tribe, and hence is called lord of Lough Lein. The School of Innisfallen was one of those which appear to have suffered least from the ravages of the Danes. This, no doubt, was mainly due to its remote insular situation amongst the mountains of Kerry. It is highly probable that Brian Boru, the hero of Clontarf, was educated at Innisfallen; at least we find that Maelsuthain, the head of the island school, was his intimate friend and counsellor during many years of his victorious career. When Brian marched in triumph to Armagh, he laid an offering of twenty ounces of gold on the High Altar of the cathedral; and our Maelsuthain O'Carroll, of Lough Lein, who accompanied him, made the following entry in the name of the king, in the *Book of Armagh*:—"St. Patrick, when going to heaven, ordained that all the fruit of his labour, as well of baptisms, as of causes and other alms, should be carried to the apostolic city, which in Irish is called Ardd-Macha. So I have found it in the libraries of the Scots. This I have written, that is, *Calvus Perennis*, 'the ever bald,' (which is equivalent to the Irish Mael-suthain), in the sight of Brian, Emperor of the Scots, and what I have written he determined for all the kings of Maceria,"[1] that being the Latin equivalent of Cashel.

[1] The original entry may still be seen in the *Book of Armagh*, as follows: "Sanctus Patricius iens ad caelum mandavit totum fructum laboris sui tam baptismi tam causarum quam elemoisinarum deferendum esse apostolicae urbi quae Scotice nominatur Ardd-Macha. Sic reperi in Bibliothecis Scotorum. Ego scripsi, id est, Calvus Perennis in conspectu Briain imperatoris Scotorum et quod scripsi finivit pro omnibus regibus Maceriae."

Maelsuthain is sometimes called the Anmchara[1] of Brian; but as it seems that he was a layman, the word must mean rather counsellor than ghostly adviser. That Maelsuthain was a renowned professor of the Innisfallen school is apparent not only from the eulogy of the Four Masters and the Ulster Annals, which call him 'chief sage of Ireland,' but also from the curious tale about Maelsuthain that has been translated by O'Curry. It is in substance as follows. Maelsuthain was so renowned a professor that three students came all the way from Connor, in the County Antrim, to his school at Innisfallen, in which they spent three years. Then they resolved to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but their professor told them that it was now high time to pay him something for their education. They had no money, however, which is always a scarce commodity with students, but offered to spend three years in service with their teacher as a recompense for their education. "No," said he, "go to Palestine, and all I ask is that when you die, as you will in the Holy Land, you shall come to me, and let me know whether I also shall die in the peace of the Lord." They agreed to this, and went to Palestine, where they died in grace; but they asked permission from St. Michael to return to their old professor, and tell him his fate before going to heaven themselves. St. Michael granted this request, and bade them tell Maelsuthain that he had only three years and a-half to live, and then he was to be condemned to hell for all eternity. So they came to Maelsuthain, in the shape of three white doves. He bade them welcome, and asked what was to be his future lot. They told him. "And why am I to be sent to hell?" said he. They told him the reasons also, as St. Michael had directed them: first, because he interpolated the canons; secondly, because of unchastity; and, thirdly, because he had given up the Altus. "I shall not go to hell all the same," replied the professor, "for God has promised that 'the impiety of the wicked shall not hurt him in whatsoever hour he shall turn himself away from it.' I will turn away from my sins; I will put no sense of my own in the canons; I will perform a hundred genuflections every day; I will recite the Altus seven times every night to make up for my past neglect; and I will keep a three days' fast every week." On the day of his death the three white doves returned, and told

[1] *Lectures*, MS. Materials, p. 77. Though Anmchara generally means confessor, it sometimes means counsellor. It is applied to the Angel Victor by the scholiast on Fiacc's Hymn

him that his penance was accepted by God, and that they saw his place in heaven, and would now accompany him into eternal glory. So he was anointed by the clergy around his bed; and his three pupils parted not with him until they all went to heaven together. "And," adds the tale, "it is this good man's writings (or manuscripts—*screptra*), that are in Innisfallen in the church there still."

This reference seems to designate some well-known writings connected with Innisfallen, of which Maelsuthain was the author or compiler, and which can hardly be any other than the well known *Annals of Innisfallen*. Eugene O'Curry tells us that it has been a constant tradition in the South of Ireland that the *Annals of Innisfallen* were compiled by Maelsuthain, and he adds that he himself had no doubt the O'Carroll was either 'the original projector of the compilation,' or that he enlarged the previous meagre outlines kept in the monastery of Innisfallen into this more regular and extensive historical work.

The principal copy of these *Annals* is at present preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. "It contains," says Dr. O'Conor, "fifty-seven leaves (of parchment), of which the first three are considerably damaged, and the fourth partly obliterated. Some leaves at the beginning are also missing." The missing leaves seem to have begun with a short account of the creation and the history of the early patriarchs extracted from the Book of Genesis. At the sixth begins the history of the Kingdom of the Greeks; then it treats of the general history of the great empires of the world down to the year A.D. 430 (at folio 9), where their real interest begins. Thenceforward there is a brief chronicle of Ireland in different hands, down to the year A.D. 1319. The first scribe has written down to the year A.D. 1130 (at folio 30). The writing of this portion is free and elegant; the initial letters are coloured and adorned; and everything seems to point to the fact that the original scribe of this manuscript wrote no further. But afterwards the work becomes more rude and careless; there is no attempt at ornamentation; in fact, the appearance of the manuscript is a faithful picture of the state of the country—daily going from bad to worse. It is fruitless now to speculate how this venerable monument of Irish learning came into the Bodleian Library of Oxford.

The work known as the *Dublin Annals of Innisfallen* is a translation in Trinity College Library, which Theophilus O'Flanagan testifies[1] that he made into English "about

[1] In a letter to Thomas Wright, 15th Jan., 1803.

nineteen years ago, from a copy perfected under the direction of Dr. O'Brien, Bishop of Cloyne and Ross, from the original in the Bodleian Library." Dr. O'Brien's scribe was, according to O'Flanagan, a priest of the name of Conroy, who was well versed in the Irish language.

There is another copy in the Royal Irish Academy in Irish and English, beginning with A.D. 250, and coming down to A.D. 1320. It is on paper, and contains 320 folios. During the later years it deals chiefly with the affairs of Munster. At A.D. 1010 we find the following entry:—"Maelsuthain, son of O'Carroll, King of the Eoghanacht of Locha Lein, and *the Primate of Ireland,* died in Aghadoe." In the Irish it is 'Priomfaidh Eirion,' which appears to mean, 'chief sage of Ireland.' More than half this volume deals with the period from A.D. 1170 to 1320, and it contains many interesting entries during that time. The chronology is, however, very defective.

Poetry, it seems, was cultivated in Innisfallen as well as history—for we are told that in A.D. 1197 Gilla Patrick O'Huihair went to his rest. He was archdeacon of the island—which shows that there was a considerable community there at the time—and superior of the convent. He also founded many religious houses, to which he gave books, vestments, and other necessaries. He was, moreover, the Annalist tells us, 'a celebrated poet;' and was held in the highest estimation for his chastity, piety, wisdom, and universal charity. We have also another entry, A.D. 1208, which gives us a beautiful picture of a reverend priest of 'Cloonuama,'[1] who died in this abbey, where he passed the evening of a life chequered by misfortune in penitence and prayer, and was buried in the cemetery of the Abbey of Innisfallen.

There is one significant entry a few years earlier—"anno 1180, this abbey of Inisfallen being ever esteemed a paradise and a secure sanctuary, the treasure and the most valuable effects of the whole country were deposited in the hands of its clergy; notwithstanding which we find the abbey was plundered in this year by Maolduin, son of Daniel O'Donoghue. Many of the clergy were slain—even in their cemetery—by the MacCarthys. But God soon punished this act of impiety and sacrilege, by bringing many of its authors to an untimely end."

During the eleventh century the O'Donoghoes of Lough Lein rose to great power and influence—one of them became

[1] That is, 'Cloyne of the Caves.'

king of Cashel, and several of them are described as royal heirs of Cashel. It was an O'Donoghue who restored the cathedral church of Aghadoe in the twelfth century—he was slain in A.D. 1166. In all probability this Maolduin, son of Daniel, was in feud with his own family, who were always the protectors of the monks of Innisfallen, and he called in the MacCarthys to help him in plundering this venerable shrine. It is satisfactory to know that vengeance soon overtook the despoilers of this paradise, as the chronicler aptly describes it.

Yes, Innisfallen is, in truth, an earthly paradise. The island contains about twelve acres; but this small area is dowered with every charm that can gratify the senses. The surface, fringed with evergreen bowers, is gently undulating, and covered with a carpet of green, so pure and so soft, that the eye loves to linger on its hues. There are miniature creeks, where the wavelets die in gentle ripples; there are giant elms and hoary ash trees, that have lived for centuries; the holly and the arbutus are not shrubs, but forest trees, and their bright green leaves, with blossoms of purest white, or berries of deepest red, gleam through the heavy-laden boughs. Then there are the manifold associations of religion, and history, and poetry, and romance, called up before the mental vision by the aspect of the ruined churches on this queen of islands. You have, besides, the mingled melodies of whispering leaves, and singing birds, and murmuring waters, filling the ear, and inviting the listener to contemplation and repose. Of old, the tinkling of bells was heard from these ruined cloisters, and the gray Franciscan habit was seen stealing along the shores of Muckross, and the cathedral chimes of Aghadoe were borne over the waters to the students' ears. Now they are all gone—no lectures within these silent roofless walls; no midnight vigils of the gray friars in Muckross; no bishop's throne in Aghadoe. Yet young Killarney rivals these ivy-grown haunts of ancient learning and holiness in all things save one—the unapproachable beauty of the sites chosen by the monks of old. Their successors live nigh to scenes of beauty; but they have so placed themselves that they can never see them. They seem to prefer naked walls and flat fields to the glorious vision of nature's unapproachable beauties, which she has poured out with lavish hand, by mountain, stream, and woodland all around this peerless Lake of Learning.[1]

[1] Lough Lein is written Loch Leighinn in an old MS., and the natives of the district explain the word as the Lake of Learning.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SCHOOLS OF THOMOND.

I.—The School of Mungret.

"Though Garryowen has gone to wreck,
We'll win her olden glories back;
The night long, starless, cold and black,
We'll light with song and story."

The first reference[1] we find made to Mungret is in the *Tripartite Life of St. Patrick*. When the saint had come into the territory of Hy-Fidhgente, which included that portion of the modern County Limerick west of the river Maigue, with a small portion of the barony of Coshma east of that river, Lomman, the king of the district, made a feast for Patrick on the summit of Mullagh Cae, to the south of Carn Feradaig. This hill still bears its ancient name, and the gifted poet[2] from whom we have already so often borrowed beautiful thoughts, describes its situation:—

"That pleasant hill ascends
Westward of Ara girt by rivers twain,
Maigue, lily-lighted, and the 'Morning Star'
Once Samhair named, that eastward through the woods
Winding, upon its rapids earliest meets
The morn, and flings it far o'er mead and plain."[3]

Now Lomman, son of Mac Eirc, and Mantan, a deacon of Patrick's household, had prepared a feast for the saint and his people on the summit of this green hill, when it chanced that a band of itinerant jugglers came upon the scene, and meeting Patrick first, asked him for some food. The laws of hospitality were always imperative in Celtic Ireland, and accordingly Patrick told them to go to Lomman and Mantan, and that they would supply their wants. No one had yet tasted of the banquet, not even Patrick himself; and hence, when the jugglers applied for food, they were rather rudely

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[1] There is no foundation for O'Halloran's statement that Mungret was founded before the time of St. Patrick.

[2] Aubrey de Vere.

[3] *The Feast of Knock Cae.*

repulsed by Lomman and the deacon, who told them in effect that strollers like them were not the persons to bless the meat and partake of it first.

They meant no harm, but still Patrick's request was not complied with, and his honour was compromised, when hospitality was refused even to the jugglers. So Patrick said:—

> "To the boy who cometh from the north (Limerick)
> To him the victory has been given."

And forthwith a youth named Nessan appeared coming up the hill-side with his mother, and she being the stronger was carrying a cooked ram on her shoulders for the king's feast. Then the saint asked the boy to give him the wether, that he might give it to the jugglers, and thus save his honour by complying with the laws of hospitality. The boy at once gladly gave the ram to Patrick; but his mother grumbled a little when she saw its destination.

Patrick, however, resolved to teach them all, that obedience and charity are the first of Christian virtues. Therefore, he said to Lomman, his host, that none of his race should ever be king, or crown-prince, or bishop; and to Deacon Mantan, he said that his cloister would not be lofty, and that it would be the dwelling of a rabble, and that sheep and swine would tread on his remains—but to Nessan he said: "Thou wilt be mighty of race":—

> "Thou that didst the hungry feed,
> The poor of Christ that know not yet His name,
> And helping them that cried to me for help,
> Mine honour cherish, like a palm one day,
> Shall rise thy greatness."

Nessan's mother, too, was punished for her grumbling. She was not to be buried in her son's church of Mungret, but beyond the cloister wall to the west, where its sweet-toned bell could not be heard. Then Patrick ordained Nessan a deacon, and founded a church for him, that is, Mungret, near Limerick.

On one occasion Nessan went to visit St. Ailbe of Emly, that he might inquire from that saint if it were right for a monk to receive or to refuse the offerings of the faithful. When Nessan arrived it was the hour of None, and the community were chanting the office in the church. Nessan, however, declined to go into the guest-house until he should see Ailbe and put his question. Now Ailbe continued in

prayer from the hour of None until Tierce on the following day; and no one went into him except the guest-master.

At length he gave his answer to the patient deacon—"Go," said he, "and tell Nessan this verse in the Scottish tongue:

"Danae Dee nis frithcoirthi,
Selba forri [forru] niscorthi;
Acht toberthar, ragabae,
Sech ni muide, ni chele."

That is:—

Gifts of God are not to be refused,
[But] possession is not to be retained of them
[Literally: possession is not to be put upon them]
If they are offered, you shall accept them,
But you shall not boast [of], you shall not conceal [them].[1]

The festival of Nessan is given in the Calendar of Ængus as the 25th of July. "It is of him," says the *Martyrology of Donegal*, "Cuimin of Condeire gave his testimony in showing that he never told a **lie** out of his mouth." Thus he says:—

"Nessan, the holy deacon, loves
Angelic pure devotion;
Never came outside his teeth
What was untrue or guileful."

And the same authority likens him to Laurentius the Deacon in his habits and life.[2] Colgan says that Nessan died in A.D. 551; but even granting that he was a mere boy when St. Patrick was in Munster it is difficult to suppose he could have lived so long.

The fame of Mungret School is, however, due much more to St. Munchin, or Manchin, surnamed the Wise, than to Deacon Nessan, although unfortunately little can be ascertained with certainty about his history. He was of the

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[1] On this passage Dr. M'Carthy has kindly sent me the following note:—

That is: do not refuse what is offered, but dispense what you do not require for your own needs: ask not, but accept what is proffered, without being vainglorious thereat, or without concealing the benefaction (in order to hoard it without incurring the censure of being avaricious).

The metre is heptasyllabic, each line ending in a word of three syllables. Its name is *Casbairdne*.

The chief Old-Irish form is *ragabae=ro-a-gabae:* that is, the relative pronoun *a* (them) is placed (infixed) between the verbal particle *ro* and the verb—*them you shall accept.* A mediæval forger could not have coined an expression of the kind.

Plainly, the quatrain embodied a *rule* of the monastery of Nessan; for most of their regulations were embodied in verse, being thus easier to be remembered.

[2] Nessan is expressly named amongst the saints of the Second Order; if, indeed, it be Nessan of Mungret who is referred to.

Dalcassian race, being son of Sedna, and grandson of Cas, who was seventh in descent from Cormac Cas, son of Ollioll Olum, the great father of the race. His uncle Blod was king of the Dalgais of Thomond, during the early years of St. Patrick's mission in Ireland. According to some writers, St. Manchan or Munchin, of Limerick, was identical with Manchan the Master, who is mentioned in the *Life of St. Patrick*. There were, however, several saints who bore that name; and it seems highly improbable that 'Master' Manchan of the *Tripartite* was the founder of St. Munchin's. O'Curry says that this latter saint was *daltha*, or foster-son, and pupil of St. Mac Creiche of Ennistymon in Clare, who flourished towards the end of the fifth century; for he was the friend and contemporary of St. Ailbe of Emly. We assume, therefore, that Manchin, the founder of Cill-Munchin, now known as St. Munchin's, flourished in the first half of the sixth century. It is said that he succeeded Nessan as Abbot of Mungret, and that under him and his successors, this monastic school attained great fame during the sixth and seventh centuries.

The fame of Mungret, however, seems to be principally founded on local tradition, for we can find no satisfactory evidence to prove its celebrity in any of our ancient documents. It is said that there were no less than six churches in Mungret, and no less than 1,500 monks (not to speak of the boys at school) within its cloisters. Of these one-third were preachers, or as we should now say, went about giving missions; one-third were constantly engaged in celebrating the divine office; and the remaining third were employed in teaching in the schools, or labouring for the community.[1] It is strange that no trace of these ancient buildings now remains, with the exception of the walls of one not very ancient church, which is 41 feet long, by 23 feet in breadth. The door-way in the west gable has a flat lintel with sloping jambs—its most characteristic feature. The round arches of the remaining opes rather show that this church belongs to the ninth or tenth century, than to the time of St. Munchin.[2] It is probable that St. Munchin presided for many years at Mungret; and then in his old age retired from community life, and built himself a cell and oratory in the neighbourhood, which was afterwards known as Cill-Munchin, and became the nucleus

[1] The *Psaltair of Cashel* is quoted for this statement, but that work no longer exists; Keating, however, saw it.

[2] The remains of a smaller, but later church, are still to be seen a little to the south of the older and larger building.

of the present city of Limerick. Thus it was that he came to be recognised as the patron of the city and diocese of Limerick; and, as such, his church is said to have been the cathedral church of the city down to the building of St. Mary's by Donald O'Brien, who died in A.D. 1194.

It is very doubtful if there was any See in Limerick before the Danish colony became Christian, and got a bishop of their own. The only scrap of evidence in favour of a line of earlier prelates in St. Munchin's that we could find, is the statement in the prose *Life of St. Senan*, that "Deron, Bishop of Limerick," was present at the obsequies of St. Senan in Scattery Island. But, as Lanigan remarks, this Life is of the post-Norman period, and cannot be accepted as an unquestionable authority.

The subsequent history of Mungret may be briefly summed up. The death of Ailill, Abbot of Mungret, is noticed by the Four Masters in A.D. 760, which shows that there was a succession of abbots in that great school. But evil days were now in store for Mungret. Situated close to the great highway of the Shannon, it was one of the first places that felt the fury of the Danes, and suffered most from their constant presence in the great estuary of Luimnech. We are told that it was burned and plundered by these 'gentiles' in A.D. 834, like most of the great monasteries on the southern coasts and estuaries. Shortly afterwards the Danes took permanent possession of the estuary of the Shannon; and although defeated by the native tribes at Shanid and elsewhere, still, owing to their possession of the sea, and the constant arrival of fresh hordes, they were able to maintain themselves at Limerick, where they established strong forts on the King's Island, which they held against all comers down to the time of Brian Boru. They were, indeed, the real founders of the city of Limerick, and their choice of that site, so suitable at once for commerce and defence, shows how keenly alive their chiefs were to the advantages to be derived from a good natural position. Of course whilst the Danes held the lower Shannon and all its islands, Mungret could not flourish. At best they could only live there on sufferance, and were constantly exposed to pillage and murder.

Still Mungret was not obliterated. Cormac Mac Cullinan by his will, which he made before he set out for the fatal field of Ballaghmoon, bequeathed, amongst other charitable bequests to other churches, three ounces of gold, an embroidered vest, and his blessing to Mungret; so that it is not improbable the great king-bishop, so learned in the Scotic

tongue, as the Four Masters tell us, had himself been a student of Mungret.[1] In A.D. 909, Maelcaisil, Abbot of Mungret, died; and although the school was burned in A.D. 934, we read of Abbot Muirgheas, whose death is noticed in A.D. 993, by the Four Masters. They also record the death of "Rebachan, son of Dunchadh, Archdeacon of Mungret," or as they write it Mungarid, in the next year; so that it was still a place of importance, having an abbot, an archdeacon, and an airchinneach also, for Constans, who held that office, died in A.D. 1033. It was burned in A.D. 1080; and was no sooner rebuilt than it was once more destroyed by a native prince, Domhnall Mac Lochlann, 'King of Ireland,' in A.D. 1088. On this occasion the King of Ireland harried the coasts and the churches of Thomond quite as cruelly as ever the foreigners had done.

Yet, phœnix-like, it rose once more from its ruins, for we are told that in A.D. 1102, "Moran O'Moore (Mughron O'Morgair), chief lector of Armagh, and of all the west of Europe, died on the third of the nones of October at Mungret in Munster." Though the Irish princes of the North and South were as usual at deadly feud, Mungret gave a hospitable home and an honourable grave to the great professor from Armagh, who was the father of St. Malachy—one of the greatest of our Celtic saints. The last entry in the Four Masters is the shameful record that Mungret was plundered in A.D. 1107 by Mortogh O'Brian. Can it be that this Mortogh, who thus impiously plundered the shrine of his kindred at Mungret, is the same Mortogh who gave Cashel to the Church, and carried the arms of Thomond in triumph from Luimnech to Lough Foyle? Thenceforward Mungret, as a school, disappears from our Annals—almost, but not quite, up to the present hour.

'The learning of the Mungret women' is proverbial about Limerick; and the proverb had its origin in this way.[2] A controversy arose between Mungret and some other monastic school of the South, as to which was the more learned community; and it was agreed by both parties that their best scholars should meet at Mungret on a certain day, and exhibit their learning in a public disputation. Now as the time drew nigh the Mungret scholars feared they would be worsted in the disputation, and so they had recourse to stratagem. A

[1] Sneidhius of Disert Diarmada was Cormac's principal tutor.

[2] See the Rev. Denis Murphy in the *Journal of the R. H. A. A.*, for July, 1889.

number of them dressed themselves as women, and going to the place, where a stream crossed the highway near Mungret by which the visitors were to approach, they began to wash clothes. The strangers coming up put some questions to the ladies in the vernacular, but the ladies replied in excellent Latin, and even some, it is said, in Greek. The visitors were filled with astonishment, and asked them how they learned the ancient languages. "Oh," they said, "every one about Mungret speaks Latin and Greek; that is nothing at all—'mere crumbs from the monks' table'—would you like to talk philosophy and theology with us?" When the strangers saw that even the women were so learned they knew they would have no chance at all if they met the monks; so they decamped right off, leaving the victory to the 'wise women of Mungret.'

Mungret is finely situated on a gently rising sweep of fertile land, close to Lord Emly's beautiful demesne at Tervoe, about three miles to the south-west of Limerick. It commands a grand view of several reaches of the Shannon, with the pine clad hills of Clare rising in the distance beyond the river. Once more, too, bands of students roam through its meadows; and in statelier halls than St. Nessan built the languages and philosophy of Greece and Rome are taught to eager disciples. There is once more a great college at Mungret; once more its students come from afar to seek sanctity and learning under the shadow of the ancient Church of St. Nessan. The Jesuits have there established, since 1884, a College and an Apostolic School, both of which have achieved wonderful success during the brief period of their existence. May St. Nessan, and all the saints of Mungret, help them to revive the ancient glories of their own monastic school, and to send to foreign lands missionaries of the Celtic race, as zealous and as learned as the men who in olden days carried the faith and fame of Erin from the Shannon's banks through so many distant lands, even to the utmost shores of Calabria.

II.—The School of Iniscaltra.

Another celebrated nursery of ancient sanctity and learning flourished in the island of Iniscaltra, especially during the seventh and eighth centuries. This beautiful island is situated in the south-western angle of Lough Derg, where that great expansion of the Shannon runs in towards the village of Scariff, between the Counties of Galway and Clare. It is elliptical in shape, and contains 45 statute

acres of exceedingly fertile land, so that £100 per annum has been frequently paid for the grazing of the island. It belongs to the county Galway, but ecclesiastically the island is a portion of the parish of the same name, in the diocese of Killaloe. The gaze of every stranger is at once arrested by the stately round tower, which rises up in lonely grandeur from this green speck in the placid bosom of the lake, marking the spot where the saints of old sought communion with God, and spent their lives in prayer, and fasting, and sacred study. No one now dwells on this lonely and beautiful island; and indeed it would be a profanation to erect a building for the common-place purposes of every-day life on its sacred soil. Better—far better—to leave its tower, its graveyards, and its ruined churches to be the lone and silent memorials of the vanished past, than to mar their holy memories by association with anything that would be common-place or trivial.

Mention is first made of this island in A.D. 548, when, as the *Four Masters* and the *Annals of Ulster* record, "Colum of Inis-cealtra died" of the Crom Chonaill, or Yellow Plague, which then for the first time, but not for the last, depopulated these countries, and carried off amongst others many of the most distinguished saints and scholars of ancient Erin. The *Four Masters* record in this same year, and probably from the same cause, the death of St. Ciaran of Clonmacnoise, St. Tighernach of Clones, St. Finnian of Clonard, the tutor of the saints of Ireland, St. Colum of Inis-cealtra, and also of St. MacTail of Old Kilcullen, of Sincheall of Druimfada, now Killeigh, in King's County, of St. Odhran of Latteragh, on the eastern slopes of Keeper Hill, and of St. Colum, son of Ninnidh, called also Colum Mac Hy-Crimthainn, the celebrated founder of Terryglass. It is highly probable that the two Colums here mentioned, Colum of Inis-cealtra, and Colum Mac Hy-Crimthainn, were really one and the same person; but the transcriber finding Colum in one place, called 'Colum of Iniscaltra,' and in another place 'Colum of Terryglass'—Tir-da-glas—thought they were different persons, and recorded them as such.

The *Life of St. Columba* of Terryglass, recently published in the *Salamanca MS.*, shows how this error may have arisen. This St. Columba was of Lagenian origin, for his patronymic, Mac Hy-Crimthainn, is derived from an ancestor, who was King of Leinster five generations before. His father, Ninnidh, seems to have been born not far from

Clonenagh, in Queen's County, for in his youth we are told that the saint learned his psalms and hymns from a holy old man named Colman Cule, who lived in that neighbourhood, and founded the Church of Cluain Cain. This has been identified with great probability as Clonkeen, near Clonenagh, in the Queen's County. Columba afterwards studied under the celebrated Finnian of Clonard, and he, with his greater namesake, Columba of Iona, is reckoned amongst the Twelve Apostles of Erin, who studied together at that great school. When he was sufficiently trained in all spiritual knowledge at Clonard, we are told that he resolved to go to Rome, and bring home with him some of the relics of St. Peter and St. Paul. On his return he came to St. Martin's monastery at Tours, where he was privileged to obtain the staff and chrismal of that saint, which he carried home with him to Erin. He also visited England during this return journey, and preached with some success to the still unconverted Saxons. Returning home to Leinster his brother Cairbre offered him a place called Echargabul, on which to build a church and monastery; but he preferred to leave in that place one of his disciples called Cronan, who was a foreigner. Afterwards, with his disciples, he remained a year at Clonenagh,[1] and then crossing Slieve Bloom he came to Hy-Many of the Connaughtmen, and founded a church, where he had a flock of 700 souls, at a place called Tir Snama, which seems to have been not far from Lough Derg; for we are told that shortly afterwards he founded other churches near the lake, called Aurraith Tophiloc and Tuam Bonden, where he dwelt for some time.

Then an angel appearing to him bade him go to the island Keltra—since called Iniscaltra. At that time a certain old man dwelt on the island, called Maccribe; but the angel told him to leave the island to St. Columba, which he willingly did.

Thus we find St. Columba of Terryglass established at Iniscaltra, where he remained a 'long time,' and where he was miraculously supported for a while by the liquor that distilled from a lime tree growing on the island. The birds that lived on the island, too, became quite familiar with the saint; and when Nadcumius, one of his disciples, asked him the reason, he gave a very beautiful reply. "Am I not a bird myself," he said—"why should they fear me, for my soul always flies to heaven, as they fly through the sky?"

[1] See *Life of St. Fintan* in this work, p. 399.

It is said that on one occasion, when one of his 'family' died suddenly on the shore opposite the northern part of the island at Mount Shannon, he ordered his monks to go and say to the dead man—"Columba bids thee arise"—and the dead man arose and returned with them to the island.

Whilst at Iniscaltra the saint seems to have made frequent voyages over the lake. On one of these occasions seeing the place, 'where Terryglass now is,' rising over the broad waters of the lake, towards the east, he said, "Oh! that my resurrection would take place from that sweet spot"—a wish that was destined afterwards to be fulfilled.

Crowds of people came to visit the saint and his companions at Iniscaltra, so that he pined for some more lonely spot, where he might hide himself far away from men. Accordingly he embarked in his curragh. as we may suppose, then shooting the rapids, and sailing out into the estuary of the Shannon, called Luimnech, he established himself with a few companions in a lonely island, called 'Insula Erci' in the Latin Life, which may, perhaps, have been corrupted into Iniscorcy, the name of an island in the bay formed by the Fergus River, close to Kilydysart. The place, at any rate, was west-north-west (a circio) of Mungret, not very far away; and had, close at hand, another small island, to which the saint was sometimes in the habit of retiring, in order, it would seem, to be still more alone with God.

From this island he was called away to visit his master, St. Finnian of Clonard, who had been stricken with the yellow plague, and anxiously longed to receive the Holy Communion from his hands. The saint at once set out for far-distant Meath, a ten days' journey, and arrived in time to give the 'sacrifice' to his beloved master before he died of that dreadful pestilence. It was in the year, it seems, A.D. 551 or 552 (548 with the Four Masters).

The blessed Columba himself seems to have caught the contagion whilst attending his dear old master; for retiring to a neighbouring place called Cluain Hii, where one of his old fellow-students had founded a church, he sickened and died of the same disorder towards the close of the same year—his festival day being December 13th, as marked in all our Calendars.

The men of Meath learning that so great a saint had died amongst them, were unwilling to let the blessed body be carried off, so that his companions had recourse to stratagem to convey the body secretly away. But even this they could

not effect until a year after the saint's death, so closely were they watched by the men of Meath. At last they hid the remains of their beloved father in a waggon, covered over with oats, and taking several other waggons also, as if for the purpose of bringing a supply of provisions with them, they set out for the Shannon, choosing the road towards Clonmacnoise. There they were hospitably received; and they told the abbot, in confidence, of the blessed burden which they bore along with them. The abbot then greatly rejoiced, and wished to have the holy relics kept at Clonmacnoise; but the brethren would not consent. Terryglass, blessed by St. Patrick, on the swelling shore of the beautiful Lough Derg, was chosen by himself to be 'the place of his resurrection;' so the Abbot Ængus, next successor to St. Ciaran, let them go in peace with his blessing. But the men of Meath now began to suspect that their treasure was taken away, and followed quickly after, headed by the prince of the southern Hy-Niall, Colman Beg. The brethren, however, had already embarked; and when Colman took the helm to pursue them, Nadcumius threatened him with God's anger if he followed them further. So for the time he turned back, and the monks with swelling sail and sturdy oar quickly traversed the lake, and came to Iniscaltra, where they buried the saint in secret for seven years, giving out, it seems, that his remains reposed at Terryglass.[1] We are told that the lake was lit up with a heavenly light of marvellous beauty during all the time that the body of the saint was borne over its heaving bosom.

Meantime the men of Meath, for seven years, kept watch around Terryglass, to see if they could get a chance of recovering their lost treasure; but finding no opportunity, they returned at last to their homes. Only then did the faithful Nadcumius transfer the holy relics from Iniscaltra to Terryglass, and thus carry out at length the dying wish of his beloved master. The men of Meath saw the bright beams that shone from heaven over all the lake on the night the holy relics were transferred; and at last reluctantly said—"Let us cease this toil. The saint chose this place for himself; let him rest in peace there for ever."

Such is the account given in the Life; but in the *Leabhar Breac*, it is stated that the relics of Colum, son of Crimthann,

[1] The ruins of a mediæval monastery may still be seen at Terryglass; and a beautiful new church has been lately erected through the munificence of Colonel Hickie of Slevoir, at a cost to him of nearly £10,000.

were taken by Mochoemhe of Terryglass, and by Odhran the Master, on a wain southwards over Esge, to Caimin of Iniscaltra. Esge is a corruption of Echtge, the ancient and correct name of the Slieve Aughty mountains, that separate Galway from Clare. As St. Caimin was certainly not then in Iniscaltra, this would seem to point to a subsequent translation of the holy relics once more to the beautiful island where Columba had spent so many years. His successor, Caimin, had, it would seem, rendered the island once more a celebrated home of learning and piety, and wished to possess, at least a portion of the blessed body of his illustrious predecessor.

Columba died A.D. 552; St. Caimin, the still more famous saint of Iniscaltra, and who has always been regarded as its patron, died, according to the *Annals of Innisfallen*, just one hundred years later, in A.D. 653; so that Caimin cannot have been a disciple of Columba. He came, however, of the same royal Lagenian race of Cathair Mor, for his father Dima, or Dimma, belonged to Hy-Kinsellagh, but his mother Cumaine, who was also, it is said, the mother of Guaire, King of Connaught, and of Cummian Fada, Bishop of Clonfert, belonged originally to the west of the County Kerry. We know little of the life of this great saint. He appears to have been present at the Synod of Easdara, now Ballysadare, which was held by St. Columba, and attended by the principal saints of Erin about the year A.D. 580 or 585. In that case the saint must have been born about the middle of the sixth century, and reached the age of one hundred years before he died. It is still more difficult to explain how he could have been a friend and contemporary of St. Senan of Scattery Island, who died about the year A.D. 544.

It is certain, however, that Caimin has always enjoyed the reputation of being himself a distinguished scholar, and the master of a very famous school. Lanigan tells us that he wrote "a Commentary on the Psalms collated with the Hebrew text," a portion of which Usher says that he himself saw, and that both the text and notes were generally regarded as in the handwriting of St. Caimin.

If this be the fragment of the Commentary on the 119th Psalm, now in Merchants' Quay, Dublin, that handwriting is certainly marvellously beautiful, but there is, we believe, no appearance of any collation with the Hebrew text. This fragment was once in the Franciscan Convent of Donegal; afterwards, it was in Colgan's possession, and has now fitly returned to the representatives of the original owners.

Caimin's school at Iniscaltra attracted, we are told, great numbers of pupils, even from foreign countries. In the *Life of St. Senan* reference is made to seven ships that arrived in the Shannon crowded with students seeking this island college of St. Caimin. Some poems have been attributed also to the saint, but without good authority. At present the remnant of the 119th Psalm is all that can fairly be regarded as his; but when complete, it must have been a very beautiful and most interesting specimen of our ancient Latin MSS.

Belonging, as he did, to the ruling classes, and connected by blood with several of the provincial kings, being, moreover, a man of great wisdom and virtue, Caimin seems to have exercised very considerable influence over the course of public events in his own time. Guaire, his half-brother, much against the wish and counsel of Caimin, provoked the King of Tara at the time, Diarmaid, son of Aedh Slaine, to a pitched battle at a place called Carn Conall, near Gort. Guaire was defeated, and his allies, the kings of Munster and Hy-Fidhgeinte, were slain on the field, thus verifying Caimin's predictions of the disastrous consequences that would certainly result to the authors of this unjust war. The Four Masters say this great battle was fought in A.D. 645, but A.D. 648 or 649 seems to be the true date.

It would seem, from the curious story told by the Scholiast on the *Felire of Ængus*, that Caimin was afflicted during the latter years of his life with many painful diseases, which he bore in a spirit of perfect resignation. On a certain occasion when Guaire, Caimin, and Cummian were together in the great church of Iniscaltra, which Caimin had built, and the two saints were giving spiritual counsel to Guaire, Caimin said to his brother, "Well, Guaire, what would you wish to have this church filled with?" "With gold and silver," replid Guaire, "that I might give it in charity to the saints and to the poor for the good of my soul." Cummian, in answer to the same question, said he would wish to have it filled with books, for learned men to instruct others in the Word of God; but Caimin himself, when asked the same question, said he wished it full of all diseases and sicknesses to afflict his body. And we are told that each of the brothers got his wish from heaven, "so that sickness and disease came on Caimin, and not one bone of him remained united to the other on earth, but his flesh was dissolved, and his nerves with the excess of every disease that fell upon him." On account, doubtless, of this peni-

tential spirit, Caimin has been likened, by an old author, to Pachomius the monk, one of the great fathers of Eastern monasticism. The monastic school of Caimin continued to flourish for many centuries after his death, and produced several distinguished scholars, whose names are still held in great veneration by the learned.

The ruined monuments still remaining at Iniscaltra, and now happily in charge of the Board of Works, sufficiently attest the ancient importance of the religious establishment on "Holy Island." The peasantry still speak of it as the "Seven Churches," and the island is almost invariably called 'Holy Island,' which shows the reverence that still clings to its ruined walls. The round tower which, in the distance, seems to rise from the waters of the lake, is a strikingly beautiful and picturesque object in the landscape. It is still 80 feet high, 46 feet in circumference, with an internal diameter of nearly 8 feet. The stones in the lower courses are very large, and the masonry of a massive character for the first seven or eight feet; after that the work becomes coarser and more irregular, and the stones are much smaller. The door-way is 10 feet 7 inches above the present level—anciently it was much more. There is a single window for each of the different lofts, looking towards the cardinal points, and lighting the different storeys. The northern window is formed of finely cut stone, and is triangular outside, but square-headed within.

There is probably no foundation for the local tradition which ascribes the building of this tower, as well as those of Inis Clorann and Scattery Island, to St. Senanus. It is much more likely that it was built at the close of the tenth, or the beginning of the eleventh century, by Brian Boru, who also erected or repaired the great church, which had been more than once partially destroyed by the Danes. The door-way of the tower is circular-headed, and formed of very finely-chiselled blocks of stone. It was anciently secured by an iron door—the bolt hole and traces of its fastenings were visible in 1838, when O'Donovan visited the island, and one of the floors existed, in the memory of an old man then living; no traces, however, of the flooring now remain.

What is now called St. Caimin's Church, a little to the east-north-east of the belfry or round tower, was probably a restoration by Brian Boru of the great church built by St. Caimin himself. It consists of a nave and chancel, the former 31 feet by 20; and the latter 15 by 12½ feet. The east wall of the chancel was quite gone, but has been partially

restored. The masonry of the chancel is finely jointed ashlar, much superior to the coarser work of the nave. The chancel arch is the most striking and characteristic feature in this old church. It is semi-circular, formed of fine cut stone in three plain orders, rising from engaged jamb-shafts with very peculiar capitals. The arch is 10 feet 2 inches wide at the bottom, narrowing to 9 feet 11 inches at the top of the jambs. It is regarded by the best judges as a work of the time of King Brian. The west door-way has been lately restored. Its character is similar to that of the chancel—a plain impost moulding, two orders rising from engaged pilasters, with sculptured heads carved on the round at the top. There was a chevron moulding round the face of the arch. The sill is of limestone, and the entire door seems to have been an insertion in an older building. There are two windows in the south wall of the nave—one square, the other round-headed, but not specially striking; the round-headed window has a deep and finely executed splay.

A stone font, one foot and a half deep, probably for holy water, was close to the west door at Lord Dunraven's visit, and is there still. Traces of the ancient cashel which surrounded the monastic church were also visible. There are many interesting inscribed stones and crosses lying about. The base of a cross lies sunk in the ground north-east of a piece of a wall said to have been portion of a small chapel called 'Teampul na bh-fear ngonta,' or the Church of the Slain Men. Here, it is said, the bodies of those slain in battle were usually buried.

The fine Church of St. Mary—Tempull Maire—is about fifty paces from St. Caimin's Church, and is much larger; but we cannot now describe it at length. The view through the arch of the church over the lake towards the wooded hills of Tipperary is of surpassing beauty, and once seen can never be forgotten.

Several sculptured stones also have been found, and six of them still bear the names of the deceased persons over whose graves they were placed. One oblong slab with the words OR DO ARSSEI . . . was partially broken, so that the full name cannot be deciphered. Another flag has a beautiful cross within a circle with the words, MOENGAL MAC LODGIN, over the arms of the cross. Another is inscribed, HILAD I DECHENBOIR—the stone tomb of ten persons. Another stone with Celtic cross of interlaced bands, asks a prayer for "Conn;" whilst three simpler flag stones, with rather plain crosses of similar formation, ask a

prayer for Diarmait Macc Delbaid, for Maelpatraic, and for Laithbertach.

We can identify with much probability Diarmaid, as "Diarmaid, son of Caicher, Bishop of Inis-cealtra," who died A.D. 951 (F. M.) The last may refer to "Laithbeartach son of Ængus, Bishop of Cluain-fearta Brenainn (Clonfert)," who died A.D. 820, probably during a pilgrimage at the Holy Island. Diarmait is the only bishop whose name is mentioned by the Four Masters in connection with Iniscaltra. They also give the names of five abbots, and one anchorite[1] of Iniscaltra. St. Caimin himself was probably only a priest. He died in A.D. 652; but we could find no trace of his tomb-stone, although he was certainly buried there. It may be that he was the saint interred in the square building outside the present wall of the churchyard and which is sometimes called the 'Confessional.' The churchyard is still much used for interments, and is greatly overcrowded, the coffins in some cases not being covered with more than six inches of earth.

This holy and beautiful island suffered fearfully during the ravages of the Danes. The Shannon was a highway for their 'ships' from Limerick to Lanesborough, and hence we find that all the churches on its shores and islands were frequently pillaged and burned by these marauders during the two centuries of their domination. It was first plundered by Turgesius about the year A.D. 836, who on the same occasion plundered all the churches of Lough Derg and set up his wife Ota, as a kind of priestess to deliver oracles on the high altar of Clonmacnoise. It was again plundered in A.D. 922 by the Danes of Limerick, who brought a fleet on Lough Derg "and plundered Inis-cealtra, and they drowned its shrines, and its relics, and its books," and having harried both shores of the river as far as Lough Ree, they returned safely to Limerick. Yet we find it had a bishop in A.D. 951; and the comarb of Colum Mac Hy-Crimthainn in Terryglass, Killaloe, and Inis-cealtra, died A.D. 1009 (*recte* 1010). This is the last abbot of whom we have any record. It is evident, however, that the school and monastery still continued to flourish. Brian Boru repaired the great church about that very time, A.D. 1005-1010, and no doubt also restored the efficiency of the schools, for his biographer tells that "he sent professors and masters to teach wisdom and knowledge, and

[1] This anchorite, who died in A.D. 898, is called Cosgraich. He dwelt in the round tower, which on that account is sometimes call Cosgraich's tower.

to buy books beyond the sea and the great ocean, because their own writings and books, in every church and in every sanctuary where they were, were burned and thrown into the water by the plunderers from first to last, and Brian himself gave the price of learning and the price of books to every one separately who went on this service.[1]"

We may be sure that Brian did not neglect Iniscaltra; for it was the great school of his own hereditary kingdom, and was within a few miles distance of his own palace of Kincora.

III.—Other Monastic Schools of Thomond.

There were, at least, four other great monasteries in Thomond, and two of them are mentioned as having monastic schools connected with them, that is, Birr and Roscrea. But we do not find the names of any distinguished scholars educated in these schools, and hence our account of these monasteries must be very brief.

St. Brendan of Birr, is to be carefully distinguished from his more celebrated namesake of Clonfert. He is sometimes called Brendan the Elder—Brendanus Senior—and like Brendan of Clonfert, came of the race of Fergus MacRoy, which produced more saints and heroes than, perhaps, any of the other Celtic tribes. The two Brendans were together at Clonard under St. Finnian, and both are ranked amongst the Twelve Apostles of Erin. St. Brendan of Birr was especially remarkable for the fulness of the prophetic spirit[2] which he possessed; and, according to one account, it was in obedience to his counsel that St. Columba, after the battle of Cuil-Dreimhne, resolved to leave Ireland, and preach the Gospel in Alba. It is said that on the same occasion he befriended Columcille at a Synod held near Teltown in Meath, where an attempt was made by some of the 'saints' to excommunicate Columba for his alleged share in bringing about that bloody conflict.

It is certain that Brendan was highly esteemed by all his contemporaries, and when he founded his monastery at *Biorra*, or Riverstown, as it would be called in English, it soon grew to be a very celebrated institution. The Four Masters, at A.D. 553, tell us that "Brendan of Birr was seen

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[1] "*Wars of the Gael*," page 139.

[2] "Qui Propheta in scholis illis et etiam Sanctorum Hiberniae habebatur." *Vita.*

ascending a chariot into the sky this year." This entry is not intended to signify that he died, but rather that, like St. Paul, he was taken up to heaven for a little, for his death is noticed by the same Four Masters under date of the year A.D. 571, when they tell us that he died on the 29th of September. The real date appears to have been A.D. 573. From a scholastic point of view, the subsequent history of this monastery contains nothing especially interesting.

St. Cronan of Roscrea belonged to the territory and sept of Ely O'Carroll, in which his monastery was situated. He spent much of his youth in Connaught;[1] but afterwards returning home, he founded his first monastic cell at a place called Seanross. This old church, though, perhaps, subsequently modified and restored, is situated within a few paces of Corville House, near Roscrea, the beautiful residence of Count O'Byrne, who carefully preserves the building from injury or profanation. At this period, however, all the low ground around Corville, towards the railway, was the Locha Cre, or Stagnum Cre, so frequently mentioned in the Lives of the Saints of this district. Seanross was a wooded promonotory running into the lake, and it was then so inaccessible and secluded (*desertus et avius*) that even Cronan resolved to leave it, and establish his monastery for the convenience of his disciples at the Ross of Cre, which was on the highway from Meath to Munster then, as it is now.

Here St. Cronan, who was himself an accomplished scholar, established what was certainly a very famous school, although, unfortunately, we know very little of its history. There is a Life of the saint in the *Salamanca MS.*, but although abounding in miracles, it is very scanty in facts Here is a specimen of the miracles. On one occasion Cronan requested a certain skilful scribe, named Dimma, to write a copy of the Four Gospels for him. Dimma said he could only afford to give one day's writing—doubtless he was otherwise engaged. "Very well," said Cronan, "it will suffice; but begin at once, and continue to write without stopping until sunset." So Dimma set to work; but, wondrous to relate, the sun's light shone round him for forty days and forty nights, until the entire manuscript of the Gospels was completed.

We have, there is every reason to believe, still in existence, this wonderful manuscript written by Dimma for St. Cronan; and it was so highly prized in Roscrea that

[1] Ad gurgitem Ruyad, perhaps Ballyshannon.

Tatheus O'Carroll, chieftain of Ely, had a beautiful cover or shrine made to enclose the precious volume, about the middle of the twelfth century. The manuscript itself contains an entry, which tells who the writer was, not for the sake of vain glory, but to beg a prayer from every reader for his soul's welfare, according to the good old Celtic custom.

Finit. Oroit do Dimmu rod scrib pro Deo et benedictione—

That is—"A prayer for Dimma, who wrote it for God, and a blessing."

And at the end of the Gospel of St. John we read thus:

Finit. Amen ✠ Dimma Macc. Nathi ✠ This Book of Dimma contains "the Four Gospels, with the Latin ritual and prayers for the visitation of the sick. A coloured figure of each of the first three Evangelists precedes his Gospel, and there is a special symbol prefixed to the opening of the Gospel according to St. John. On the fractured final page of the volume, at the termination of St. John's Gospel, after the words quoted above—'Dimma Macc Nathi'—there are two imperfect and archaic Irish lines, in which the writer prays that 'he may not be venomously criticised,' and that he may attain 'a mansion in heaven,' as the reward of his labours."[1]

This Book of Dimma is at present in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin; but only a small portion of the ornamentation of the beautiful *cumdach*, or shrine, is now to be had. The shrine and its contents were taken away from Roscrea monastery at the suppression; but were, it is said, found in the year A.D. 1789 by some boys who were hunting for rabbits in the Devil's Bit Mountain, which is not far from Roscrea. The silver plate of the shrine was, it is supposed, then torn off, and the precious stones that adorned it were also abstracted; but the portion representing the Passion of Christ was left untouched. It afterwards passed from Dr. Harrison of Nenagh, through Dr. Todd, into the Library of Trinity College.

Of Dimma, the scribe, nothing else is known for certain. There were many saints and scholars of the name; but it is supposed that this scribe is identical with Dimanus, whose name is mentioned in connection with that of St. Cronan in the letter addressed to the Irish Prelates in A.D. 634, by Pope John IV., concerning the alleged appearance of Pelagianism in Ireland.

[1] See Gilbert's *National Manuscripts*, Vol. i., page 21

We know from various entries in our Annals that St. Cronan's School of Roscrea continued to flourish for many centuries even during the worst period of the Danish ravages. We find frequent reference to its abbots, scribes, and professors down to the period of the Anglo-Norman invasion. A portion of the old abbey still remains, and shows that it was one of the most beautiful specimens of Romanesque architecture in Ireland.

St. Senan's monastery on Scattery Island was also a very famous institution; but we do not find that it was celebrated as a school. Neither was St. Flannan's monastery at Killaloe frequented by scholars, who seem to have preferred the quiet beauty of Iniscaltra to the passes of the Shannon, especially after the arrival of our unwelcome visitors from Scandinavia.

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CHAPTER XXII.

LATER SCHOOLS OF THE WEST.

I.—St. Colman's School of Mayo.

"'Tis a rosary of islands in the Ocean's hollow palm—
Sites of faith unchanged by storms, all unchanging in the calm,
There the world-betrayed may hide them, and the weary heart find balm."

—*M'Gee.*

The history of St. Colman, who founded the monastery of Innisboffin, and the Monastic School of Mayo, is full of interest. He may be called an island-saint, like Enda of Aran; but his was a far more strange and adventurous career. Trained in Iona, ruling in Lindisfarne, defeated but not subdued by Wilfrid at Whitby, and then coming home in his old age with the relics of his sainted predecessors to labour and to die in the misty islands of the West—there is no element of romantic interest wanting in Colman's extraordinary history.

We may, we think, fairly assume with Colgan that he was a native of some part of the West; for otherwise the very existence of Innisboffin would have been unknown to him. It is quite certain, however, that he received his education and religious training in Iona, and that he was for many years a member of that community. Bede describes him as an Irish Bishop (de Scottia Episcopus), and shows very clearly what he means thereby, when he adds, that on his departure from Lindisfarne he returned to Ireland (in Scottiam regressus est). Indeed, Bede has never, even once, applied the word 'Scottia' except to Ireland.[1]

Colman was a monk in Iona during the abbacy of Segienus, the third ruler of that monastery from A.D. 623 to 652. These were years of much missionary enterprise, especially after King Oswald mounted the throne of Northumbria in A.D. 634. At his request Segienus sent one of his monks, Corban by name, to preach to the Northumbrians. But Corban's mission was a failure; he expected too much from the semi-barbarous Angles of Northumbria; and he offered them the solid food

[1] See Skene's *Celtic Scotland*, Introduction, page 3

before he gave them the milk of sound doctrine. After his return to Iona, Aidan, an Irishman, as Bede tells us, was consecrated bishop, and sent to preach in Northumbria. Bede gives a most interesting account of his life and character,[1] and adds, as might be expected, that his mission was entirely successful. He converted the Northumbrians, and founded the monastery and See of Lindisfarne about the year A.D. 635. When Bishop Aidan died in A.D. 651, another Irish prelate called Finan was sent to succeed him in the government of the Northumbrian Church. His first task was to build a church in Lindisfarne, of hewn oak, after the manner of the Irish, and he covered it with reeds. In this church he laid the body of his sainted predecessor on the right side of the high altar.

The Easter Controversy, of which we have already spoken, embittered the brief episcopacy of Finan. Like Aidan and all the monks of Iona, he still followed the old Irish custom of calculating the Easter Day, so that the southern Angles, who followed the Roman method, were much scandalized to see the King celebrating Easter Sunday, while the Queen, Eanfled, and her Roman chaplain were keeping the rigorous fast of Palm Sunday.

Bishop Finan died in A.D. 661, after ten years' episcopacy, during which nothing was done to bring about uniformity; and Colman, another Irish monk of Iona, was appointed to succeed him. But he, too, persisted in observing the old Irish Easter, and wearing the frontal tonsure, so that even King Oswy felt it was high time to try and establish one uniform usage in Northumbria.

For this purpose a Conference, or Synod, was appointed to meet in the monastery of Streaneshalch, since called Whitby. The abbess Hilda favoured Bishop Colman, and presided over the assembly as it was held in her monastery; and she was besides a royal lady. King Oswy also favoured the Scots, but Aldfrid, his son, the crown prince, was in favour of the Roman usage. The learned and eloquent Wilfrid, then an abbot, but afterwards Archbishop of York, was the great champion of orthodoxy, and was supported in his views by Agilbert, a Frenchman, who had studied the Scriptures in Ireland, and appears to have been acquainted with the Irish language and usages. On the other side was Colman, and he had an able episcopal supporter in Bishop Cedd, who, though a southern prelate, was inclined to favour

[1] *Bede*, Liber iii., C. v.

the Irish usage, for he was trained and consecrated by the 'Scots,' that is the Irish party.

Colman was called upon by the king to open the discussion. He justified his own usage by three arguments—first, because he received the practice from the holy elders of the Irish Church, who had ordained him bishop and sent him to Northumbria; secondly, because it was the practice of the holy Apostle St. John; and thirdly, because this usage had been sanctioned by the holy and learned Anatolius, a man of great authority in the Church of God.

Then Wilfrid[1] rose to reply, as he was well acquainted with the Anglo-Saxon tongue. He was, besides, an able and learned man who had travelled much abroad. His first argument against Colman was of itself quite conclusive: "The Easter which we observe we saw celebrated everywhere in Africa, Asia, Egypt, and Greece—we saw it celebrated by all men at Rome, where the blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul, lived, taught, suffered, and were buried." Apostolic authority and universal usage were thus clearly against the few Picts and Britons—the Irish had nearly all given in by this time—who still adhered to the old Easter and the frontal tonsure. As to the authority of St. John, to which Colman appealed, it was not to the purpose. For according to Wilfrid, St. John kept Easter on the 14th day of the first moon in the evening, no matter what day of the week it happened to be—in this respect following the Jews, whilst it was yet lawful to Judaize. "But you, Colman, admit that Easter may not be celebrated on a week day, and hence you do not follow the practice of St. John, nor, as I have shown, of St. Peter either." This was a home thrust for poor Colman, and Wilfrid followed it up by disposing of Anatolius also. "He was, I admit, a holy, learned, and commendable man; but you do not observe his decrees; for he had a cycle of nineteen years of which you know nothing, or if you do, you despise it; although it is now followed by the entire Church."

As to Colman's appeal to the authority of his sainted predecessors, Wilfrid admitted that they were holy men, and perhaps even men of miracles; but they were excusable on account of ignorance of the truth: "you, however," he says, "have no such excuse because the more perfect rule adopted by the entire Church is now brought home to your minds."

Wilfrid concluded by appealing once more to the authority of the Apostolic See of Peter as conclusive, for it was to

[1] See *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* for April, 1887.

Peter our Lord said—"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

"Colman," said the king, "is it true that these words were spoken to Peter by our Lord?" "It is true, O king," said Colman. "Then," said the king, "as Peter is the door-keeper, I will not contradict him in anything lest there should be none to open to me if I made him my adversary." So the Conference ended, and Colman and his clerics felt that they were defeated. It was a severe blow to the old man; and he felt it keenly, not for his own sake, but for the sake of his sainted predecessors. "His doctrine," says Bede, "was rejected and his sect despised;" and that, too, by men whom he must have regarded as interlopers. Why should they put their sickles into his harvest? Why not leave him and his clergy and people in peace? When hard work was to be done, they were not to be found—it was the monks of Iona who converted the Northumbrians to the Church; but now these Southerns came to regulate the date of their Easter Day, and forbid them to wear the tonsure, which they had worn from their boyhood, and which was worn by Columcille himself, the great Apostle of the Picts and Scots. It was intolerable; and now as King Oswy and his son Aldfrid had turned from their spiritual fathers to Wilfrid and his associates, Colman resolved to leave Northumbria for ever.

But first the old man returned to Lindisfarne, and told his monks all that had happened. For his own part, he declared that he would not accept the new discipline, nor give up the traditions of his sainted predecessors, who proved their mission by countless miracles; and that, as the king was determined to follow the new discipline introduced by Wilfrid, he himself would return to his native country where he might follow the ancient discipline in peace. Those who listed might remain; but those who choose to come with him were welcome, and together they would seek an asylum in the far west of Ireland.

The sequel is told by Bede:—"Colman, the Irish Bishop, departed from Britain, and took with him all the Irish (Scoti) that he had assembled in the Island of Lindisfarne, and also about thirty of the English nation, who had been instructed in the monastic life, and leaving some brothers in his church of Lindisfarne, he repaired first to the Island of Hii, whence he had been first sent to preach the Word of God to the English nation. Afterwards he retired to a small island, which is to the west of Ireland, and at some distance from its

coast, called, in the language of the Irish (Scoti), Inisbofinde, that is, the Island of the White Cow. Arriving there he built a monastery, and placed in it the monks he had brought with him of both nations; who, not agreeing among themselves, by reason that the Scots—that is the Irish—in the summer season, when the harvest was to be brought in, leaving the monastery, wandered about through places with which they were acquainted, yet wished to get a share of what the English monks had provided for their common table. Colman sought to put an end to these dissensions; and, travelling about, at length found a place in Ireland fit to build a monastery, which, in the language of the Scots, is called Mageo" (Mayo.)[1]

Such is the brief, but most interesting, account which the Father of English History gives of the founding of the two monasteries of Inisboffin and Mayo; and it is confirmed in all points by our native Annalists. But there are some few additional particulars to be noted.

When Colman and his monks were leaving Lindisfarne, their hearts were sore at the thought of leaving behind them the relics of their sainted father Aidan, who had founded that church and monastery. Yet they did not wish to carry away all the holy relics, and so they adopted a middle course. They opened the grave which was outside their wooden church, in the little green churchyard, where they had so often walked and prayed. With reverent hands and streaming eyes they took a part of the sacred relics to carry home with them to their native Ireland; the rest, for greater security, they re-interred in the sacristy for those who were to come after them.

Then the band of exiles set out on their journey home. But first, as in duty bound, Colman and his monks resolved to visit Iona, the parent house, which had sent them to preach the Gospel in Northumbria. Bede does not tell us how long they remained there; and it is not easy to fix the period from the dates given in our own Annals. Colman left Lindisfarne A.D. 664; and the *Chronicon Scotorum*,[2] and the first entry in the *Annals of Ulster*[3] tell us that in the same year he came to Inisbofinde. In that case the visit to Iona could only have been a passing one. But the weight of authority goes to

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[1] Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, Book iv., c. 4.

[2] A.D. 644, "Navigatio Colmain episcopi cum reliquis Scotorum ad insulam Vaccae Albae in quâ fundavit ecclesiam." *Ch. Scotorum.*

[3] They say he came in the year in which Diarmait and Blathmac died; that is, in A.D. 664, according to the first entry.

show that this voyage of Colman did not take place until A.D. 667 or 668.[1] In the *Ulster Annals*, Hennessy renders the contraction—"cum reliquis scorum," as if it were—cum *reliquiis sanctorum*—"with the relics of saints," which they undoubtedly had with them; but in the *Annals of the Four Masters* it is rendered with "the other saints;" and in the *Chronicon*, "with the other Irish monks"—as if it were, cum reliquis scotorum. There is, however, no difference in meaning, because Colman brought both with him to Mayo—his Irish monks, and the relics of his sainted father Aidan, if not, also of Columba, and some other saints of Iona.

And there, says Bede, in Inisbofinde he founded his monastery; and, as the *Irish Annals* say, there he also built his church.

It is a bare and desolate island exposed to all the fury of the Atlantic storms; but the monks of old thought little of comfort so long as they could be alone with God—and who was to disturb them on the naked shores of this barren island? It is probable that at this time the island was uninhabited; and we know, from the Life of St. Flannan of Killaloe, that the people of these western coasts were still half pagan. The more need then of apostolic men to instruct them in Christian doctrine.

The island took its ancient name from a wild tale of a certain white heifer that dwelt in an enchanted lake in the island, whence it was seen to emerge from time to time to graze on its shores. The lake is there still, and, if one may credit the islanders, the White Cow is there too, in spite of St. Colman and all his monks. The island is about six miles due west of Renvyle Point, in the Joyce country, and contains 2,312 statute acres, most of which, however, is quite naked and barren. At one time the population amounted to fifteen hundred souls, who lived very much on the produce of their stormy seas; but at present, we believe, it has fallen to about two-thirds of that number.

Inisboffin still contains several interesting memorials of St. Colman. The ruins of his ancient church are yet to be seen in the townland of Knock. There is also a holy well to the south-west of St. Colman's oratory, which is called *Tobar Flannain*, and takes its name from the patron saint of Killaloe, who spent a considerable time on the island, and was much venerated there. In the townland of Middle

[1] See the *Four Masters*, the second entry in the *Annals of Ulster* A.D. 667, and *Tighernach*, who has it in A.D. 668.

Quarter dwelt another recluse, who appears to have been a disciple of St. Colman; the site of his 'House' is still pointed out, and called in Irish—*Aittighe Guarim*—the place of Guarim's House. The celebrated Grace O'Malley, better known as Grana Weale, had a castle on the island, which has almost quite disappeared—but the place is still called *Dun-Graine.* In Cromwell's time the island was fortified, and became a kind of penal colony, in which many horrible atrocities were committed on the helpless Irish. The remnant who survived were crowded into ships, like African slaves, and transported to Barbadoes. Those who did not perish during the voyage soon succumbed beneath the broiling sun of the West Indian plantations. The islanders still remember, with a shudder, those terrible times.

It seems, however, that the Celts and Saxons did not get on amicably together even in St. Colman's time. The saints themselves will sometimes disagree; and, according to Bede, the Irish monks were much in fault. During the summer months, when the grain was to be sown, and reaped, and harvested, they wandered about in the neighbourhood—"through places with which they were acquainted"—coshering, in fact, upon their friends, and very likely pocketing such alms as they could get. But when the winter came, they returned to the monastery to eat what they had not sown nor helped to reap. It was too bad; and if it be true, and not the recital of some Anglo-Saxon returned to Yarrow from Connemara, one cannot blame the Saxon monks for objecting to such a state of things.

So Colman resolved to put the Saxon monks in a monastery by themselves, and make the Irishmen work for their living. He travelled about far and near to find a suitable place on the mainland for a monastery. At length he succeeded. He bought a small parcel of land from the 'earl' to whom it belonged—this is Bede's way of saying it—and got more, it seems, on condition that the monks residing there should pray to the Lord for him who let them have the place "Then Colman, building the monastery with the help of the earl and all his neighbours, placed the English there, leaving the Scots in the aforesaid island. That monastery is to this day (A.D. 730) possessed by English inhabitants; being the same, that growing up from a small beginning, to be very large, is generally called Mageo (Magh eo); and as all things have long since been brought under a better method, it contains an exemplary society of monks, who are gathered there from the province of the English, and live by the

labour of their hands, after the example of the venerable fathers, under a rule and canonical abbot, in much continency and singleness of life." The English monks were anxious, in fact, to get Home Rule, even in Ireland; and were, it seems, much the better of getting it. We shall presently return to the history of this monastery of Mayo.

Of Colman's further history we know nothing except the date of his death. Doubtless with his Celtic sympathies he preferred to live in his island retreat; although of course he visited from time to time the English monks of Mayo. But they had now got a 'canonical abbot' of their own, one elected by themselves, and were, it seems, an entirely independent community. Their subsequent history shows that the monastery of Mayo, as Bede says, became a large establishment, and ultimately an episcopal See.

Colman's death is noticed by the Four Masters in A.D. 674; the *Annals of Ulster* enter it under A.D. 675; but the true year appears to be A.D. 676—the ninth after his arrival in Inisboffin. All our martyrologies give his festival on the 8th of August. In the *Felire* of Ængus he is set down as the "praiseworthy Colman of Inis-bo-finde;" and the scholiast describes that island as situated in the western sea off Connemara in the west of Connaught. There, too, he was buried.

Bede, while strongly dissenting from Colman's views on the Easter Question, bears noble testimony to his many virtues. He was much beloved, he says, by King Oswy, on account of his singular discretion. Then he adds that the place (Lindisfarne) he governed shows how frugal he and his predecessors were; how they despised earthly goods; and kept no money which they did not give to the poor; how their whole care was to serve God, not the world—to feed the soul, and not the belly. Hence the religious habit was then held in great veneration; the monk was joyfully received everywhere, and people from all quarters ran to get his blessing. When these Irish monks went into a village, it was either to preach, baptize, visit the sick, or otherwise take care of souls. They refused to endow their monasteries with lands or other possessions, content to preach the Gospel and to live by the labour of their hands, and the small alms of the faithful. It is not wonderful that they converted Northumbria, and that even in these unbelieving days of ours the memory of the Irish monks of Lindisfarne is still revered by men of all classes and of all creeds.

II.—St. Gerald of Mayo.

St. Gerald was in all probability the first 'canonical abbot' whom the Saxons of Mayo elected with the assent of Colman to preside over that famous monastery. There is a Life of this saint given by Colgan at the 13th of March, his festival day.[1] It was evidently not written for a considerable period after the saint's death; and although containing much that Lanigan calls 'sorry stuff,' it still furnishes us with some valuable information. The composition of the Life has been attributed to Augustin Magraidin, the compiler of the celebrated manuscript belonging to the Monastery of All Saints in Lough Ree. The substance of Magraidan's strange biography is as follows:—

Whilst Colman was Archbishop of Northumbria, the king of that or some neighbouring territory, Cusperius by name, sent his four sons to be educated under Colman's care at Lindisfarne. Their names were Gerald, Balanus, Berikertus and Hubritanus or Hulbritanus. The queen, their mother, was called Benitia. And here, by way of parenthesis, we may observe that it is not a little remarkable to find the names of these holy brothers in our domestic martyrologies. Balloin of Tech-Saxon (in the co. Mayo) is given in the *Martyrology of Donegal* on the 3rd of September; Beretchert of Tolach-leis is given at the 6th of December; and Huildbriti at the 24th of April, is given both by Marianus O'Gorman and the *Martyrology of Tallaght.* The four brothers were instructed by Colman in the liberal arts, in theology, and in monastic discipline, and seem to have become greatly attached to their master.

It is said that Gerald became Abbot of Winton before Colman's departure from Lindisfarne. When these four brothers saw how the kings and clergy of Northumbria rejected the discipline and authority of Colman, they resolved to leave their native country and accompany their beloved master to Ireland. There was nothing to detain them in England. Their mother was dead, and their father, it seems, entered on a career of crime, which hastened their departure. And so, says the Life, embarking in their fleet of ships, or rather boats, and taking with them all necessaries, they set sail and landed at the 'mouth of the Shannon in Connaught.'[2] The subsequent narrative, however, shows that it is much more probable that they landed at the mouth of the river

[1] See also O'Hanlon's *Lives of the Saints.*

[2] Clare was a part of Connaught, at least at an earlier date

Moy near Killala, for it is in that district we find them shortly after their arrival.

It was nothing new or strange for English princes and nobles to go to Ireland to be educated at this period. It is fortunate that on this point we have the unexceptional testimony of Bede himself. "Many of the nobility, and of the lower ranks of the English nation were there (in Ireland) at that time (when the pestilence broke out), who, in the days of the Bishops Finan and Colman, forsaking their native island, retired thither either for the sake of divine studies, or of a more continent life; and some of them at once devoted themselves to a monastic life; others chose rather to apply themselves to study, going about from one master's cell to another. The Irish (Scoti) willingly received them all, and took care to supply them with food, and also to furnish them with books to read, and their teaching gratis."[1]

It seems that the west of Ireland was, especially after the return of Colman, a favourite place of refuge for these Saxon scholars. In fact we find in all our native annals that the sons of Gartnait, King of the Picts, with the people of Sketh (probably Skye), made a voyage to Ireland in the very same year, according to the *Ulster Annals*, that Colman sailed for Inisbofinde. Their return to Scotland two years later is also mentioned, which shows that they spent at least two years, most probably in the West of Ireland, with Colman.

Whether or not St. Gerald and his brothers accompanied St. Colman to Ireland is doubtful. The narrative in the Life would seem to imply that they came straight to Ireland after Colman's departure from Lindisfarne, and that during the time he remained in Iona Gerald and his companions had founded the monastery of Elitheria, or 'The Pilgrims Home,' as we might call it. At first, it seems, they met with some opposition from a certain wicked ruler in the district, called Ailill, who sent an armed force to oppose their landing. This was in all probability Ailill, or Oilioll, son of Dunchadh of Murrisk, prince of the Hy-Fiachrach, and ancestor of the O'Dowds. Dunchadh himself was slain in A.D. 681; but his son, Oilioll, might well be of age and a ruler of a separate territory in A.D. 664 or 665. He was prince of Tirawley; and hence it is highly probable that it was either at Killala or in the Bay of Westport that the Saxon pilgrims landed. By a wondrous miracle Gerald disarmed the hostility of Ailill, and even induced him to grant them the site of a

[1] Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, Book

monastery which, in the Life, is called Elitheria, or the Field of the Stag, from the Irish *Elith*, a stag. Colgan, however, thinks it more probable that the place received its name from *elitheir*, a pilgrim. This locality has not been identified. It is evident, however, that it was not far from the banks of the Moy, for prince Ailill, seeing the wonders wrought by St. Gerald, asked him to remove a rock from the bed of that river which was a great impediment to navigation, and tore the fishermen's nets when they were draughting the river for salmon. In this, also, Gerald gratified the prince, and caused the rock to be broken in fragments. No doubt this occurred somewhere between Killala and Ballina.

Here the writer of Gerald's Life is guilty of a great anachronism, for he says that Raghallach (Ragallus), the celebrated King of Connaught, hearing of the fame of St. Gerald, invited the latter to come to his court, and promised also to give him land for founding a monastery; adding that afterwards he fulfilled this promise, and gave him the ground on which the monastery of Mayo was built. Now Raghallach, or Reilly, King of Connaught, was slain in A.D. 645, as the Four Masters say, or in A.D. 648, according to the *Annals of Ulster*, that is, nearly twenty years before Gerald came to Ireland. The King of Connaught, when Mayo was founded, was Cennfaeladh, son of Colgu, whose death is notified by the Four Masters, A.D. 680. Besides, Bede expressly says that it was Colman himself who procured the site of the Mayo monastery, partly for money and partly for the prayers of the community.

We are then told that Gerald divided this community into three sections. One party he sent back to England in order to procure all things necessary for the new monastery. A second division was told off to build the dun or cashel—murus it is called in the Latin Life—around the monastery. The third division was, meantime, employed in the celebration of the Divine Offices for themselves and for the people around them.

We are then told that Gerald of Mayo, and all the other heads of religious houses in Ireland, went to Tara in obedience to an edict of the joint kings, Diarmaid and Blathmac, who reigned from A.D. 658 to 664 or 666. The purpose of the kings in summoning this meeting seems to have been to devise some means of staying the dreadful plague and its attendant famine which were then ravaging the country. St. Fechin and St. Gerald are represented as divided in opinion; the former said the plague was sent by God to pre-

vent the people from starving, and that they must have perished either way, seeing that the country was over populated. But St. Gerald, like many other well-meaning people, put his trust in God, and said that all the clergy should pray to God to stop the plague, and also to supply food for the starving people. Divine Providence, he said, could do both one and the other; but it seems there was no human help to save them. The plague, however, soon solved the problem; it spared none—saints, kings, and people alike perished, so that half the population of the land disappeared in two years. St. Gerald himself escaped, and saved many others by his gift of healing; but his sister, Segresia, and one hundred of her nuns, who, it seems, had a convent close to Elitheria, with fifty of the monks of that establishment, all perished.

It is certain that St. Gerald was alive until A.D. 697, for we are told that about that time St. Adamnan, the celebrated Abbot of Iona, paid him a visit at the convent of Mayo. We know that Adamnan in that year went to Ireland, and promulged the celebrated 'Lex Innocentiae,' by which women were forbidden to share the dangers of the battlefield. We know, too, that he founded the Church of Skreen in Hy-Fiachrach, probably about the same time; and if he were in that neighbourhood nothing is more natural than that he should visit the foundation of Colman, whom he must have known in his youth, and try to ascertain how the Saxon monastery, which he had planted, was progressing in the land of the Scots. He seems to have remained, too, a considerable time in Ireland, or very soon returned thither, for in A.D. 703 he celebrated the Roman Easter (Canonicum Pascha) 'in Hibernia.'[1] It is even stated that he ruled the monastery of Mayo for seven years after the death of Gerald himself, and during that time was engaged in writing books, casting bells, and teaching the monks, until he returned to die in his own monastery of Iona. This is not 'manifestly a figment,' as has been said by some writers; there is nothing at all improbable in it, especially if St. Gerald did not live after A.D. 697, as Colgan thinks.

The chief difficulty arises from the fact that the death of St. Gerald seems to be recorded at a much later date. The Four Masters record it, A.D. 726, "Gerald of Magh Eo died on the 13th of March." The *Annals of Ulster* record the same event, A.D. 731. "The Pontiff of Magh Eo of the

[1] See Reeves' *Adamnan*, page 378

Saxons, Gerald, died." It is alleged, however, that the words 'Pontifex Magh Eo of the Saxons' should be connected with the previous entry, which would then read thus: "Bellum Connacht in quo cecidit Muredach Mac Indrechtaigh pontifex Maighe Eo Saxonum." The critics say, however, that the mistake was made by the Four Masters, who connect it in this way, and that Gerald, not Muredach Mac Indrechtaigh, was the Pontiff referred to. If Gerald really lived to this date, he must have been at least ninety years of age when he died in his monastery of Mayo. It is, at all events, certain that he died there, and his fame as a saint and scholar both during his life, and long afterwards, was the means of attracting crowds of students both from Erin and Saxonland, to the great monastic school, which he founded in the plains of Mayo.

There is a local tradition that King Alfred the Great visited Mayo, and that he sent his son to be trained up in that monastery, but that the young prince died there, and some of the natives even undertake to point out the place where he was buried. It is very likely this tradition had its origin in the undoubted visit to Ireland, and most probably to Mayo also, of King Aldfrid of Northumbria. He was an intimate friend of Adamnan, and probably accompanied that saint to Ireland. William of Malmesbury states expressly that he spent his youth in Ireland, and if so, it was most likely at Mayo.

III.—Subsequent History of the School of Mayo.

Of the subsequent history of this great monastic school we know very little.

Aedhan, Bishop of Magh Eo, died A.D. 768 (F.M.); and the monastery was burned in A.D. 778 (*recte* 783) by lightning, "on Saturday night, precisely on the 4th of the Nones of August. That night was terrible with thunder and lightning, and wind-storms," which destroyed Armagh and Clonbroney, as well as the monastery of Mayo. Probably all these edifices were then built of wood. It is said that Turgesius, the Dane, attacked and plundered the monastery in A.D. 818; but of this pillage we can find no record, except in the *Life of St. Gerald*, which is no authority for dates. In A.D. 805 (but really in A.D. 808), the Four Masters say the oratory of Mayo was again burned.

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries frequent mention is made of Mayo; and it seems that during this period

a bishop usually dwelt in the monastery, who exercised jurisdiction over the surrounding parishes.

It appears to have been regarded as a holy place to be buried in, for we are told that Domhnall, son of Turlough O'Conor, Lord of North Connaught, "the glory, and the moderator, and the good adviser of the Irish people," died in A.D. 1176, and was interred at Mayo of the Saxons (F.M.)

In A.D. 1209 is recorded the death of "Cele O'Duffy, Bishop of Magh Eo of the Saxons," which shows that at this period it was recognised as a diocese long after the Synod of Kells, in A.D. 1152. O'Donovan, in a note to this entry, observes that although Colgan translates Magh Eo, the plain of the "Oaks," it more probably means the plain of the "Yews."

This O'Duffy was a member of the celebrated family of that name, which during the twelfth century produced the most distinguished ecclesiastics in the province of Connaught. They were not merely prelates and scholars, but liberal patrons of the fine arts as they were known at the time. To them we owe the beautiful processional cross of Cong, the gem of Irish metal-work. From a very early period they were connected with the School of Clonmacnoise, and afterwards with the School of Tuam; but the monastery of Cong seems to have been their favourite dwelling-place when living, and resting-place when dead. Cong was made a diocese at the Synod of Rathbreasil in A.D. 1110. The monastery was burned A.D. 1114; it was then probably that the beautiful building was erected, whose picturesque ruins have charmed every visitor to that remote district. In the base of the market cross of Cong we find an inscription, probably of the 13th century, asking a prayer for "Nichol and for Gilleberd O'Duffy, who was in the Abbacy of Cong," and who doubtless caused this cross, the "symbol of their faith and hope," to be erected in the square of their monastic city. In A.D. 1150 Muireadhach O'Duffy, Archbishop of Connaught, "the chief senior of all Ireland in wisdom, in chastity, and in the bestowal of jewels and food, died at Cong." In A.D. 1168, Flanagan O'Duffy, "Bishop and chief doctor of the Irish in literature, history, and poetry, and in every kind of science known to man in his time, died at Cong, in the bed of Muireadach O'Duffy." Catholicus O'Duffy, Archbishop of Tuam, was the most distinguished man of his time. He was present at the Council of Lateran in A.D. 1179, and died in A.D. 1201.

In A.D. 1236 MacWilliam (Burke) went to Mayo of the

Saxons, then, it seems, under the protection of 'King' Felim O'Conor, "and he left neither rick nor basket of corn in the large church-enclosure of Mayo, or in the yard of the church of St. Michael the Archangel, and he carried away eighty baskets out of the churches themselves." These yards adjoining the churches seem to have been used as haggards by the monks for storing their corn, and were completely pillaged by MacWilliam. Yet the monks still continued to live in the midst of the perpetual strife which desolated the Province of Connaught during the next century; for in A.D. 1478—a comparatively recent period—the death of Bishop Higgins of Mayo of the Saxons, is recorded.

It is difficult to ascertain exactly when the See of Mayo was annexed to Tuam. Christopher Bodkin was Archbishop of Tuam, "although he took the oath of allegiance to the Queen,"[1] from A.D. 1555 to A.D. 1572. David Wolf, in a letter to the Holy See from Limerick, October 12th, 1561, says that Bodkin held besides Tuam the Sees of "Duacensis, Enachdunensis, et Mayonensis;" but he (Bodkin) says—"the two last were united to Tuam long ago." There is, however, every reason to believe that Bodkin was a time-server, and a see-grabber, for not content with the four sees mentioned, he also claimed the Diocese of Clonfert. Bodkin might, however, with some show of reason say that "Mayo was annexed to Tuam long ago." So early as the year A.D. 1217, there was a letter addressed on this subject by Pope Honorius III. delegating the Bishop of Clogher, the Abbot of Kells, and the Archdeacon of Ardagh, to report on this very question. The then Archbishop of Tuam, Felix O'Ruadan, asserted that Mayo was not a cathedral, but a parochial church. The Archdeacon of Mayo appealed against a decision to that effect given by Innocent III., on the ground that it was surreptitiously obtained, and the decision was withdrawn. Afterwards, it seems, the Archdeacon in a collusive suit allowed judgment to go against himself and his church. This being discovered at Rome, the Pope ordered the aforesaid judges to summon all the parties before them, and having heard all the witnesses, to send a full report of the entire case to the Apostolic See.[2] Unfortunately we do not know the issue; but it is evident that the Archbishops of Tuam during the troubles of subsequent centuries were able to assert their own jurisdiction; and so the Canons of Mayo lost their status as Canons of a Cathedral Church. About this period, too,

[1] See *Brady*, Vol ii., p. 134. [2] See Theiner, *Vet. Mon.*, page 4.

many of the parishes belonging to the ancient See of Mayo around Clew Bay were claimed by the Archbishop of Armagh on the ground that they were founded by St. Patrick.[1] The claim was to some extent allowed by Innocent III.; but afterwards it fell into abeyance, and the jurisdiction of Tuam was recognised over all these Patrician churches of the ancient diocese of Mayo.

There are still considerable ruins of the ancient monastery at Mayo, but the buildings do not appear to have dated back to the original foundation by St. Colman, who, doubtless, built his monastery in the old Irish style.

IV.—The School of Tuam.

The School of Tuam belongs to the earliest period of Irish ecclesiastical history; and the School of Tuam belongs also to the latest, and best period of Celtic art. We shall consider it in both respects—first as a school of Sacred Science under St. Jarlath, and then, along with Clonmacnoise, as a school of Sacred Art in the eleventh century, just before the advent of the Anglo-Normans to Ireland.

Of St. Jarlath himself unfortunately we know very little, for no Life of the saint has been discovered. His name is not mentioned in our Annals, and hence we are dependent for such information as we possess on isolated passages having reference to him in the Lives of other saints. Colgan has collected these meagre notices together; and was thus enabled to furnish us with a brief sketch of the life of this eminent saint.[2]

Jarlath belonged to the race known as the Conmaicne. They are so called because their common ancestor was Conmac, son of the celebrated Fergus Mac Roy, so famous during the heroic period of Irish history. The descendants of Conmac were lords of a considerable territory in the province of Connaught, and gave their name to several well-known districts. In North Connaught they were known as the Conmaicne of Moyrein in Leitrim and Cavan, with Fenagh as their ecclesiastical city, and St. Caillin as their patron saint. In West Connaught they were divided into three families or branches—the Conmaicne Mara, of the Sea, who have given their name to the modern Connemara; the Conmaicne Cuil-Tola, who occupied the present barony of

[1] See Theiner, *Vet. Mon.*, p. 2. [2] See *Acta Sanctorum*, pp. 308-310

Kilmaine in the County Mayo, and the Conmaicne Chineal-Dubhain, who dwelt around Dunmore in the County Galway. Tuam is in the barony of Dunmore, or at least on its borders, and so we may assume that Jarlath belonged to the Conmaicne of Dunmore, for the Irish saints generally founded their churches in their own tribe-land. His father's name was Loga (or Lugha), "of the race of Conmac, son of Fergus, son of Ross, son of Rudhraighe from whom the Clanna Rudhraighe are called, and Mongfinn, daughter of Ciardubhan, of the Cinel Cinnenn was his mother." [1]

St. Benen or Benignus, as we have already seen, was, before he became Coadjutor to St. Patrick in Armagh, assigned by that saint to be in an especial manner the apostle of of Conmaicne. Hence he founded the Church of Kilbannon which still bears his name, a little to the north-west of Tuam, in the very heart of their territory. But he did more. He undertook himself to train up two young clerics to be future bishops of Conmaicne, when he should be called away by death or by other duties. These two young men were Jarlath of the Western Conmaicne, and Caillin of the Conmaicne of Moyrein. We are told in his Life that he not only educated these young men in all knowledge human and divine, but also promoted them to Holy Orders, and founded and consecrated churches for them, so that they might continue his work without interruption.

St. Benignus died in A.D. 468,[2] and hence we must assume that Jarlath was then at least twenty-five years of age, and was probably something more. The first church of St. Jarlath was founded at Cluainfois (Cloonfush), about two miles to the west of Tuam. There is still, as I myself can testify, a vivid tradition at Cluainfois of conferences held there between the three saints—Benen, Jarlath, and Caillin. The old round tower of Kilbannon can be distinctly seen from Cluainfois, a little to the north, and whether the conferences were held there or at Cluainfois, there could be no difficulty in the saints frequently meeting, and holding converse on those weighty questions in scripture and theology, which they loved to discuss together. The tradition is that they were generally held at Cluainfois, and the name itself implies as much—it is according to Colgan the 'Meadow of Retreat,' as we should say, or 'Locus commorationis,' as Colgan calls it. This is still more probable, if with some writers we place the death

[1] *Martyr. of Donegal*, page 349. [2] *Annals of Ulster*, page 467.

of Benen in A.D. 476, ten years later than the date assigned in the *Annals of Ulster*.[1]

The place still deserves its ancient name. It is indeed a Meadow of Retreat. The old churchyard which alone marks at present the site of the ancient College of Cluainfois, stands on the southern slope of a rich and wide grazing farm, now tenanted by sheep and heifers alone. The old causeway to the church can still be traced, though much overgrown with grass. A solitary ash-tree rises over the narrow homes of the dead; but there is no trace of the ancient church, except a portion of its foundations, now remaining. Like most of the sites of our ancient monasteries, the spot was admirably chosen on the southern slope of fertile swelling fields, overlooking a wide prospect to the south and west, with the Clare river quietly stealing through the low-lying meadows to the south, and showing here and there reaches of its waters gleaming in the sunlight. One thing at least our monks of old greatly loved, and that was water. They loved it in all its various forms—whether it was the great sea, or the quiet lake, or the murmuring stream—they never built a monastery except close to water in one way or another. This love for natural beauty seems to have disappeared in modern times. It must be said, however, that in old times the monks had sites of their own choice; but in our times we must be thankful if we can get any site at all to build upon. We venture to think, however, it would be almost better to wait, than to erect a noble building in some unsightly hole, or swampy flat, where noisome vapours too often infect the atmosphere, and the glorious vision of nature's beauties is as completely cut off as if the inmates dwelt in a jail.

Jarlath's College of Cluainfois soon became very celebrated, and attracted, especially towards the close of the fifth century, scholars from the most distant parts of Ireland. Two especially, as Colgan remarks, became even more eminent than their master. One was St. Brendan of Ardfert and Clonfert, the other was St. Colman of Cloyne.

We are told that Brendan, burning with a love of the Holy Scriptures, and ardently desiring to see with his own eyes the virtuous example of the sainted fathers of the young churches of Ireland, asked permission of his master St. Erc, and of his foster-mother St. Ita, to leave his native mountains in Kerry and travel through Ireland. First of all he came to St. Jarlath's School at Cluainfois, for he had heard much

[1] See *Loca Patriciana*, page 474.

of the fame of that great and holy master. On his way it seems he met Colman, son of Senin, and induced him to give up his worldly life, and devote himself to the service of God. With this view the latter accompanied Brendan on his journey to Western Connaught. St. Jarlath received them kindly, and we are told that they remained with him a considerable time drinking in deep draughts at this fountain of sacred knowledge. But Brendan, though still very young, probably not more than twenty years of age, had already made great progress in virtue, and was highly favoured by God. In the spirit of prophecy which he possessed, he told St. Jarlath that Cluainfois was not destined by God to be the place of his resurrection. He was to move a little further eastward, and he was to remain at the place where the wheel of his car would break on the journey. "Remain there," said Brendan, "and build your oratory, for God wills that there shall be the place of your resurrection, and many shall arise in glory in the same place along with you." The holy old man obeyed this manifestation of the Divine will; the chariot wheel was broken at the place *now* called Tuam da gualan, and there the saint built his church on the site of the old Cathedral of Tuam, which has for so many centuries become the metropolitan Church of Connaught. At the same time St. Jarlath said to Brendan, "O holy youth, it is you should be master, and I the pupil—but go now with God's blessing elsewhere." And so Brendan with the blessing of God and St. Jarlath left Cluainfois, and shortly after, having returned to his native Kerry, was ordained a priest by his first master, the holy Bishop Erc, before he died. If this was St. Erc of Slaine, who died in A.D. 512, St. Brendan must have been at the School of Cluainfois some time between A.D. 504 and that date.

It is difficult to ascertain the exact date of St. Jarlath's death. As he was a disciple of St. Benignus he cannot have been born after A.D. 460. He seems to have been an aged man when Brendan was at Cluainfois—certainly not less than sixty years of age. He is ranked, however, amongst the saints of the Second Order; and hence it is assumed that he must have lived until A.D. 540, when he would be about ninety years of age. It is well known, however, that in those days these holy men, leading active and abstemious lives, frequently lived on in the enjoyment of all their faculties to a very great age—even beyond a hundred years. It is eating and drinking too much that shortens life, rather than eating and drinking too little. St. Jarlath especially was remarkable for the extreme asceticism of his life. Prayer and sacred study

were his chief food; his diet was so meagre that he seemed to have no body. He was fond of meditation and watching and the scholiast in the *Felire* of Ængus tells us that he made three hundred genuflections by day and three hundred every night, so that his whole life was one continued prayer.

A Prophecy concerning his successors in the See of Tuam, written in Irish, has been attributed to St. Jarlath. Nothing is known of its existence at present; but it seems to have been extant when Colgan wrote. Its authenticity, however, is very doubtful; and it appears to belong to a class of documents composed many centuries later than the alleged time, but which, to lend them authority, are falsely attributed to the famous saints of the early Irish Church.

The relics of St. Jarlath were for a long time preserved in Tuam with great reverence. A special church, close to the Cathedral, was built for the scrinium, or shrine, containing the precious treasures, hence called *Tempull na Scrin;* but at present there is, we believe, no trace of the church, or of the shrine itself to be found anywhere. Both the Church of the Shrine and St. Jarlath's ancient Cathedral were built on the site of the present Protestant Cathedral of Tuam. The new and beautiful Catholic Cathedral occupies a fine site at some distance on the other side of the highway.

After the death of St. Jarlath we hear scarcely anything of Tuam for nearly five hundred years. For the first two hundred and fifty years no reference whatsoever is made to the City of St. Jarlath; but in A.D. 776 the Four Masters record the death of "Nuada O'Bolcan, abbot of Tuaim Daolann."[1] The true date is, however, A.D. 781; and it is strange that the *Annals of Ulster* record in the same year the death of Ferdomnach of Tuaim da Ghualann, without any epithet designating his office. No reference, however, is made to either as bishop.

In A.D. 969, Eoghan O'Cleirigh, 'Bishop of Connaught,' died. The reference here is probably to a prelate resident at Tuam, for in A.D. 1085 Aedh O'Hoisin, whose death is entered under that year, is described by the Four Masters as comarb of Jarlath, and High-bishop (ard-epscoip) of Tuam. This is the first distinct reference to a Bishop of Tuam since the decease of St. Jarlath.

From this period, however, the prelates of Tuam appear prominently in the history of the western province. Just at this time the O'Conor family reached a high degree of power,

[1] O'Donovan says it is another form of "Tuaim da Ghualann."

and retained it for three generations over the entire province. There was a long and bitter struggle between that family and the O'Brians of Kincora for the pre-eminence, which continued for nearly a hundred years. After the death of Turlough O'Brian, King of Ireland 'with opposition,' in A.D. 1085, the O'Conors gained the ascendency. Turlough Mor O'Conor was the most powerful prince in Ireland for fifty years, from A.D. 1106 to his death in A.D. 1156. He is described by the Four Masters as King of all Ireland, but 'with opposition.' They add that "Turlough Mor O'Conor was the flood of the glory and splendour of Ireland, the Augustus of the West of Europe, a man full of charity and mercy, hospitality and chivalry: and he died after the sixty-eighth year of his age, and was interred at Clonmacnoise, beside the altar of Ciaran, after having made his will, and distributed gold and silver, cows and horses, amongst the clergy and churches of Ireland in general." We shall see presently, when treating of Celtic art in Clonmacnoise and the West of Ireland, that if Turlough was not the Augustus of the West of Europe, he was certainly the Augustus of the West of Ireland. He was succeeded without opposition by his degenerate son, Rory O'Conor, the last monarch of Ireland.

CHAPTER XXII—(*continued*).

CELTIC ART IN THE WESTERN MONASTERIES DURING THE REIGN OF TURLOUGH O'CONOR.

"He stepped a man out of the ways of men,
And no one knew his sept, or rank, or name—
Like a strong stream issuing from a glen,
From some source unexplored, the Master came."
—*M'Gee's 'Gobban Saer.'*

We have said that Turlough Mor O'Conor was, if not the Augustus of Western Europe, certainly the Augustus of the West of Ireland. During his long reign of fifty years Celtic art reached its highest degree of perfection, at least in three great branches—architecture, sculpture, and metal work. He was inaugurated as king of the Siol Muireadhaigh in the year A.D. 1106; and he went to his rest, beside the altar of Ciaran in Clonmacnoise in A.D. 1156, in the sixty-eighth year of his age. With his own right hand he fought his way through more than fifty battles to the kingship of all Erin—an honour to which no prince of his line had ever before attained since the time of Niall the Great. He had a clear head, too, as well as a strong arm; and thoroughly appreciated the force of the royal maxim—*divide et impera*. Neither did he neglect, so far as he could, the arts of peace. He made many roads and causeways through woods and morasses that were hitherto impenetrable; he built bridges over the Shannon and Suck, and fortified them with strong castles. He caused money to be regularly coined at Clonmacnoise for the convenience of commercial transactions. He had a great fleet of boats on the Shannon for trading, as well as for warlike purposes. He founded a chair of divinity in the great School of Armagh, to which we have already referred. He erected a hospital at Tuam for the aged and infirm, and was most munificent in rebuilding and adorning the churches of his own hereditary dominions with all those beautiful monuments of Celtic art to which we now propose to direct special attention.

I.—The O'Duffys.

Augustus always finds a Maecenas; and it was doubtless owing to the powerful patronage of Turlough that in all his cathedral cities members of a great and talented ecclesiastical

family held the crozier, to whom quite as much as to himself we owe many of the most beautiful specimens of Celtic art still extant in Ireland. This was the family of the O'Duffys (Ua Dubhthaig), which flourished throughout the whole of the twelfth century, and gave bishops or abbots to Clonmacnoise, to Roscommon, to Tuam, to Clonfert, to Cong, to Mayo, and to Boyle. The O'Duffys originally belonged to the Province of Leinster, for they were sprung from the race of Cathair Mor, who divided that province amongst his twenty-four sons. But later on some members of the family settled both in Galway and Roscommon, and appear to have risen to a good position; although they are not mentioned by O'Dugan, who doubtless regarded them as more or less strangers in the West. They seem at this period to have been located in Roscommon, for the earliest reference we find to any member of the family is to Flanagan Ruadh O'Duffy, successor of St. Coman of Roscommon, and also it appears, a ferlegind, or professor, of the School of Tuam. His death is recorded in A.D. 1097. Domhnall O'Duffy, who died in A.D. 1136, is called in the *Annals of Loch Cé*, Bishop of Elphin, and comarb or successor of Ciaran in Clonmacnoise. The Four Masters call him High-bishop of Connaught,[1] because he was doubtless the most distinguished prelate of his time, for as yet there was no metropolitan See of Tuam. Domhnall's death took place in the monastery of Clonfert 'after Mass and Celebration;' and he appears to have been much regretted, for he is described as the head of the wisdom and hospitality of the entire province. He was buried on St. Patrick's Day in Clonfert; the true year seems to be A.D. 1137 (*Annals of Lough Cé*).

Muireadhach O'Duffy, who, if not a brother of Domhnall, was doubtless a member of the same family, appears to have succeeded him as High-bishop of Connaught. Reference is made to this prelate by the Four Masters the very year of Domhnall's death, and he is distinguished from the comarb of Jarlath in Tuam. He is referred to again in A.D. 1143 as one of the sureties for Rory O'Conor; but in spite of his sureties that prince was seized and imprisoned by his own father Turlough. At his death in A.D. 1150 he is described by the Four Masters as "High-bishop of Connaught, and chief senior of all Ireland in wisdom, in chastity, in the bestowal of jewels and food." He died at Cong in the new

[1] In like manner Bishop O'Cattan is described in the previous year as High-bishop of Ferns, as there was as yet no Archbishop of Dublin.—See *Four Masters*, A.D. 1135.

abbey which he helped to found, on the sixteenth of May, that is the festival of Brendan, in the seventy-fifth year of his age. It will be observed that these two prelates flourished during the reign of Turlough O'Conor, and no doubt cordially co-operated with that prince in his projects for the diffusion of knowledge and the development of art.

Hugh O'Hessian (Aedh Ua h-Oissen) appears to have succeeded O'Duffy as High-bishop of Connaught in A.D. 1150. He seems to have lived at Tuam, and he is correctly described as Archbishop of Tuam; for in A.D. 1152 he was one of the prelates who received the Pall from Cardinal Paparo in the Synod of Kells. He died in A.D. 1161. Mention is made of a Bishop Flanagan O'Duffy, who died in A.D. 1168; but no See is mentioned in connection with his name. He was, however, a most learned man, for he is described as "Bishop and chief Doctor of the Irish in literature, history, and poetry, and in every kind of science known to man in his time." He died 'in the bed of Bishop Muireadhach O'Duffy at Cong,' and was doubtless a near relative of that prelate. Catholicus O'Duffy is generally represented as succeeding to the See of Tuam after the death of O'Hessian in A.D. 1161. He ruled in Tuam for forty years; and was through good and ill the faithful friend and counsellor of the unhappy Rory O'Conor during all the years of his stormy and disastrous reign. He was present with five other Irish bishops at the General Council of Lateran in A.D. 1179. In A.D. 1198 he saw his discrowned monarch die in his old age amongst the canons of Cong 'after exemplary penance.' Doubtless he accompanied the king's body to Clonmacnoise, and saw it laid near the grave of his great father, Turlough, beside the altar of Ciaran. Then stricken by the weight of years and sorrows, the archbishop, too, retired to Cong, and three years later died amongst the same holy canons, victorious, like his unhappy master, 'over the world and the devil.'

The O'Duffys, therefore, were the real ministers and counsellors both of Turlough and Rory O'Conor throughout the twelfth century; and to them, as much as to those princes themselves, must be attributed the many works of art which were produced during that period. They had almost all the ecclesiastical power of the province in their own hands; for we find that besides those already mentioned, Maurice O'Duffy, who died in A.D. 1174, was abbot of the great Cistercian monastery of Boyle, and another, Kele or Catholicus O'Duffy, who died in A.D. 1209, was Bishop of Mayo of the Saxons. We find also that one of them held the See of

Clonfert towards the close of the thirteenth century—William O'Duffy—whose death is marked under A.D. 1297. It will be seen, however, that this great family used their power for God's glory, and the good of the Church. Whatever they touched they adorned, as the existing monuments of their artistic taste and skill so conclusively prove.

II.—Celtic Art at Clonmacnoise.

Clonmacnoise was founded by a saint, who was born and baptized at Fuerty, within three miles of the town of Roscommon. It is quite true, as we have already observed, that Clonmacnoise was more catholic in the selection of its abbots than any other great monastery in Ireland; and this was undoubtedly one of the causes which raised Clonmacnoise to its proud pre-eminence amongst the monastic schools of Erin. Still the City of Ciaran could not forget the rock from whence it was hewn; and, as our Annals tell, the men of Roscommon always occupied positions of commanding influence in Clonmacnoise. This connection will also help to explain why Domhnall O'Duffy, Bishop of Elphin, and Abbot of Roscommon, was also chosen to be comarb of Ciaran, at Clonmacnoise. This connection also gave countenance to the ambitious designs of Turlough O'Conor, who was resolved to annex the abbacy of Clonmacnoise, with all its rich termon lands, to his own hereditary dominions.[1] In the Synod of Rathbreasil, Cluain appears to be included in the diocese of Clonard,[2] and rightfully, as it was a portion of the ancient kingdom of Meath. But in the Synod of Kells (A.D. 1152), Cluain, or Clonmacnoise, is explicitly assigned as a suffragan See to Tuam. This was doubtless owing in great measure to the influence of Turlough O'Conor; and naturally enough the influence of the O'Duffys would favour the designs of the king. In A.D. 1152, however, it was O'Malone, and not an O'Duffy, who was Comarb of Ciaran; but the O'Malones themselves were a branch of the great O'Conor family, who had settled in Teffia[3] (County Longford).

Clonmacnoise, during the twelfth century especially, was the great school of Celtic Art. This statement will need no proof for anyone who even at this day wanders through the ruined City, and carefully observes its churches, its crosses,

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[1] The ancient poem ascribed to Ængus Cele De, and quoted by Colgan from the *Saltair na Rann*, describes the Siol Briuin of Roscommon as under the patronage of Ciaran of Clonmacnoise.

[2] See *Cambrensis Eversus*, Vol. ii., p. 786.

[3] See O'Hart's *Pedigrees*, page 556.

its round towers, and its sculptured tombstones. But we propose to put in more formal evidence, and to show that it was the artists of Clonmacnoise who executed many other of our choicest works, which at first sight appear to have no connection with the City of St. Ciaran.

ARCHITECTURE was certainly one of the fine arts taught in our monastic schools, and with very considerable success, as existing ruins, and especially our round towers, clearly prove. The architect, or ollamh-builder, was at the head of the profession, and had his remuneration fixed by law. Besides a kind of per-centage on the work which he superintended, he had a fixed annual salary rated at twenty-one cows, from the king-in-chief, in whose service he was engaged. But he was required to be a perfect master of his art in the widest sense of the word. He was not only required to build stone churches (damhliags) and oratories, whether of wood or stone, but also farm steadings, containing the usual five buildings, namely, dwelling-house, cow-house, calf-house, pig-sty, and sheep-fold. He was required to be a millwright, a boat-maker, a cooper, a cart-maker, and a road-maker. He should be skilful in yew carving and plough-making, and was even expected to weave wicker shields and build wicker houses. He was, in fact, a jack-of-all-trades, and must have well earned his salary of twenty-one cows in the year.

The most distinguished of this fraternity was the renowned Gobban Saer, or Gobban the builder, whose fame is still traditionally preserved in various parts of the country. He was, undoubtedly, a historical personage, and seems to have flourished during the first half of the sixth century. His father is said to have been Turvey (Tuirbhi), who gave his name to the strand of Turvey, on the northern coast of the County Dublin—Kilgobbin, in the same county, is said to derive its name from the renowned builder himself. At this early date the Gaels knew little of church building, and hence the services of the Gobban were in great request with the saints for building their churches and oratories. As he had no rivals he could make his own terms, and is said to have charged exorbitant prices, and, moreover, being feeble, took his own time at his work. He agreed to build a wooden oratory for St. Moling of Carlow, but he spent a whole year in idleness before he began, and when he had finished his task, at the instigation of his wife, he asked from the saint the full of the oratory of rye as his wages. The saint had agreed to give him his own demand, but not having nearly

this quantity of rye, he was forced to appeal to his tribesmen to help him. "Bring me," he said, "whatever you have—corn, nuts, apples, even green rushes." They did so, and filled the oratory, which the Gobban turned upside down to receive the offerings without starting a plank. It was all changed into rye at the prayer of the saint, but next morning, when the Gobban came to take away the grain, he found that it had turned into maggots!

We also find this famous architect mentioned in the *Life of St. Abban*, for whom he built a church. It was, says this Life, his constant occupation to work for the saints wherever he was, but he charged them so dear that he lost his sight through the displeasure of the saints at the greatness of his charges. The Gobban was probably of foreign descent, and tried to make the Scots pay well for their buildings.

It is certain that Clonmacnoise reached a high degree of perfection in architecture, and the Nuns' Church, *Relig na Cailleach*, was certainly one of the most beautiful types of the Celtic Romanesque in Ireland. It was situated to the north-east of the monastic buildings, and was approached by a causeway that was built along the river, which frequently overflowed the surrounding meadows.

This church was erected at the expense of the celebrated Dervorgilla, wife of Tiernan O'Rorke, King of North Connaught. It appears to have been completed in A.D. 1167, and probably occupied the site of an older church belonging to the nuns of Clonmacnoise, for, as we have seen, we find reference made to the garden of the abbess so early as A.D. 1026, when the causeway was constructed from her garden to the Three Crosses, near the great Church of Clonmacnoise. A.D. 1082, we are told that the "cemetery of the nuns of Clonmacnoise was burned with its stone church, and with the eastern third of the entire establishment." The cemetery here means the enclosure surrounded by the cashel, portions of which still remain; it contained not only the church, but also the cells in which the nuns dwelt, and the other buildings necessary for their accommodation. The causeway, too, can still be traced from the nunnery to the Carn of the Three Crosses, which was surmounted by a stone bearing the following Irish inscription:—

OROIT AR THURCAIN LASAN DERNAD IN CHROSSA.

(Pray for Turcan, by whom this Cross was made.)

The striking features of the Nuns' Church are the

western door-way and the chancel arch. This door-way is the principal entrance to the nave, which is 36 ft. in length, and nearly 20 ft. in breadth; the walls are 3 ft. thick. The chancel, like that of Tuam, is nearly a square—14 ft. 6 in. by 13 ft. in breadth; the walls are 3 ft. 3 in. thick, and built of hard limestone, hammer-dressed.

Lord Dunraven thus describes the door-way and chancel arch:—

"The door-way at the west end is 7 ft. in height, to the springing of the arch; 2 ft. 10 in. wide at the base, and 2 ft. 8½ in. at the top of the jambs. It is deeply recessed, and of four orders; the two inner jambs are rectangular shafts, the outer are rounded into pillars, with shallow bases and imposts. The external shafts had a plain chamfered abacus, and the hood moulding, or outer arch, terminates with heads of the same character as those in the small church at Rahan. The jambs were richly ornamented with incised chevrons and other designs. The outer arch was enriched with pellets, the inner with chevron blocks, incised with bold lines; the third with heads with rolls in their mouths, or with beak-head, or cat's-head moulding, deeply undercut, and the front face enriched with incised traceries and chevrons, and pellets upon the soffit of the arch. The door-way had eel-heads terminating the zig-zags, but they are not so distinct as those on M'Carthy's Church close by, where they had been covered with accumulated earth until lately.

"The chancel arch, which was of sandstone, was 9 ft. 2 in. wide at the base, and 7 ft. 6 in. in height, to the top of the impost, making the arch about 12 ft. high. It was 15 ft. 6 in. wide from one outer pier to the other." The ornamentation, mainly consisting of zig-zag and chevron, with a pear-shaped ornament in the inner order, is very striking, and "the capitals and ornaments of the piers," says Lord Dunraven, "are totally unlike anything in England, and, if taken by themselves, would appear to be of much earlier character than the arch."

This church was built, as the Four Masters tell us, by Dervorgilla in A.D. 1167. The abduction or flight of that false fair lady took place in A.D. 1152, when MacMurrough caused her to be carried to his own castle of Ferns. But next year Turlough O'Connor led an army against MacMurrough, when Dervorgilla was given up, and restored by that prince to her own friends in Meath, and shortly afterwards was taken back again by her injured husband. It is highly probable that the erring dame built the Church of the Nuns

at Clonmacnoise, the foundation of her own royal ancestors, as a penance for her sins; and it may be she found grace and pardon within that holy shrine. She survived her husband several years, and died at the advanced age of 85 in the monastery of Mellifont, to which she had presented many valuable offerings during her long and eventful career.

We have already referred to the sculptured crosses in the graveyard, which are some of the finest specimens of ancient art in this country. But besides these there were numerous other objects of the highest antiquarian interest, which were produced or preserved at Clonmacnoise, to which we shall presently refer.

Under the head of SCULPTURE we include sculptured gravestones, high crosses, and architectural ornamentation in relief. Clonmacnoise exhibits in its churchyard more sculptured stones, and in greater variety, than all the rest of Ireland together. The first volume of *The Christian Inscriptions in the Irish Language*, deals exclusively, and very fully, with those found at Clonmacnoise; but as we have already referred to this part of our subject, we shall pass on to give an account of the crosses and architectural ornaments in sculpture at Tuam and Cong, which belong to the artistic School of Clonmacnoise.

The first is the celebrated high Cross of Tuam, now standing in the market place. Of this Dr. Petrie remarks[1] that "it is of far greater magnificence and interest (than the Cross of Cashel); and may justly rank as the finest monument of its class and age remaining in Ireland." It is made of sandstone, and measures in its pedestal five feet three inches in breadth, and three feet eight inches in height; but including the shaft, which is ten feet long, the entire cross is thirteen feet eight inches high.

On the base, or pedestal, of this cross there are two highly interesting inscriptions in the Irish language, now partly defaced, but still decipherable. One is:—

OR DO U OSSIN; DON DABBAID LASAN DERNAD

"A prayer for O'Hossin (Hessian) for the abbot by whom it was made." On the opposite side is the following inscription:—

OR DO THOIRDELBUCH U CONCHUBUIR DON . . .
IARLATH LAS IN DERNAD INSAE. . . .

That is—"A prayer for Torlough O'Conor; for the (comarb) of Jarlath by whom was made this. . . ."

[1] *Round Towers*, page 317.

O'Hoisin, or O'Hessian, referred to in the first inscription, was, as we have said, the first regular Archbishop of Tuam. He succeeded Muireadhach O'Duffy, who died in A.D. 1150, and received the pallium from Cardinal Paparo at the Synod of Kells in A.D. 1152. It is singular, however, that he is not described on the Cross as either bishop or archbishop, but simply as abbot in the one, and as comarb of Jarlath in the other. Hence Petrie conjectures that this Cross was sculptured before O'Hessian became archbishop, and whilst he was yet merely abbot of the monastery of Tuam. There is evidence that he was abbot so early as A.D. 1134, for, according to the *Annals of Innisfallen*, he was sent on an embassy in that year by King Turlough, to make peace between Connaught and Munster. Therefore Petrie thinks it probable that he became abbot in A.D. 1128, on the death of Muirges O'Nioc, who filled that office before him; and he held the abbacy during the entire period of O'Duffy's rule as High-bishop of Connaught. We have already seen that Muireadhach succeeded Domhnall O'Duffy in A.D. 1136 or 1137, and ruled over Elphin, Roscommon, Clonmacnoise, and probably Tuam also until A.D. 1150. It appears to be quite clear, therefore, that this beautiful Cross of Tuam was made whilst O'Duffy was High-bishop, and O'Hessian abbot of Tuam. The prayer for Turlough O'Conor seems to imply that the work was constructed at his expense. Petrie thinks that the Cross was erected to commemorate the re-building of the ancient cathedral of Tuam, which was also accomplished at the expense of King Turlough. A slab of sandstone was found within the present cathedral, near the Communion Table, which is supposed to have been designed to commemorate the re-building of the cathedral. It may, however, have been a portion of a second Cross, and, like the other, it contains two inscriptions—one asking a prayer for the Comarb of Jarlath, that is, "for Aed O'Hossin, by whom this Cross was made," and the other on the obverse of the slab asking a prayer for King Turlough O'Conor, and a prayer for Gillachrist O'Toole, by whom the work was wrought. There were no O'Tooles at this time in Connaught, although, later on, a branch of that tribe settled in Omey Island, on the coast of Connemara. Hence, we are inclined to think that this eminent artist came from Clonmacnoise, if he were not one of the itinerant craftsmen who at this period migrated from place to place, as they do still, for a job. One thing is clear—he was a native Celt, and a skilful workman in his craft, which was that of master sculptor or stone-

cutter. The addition of his name shows that the memory of such an artist was deemed worthy of being preserved. And so, in truth, it was, if he executed both these crosses, and the beautiful chancel arch of the cathedral, which fortunately still survives the effect of time's effacing fingers. The Crucifixion is sculptured on one face of the shaft of the Tuam Cross. The figure of the Saviour is archaic, but very striking. The figure of a bishop is on the other, and what seems to be a funeral procession is on the reverse. There are two figures standing close together, above the inscription on the pedestal of this Cross. One holds in his left hand a pastoral staff—which, however, might designate that the holder was either a bishop or an abbot. Perhaps they are intended to represent Turlough O'Conor and the comarb of Jarlath, whose names were inscribed beneath.

There was a somewhat similar high Cross in the market place of Cong. The original pedestal is there still, with an inscription, recording the names of the artist and patron who caused the Cross to be sculptured. The ancient shaft has disappeared, but its place is supplied by a modern one inserted in the original plinth by a member of the Elwood family, in the year 1822. The inscription is in Irish, but the lettering is of a later type, rather resembling the black letter than that of the Cross of Tuam. It asks "a prayer for Nichol, and for Gilliberd O'Duffy, who was abbot of Cong." So far as we know there is no mention in our Annals either of Nichol, the artist, or of Gilliberd O'Duffy, the abbot, but it is highly probable that the latter was a member of the same illustrious family that produced so many distinguished ecclesiastics during the twelfth and the early part of the thirteenth century.

Of Cong itself we know nothing from the time of St. Fechin to the year A.D. 1114, when we are told that, like many other religious houses, it was burned in that year. It was then probably rebuilt, for mention is made of the death of Gillaciarain O'Roda, or O'Roddy, erenach of Cunga, in that year. It was he who erected with the help of Turlough O'Conor and the O'Duffys, that noble monastery of Cong, whose ruins, so picturesquely situated at the head of Lough Corrib, lend one of its many features of beauty to that enchanting scene.

There are still to be seen some very interesting architectural remains of the buildings erected during the reign of Turlough in the west of Connaught. Turlough's reign was red with the blood of many battles, and not altogether free

from deeds of revolting cruelty, yet he seems to have been a prince of lofty aims and generous aspirations. He built a bridge over the Shannon at Athlone, apparently for the first time, and another over the same river at a place called Ath Crioch, near Shannon Harbour. He also built a bridge over the river Suck at Ballinasloe; it was then called the Bridge of Dunloe, and was opposite Dunloe Street, in the modern town of Ballinasloe.

But he also did much for ecclesiastical architecture. Cormac M'Carthy had just built a very beautiful church on the Rock of Cashel, which still bears his name; and it seems that Turlough even in this did not wish to be excelled by his rival and hereditary foe, the Prince of Munster. His first work was probably the re-building of the Cathedral of Tuam, where he had fixed his principal residence. Only a portion of the chancel and chancel arch of that beautiful church now remains; but it is quite enough to give us an idea of what the Irish Romanesque would ultimately become in capable hands. "This chancel," says Petrie,[1] "is sufficient to make us acquainted with its general style of architecture, and to show that it was not only a larger, but a more splendid structure than Cormac's Chapel at Cashel, and not unworthy of the powerful monarch to whom it chiefly owed its erection. The chancel is a square of twenty-six feet in external measurement, and the walls are four feet in thickness. Its east end is perforated by three circular headed windows, each five feet in height, and eighteen inches in width externally, but splaying on the inside to the width of five feet." These windows are richly ornamented with zig-zag and other mouldings, and are connected together by strong course-mouldings, of which the external one is quaintly enriched with pateral, or cup-shaped disks.

The most striking feature, however, of this chancel was the arch opening on the nave, "which is perhaps the most magnificent specimen of its kind remaining in Ireland." It is composed of no less than six semicircular, concentric, recessed arches of which the innermost is sixteen feet wide and fifteen feet high. The rectangular capitals are richly sculptured in a variety of interlaced traceries, and those surmounting the two jambs are adorned with curious grotesque heads with broad flat faces. The imposts too are richly sculptured in scrolls and other striking designs, and are carried along the face of the wall as tablets. The bases consist of a double plinth and torus moulding, but are otherwise unornamented

[1] *Round Towers*, page 317.

as befits the solid and majestic character of the building. The arch mouldings display many varieties of ornament—the nebule, diamond, frette, and chevron—and show how the Celtic imagination loved to revel in a great variety of ornamental forms. All the ornamental parts of this peerless chancel arch are executed in red sandstone, which has withstood wonderfully well the wear and tear of time and moisture in that damp atmosphere.

Where did Turlough get the workmen whose teeming brains devised, and whose cunning hands executed this beautiful arch? It has been said that the workmen who built the grand Cistercian monasteries during the latter part of this twelfth century were imported from France and England. Well, be it so. But no one can deny that it was Celtic artists who built and adorned Cormac's Chapel and Tuam Cathedral; and there has been nothing finer executed in any Cistercian monastery in Ireland or England either. These great monasteries were larger and grander if you will, but certainly not more artistic nor more beautiful.

The ruins of the abbey of Cong are still to be seen and speak for themselves. The 'neck' of land on which it was built between the two lakes, Lough Mask and Lough Corrib gave its name to the abbey. It was rebuilt by the Augustinians under the patronage of Turlough O'Conor, in all probability between the years A.D. 1120 and 1130. The Cistercians about the same period, A.D. 1128, were introduced into England, but had not yet come to Ireland; so that Cong is the connecting link between the indigenous monasteries of the past that grew up with the growth of the Irish Church, and the houses of the foreign orders introduced during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Imar of Armagh formally adopted the Rule of St. Augustine, about the year A.D. 1126, and hence these ancient Irish monasteries came to be called Augustinian houses; but as a matter of fact they were in all respects as purely Celtic and as racy of the soil as the Irish race and the Irish tongue. The Cistercians who came to Mellifont about the year A.D. 1142, were really the first 'foreign' order that came to Ireland, and were followed about a century later by the Dominicans and Franciscans. The abbey of Cong was not designed, or executed, or tenanted by any foreigners. It was a purely Celtic house. It was designed most probably by some member of that talented family—the O'Duffys—that afterwards ruled over it for many generations. It was built and adorned under their superintendence by native workmen; and Turlough O'Conor

and his unhappy son Roderick, both of whom, especially the latter, loved Cong much, seem to have contributed the greater part of the expense necessary for its erection.

It was built on a scale of great magnificence. The abbey church was 140 feet in length. The east window consisted of three long narrow lights, not lancet-headed, but semi-circular, for the Romanesque had no lancets, and where they appear in the Romanesque they are always later insertions.

It has been alleged that the pointed door-arches of Cong show a departure from the Irish Romanesque and indicate foreign origin and a later date than the first quarter of the twelfth century. Even supposing that these arches are coeval with the monastery, a glance at Sir W. Wilde's illustration will show that they are not lancet-headed like the pure Gothic, but rather indicate the first step of the transition from the Romanesque to the Gothic, which was just beginning at this time to take place in Ireland. The most characteristic features of the existing group of ruins are to be found in the western façade, which appears to have opened on the cloister of the abbey. "It is 80 feet in length and contains a doorway, and two windows with circular arches; also two large and most elaborately ornamented lancet-headed doors, with undercut chevrons along the deep mouldings of the arches, that spring from clustered pillars, the floral capitals of which —all of different patterns—present us with one of the finest specimens of twelfth century stone-work in Ireland."[1]

With this beautiful abbey are associated many interesting historic memories. It was to this lonely but sweet retreat that Ireland's last High-king retired to die. He had drawn a sword that could not save his country and his race from the hated dominion of the stranger; he had seen his own children rise up in rebellion against him, and engage in the very face of their country's enemies in fratricidal strife; he had seen his best-beloved son, O'Conor of Moenmoy, whose bold heart and strong arm were his country's only hope, slain by "a party of his own people, and of his own tribe;" and now there was nothing left for him but to end an inglorious life by a pious and penitential death. He retired to Cong in A.D. 1183. After the death of his eldest and bravest son, he sought once more to regain his authority in Connaught. But he soon found that

> "Authority forgets a dying king,
> Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
> That bow'd the will."

[1] Wilde's *Lough Corrib*, pages 179, 180.

He returned once more to his monastic retreat, and there in the year A.D. 1198, "he died amongst the Canons of Cong, after exemplary penance, victorious over the world and the devil. His body was conveyed to Clonmacnoise, and interred at the north side of the altar of the great church."

In METAL-WORK the O'Duffys of Tuam and Cong have left us, at least, one memorial that will never perish. The Processional Cross of Cong, the Chalice of Ardagh, and the Tara Brooch, are regarded by all competent judges as the highest effort, each in its own way, of the Celtic art in metal-work. No one knows anything of the Tara Brooch except that it was found in the year 1850 on the sea shore near Drogheda. Neither does the Ardagh Chalice bear the name of the king or workman by whom it was made, nor ask a prayer for his soul's welfare. We can, however, with tolerable certainty, trace its history; and we shall find that it is a product of the same school of art which produced the remarkable Cross of Cong, to which we now invite the reader's attention.

It appears that this beautiful Cross of Cong was made originally for the Church of Tuam. It is very probable that some western prelate was present at the first General Council of Lateran, held in A.D. 1123, and that he brought home with him a relic of the true Cross, which, as we are informed in the *Annals of Innisfallen*, was enshrined in that year by Turlough O'Conor. "A portion of the true Cross came into Ireland and was enshrined at Roscommon by Turlough O'Conor." The following inscriptions are found on the Cross itself, and corroborate the statement in the *Annals of Innisfallen*:—

+ HAC CRUCE TEGITUR QUA PASUS CONDITOR ORBIS. OR DO MUREDUCH U DUBTHAIG DO SENIOR EREND. OR DO THERRDEL U CHONCHŌ DO RIG EREND LAS AN DERNAD IN GRESSA.

OR DO DOMNULL McFLANNACAN U DUBD EPSKUP CONNACHT DO CHOMARBA CHOMMAN ACUS CHIARAN ICAN ERRNAD IN GRESSA.

OR DO MAELISU McBRATDAN UECHAN DO RIGNI IN GRESSA.

We gather from these inscriptions that the Cross was made to enshrine a particle of the true Cross, on which the Creator of the world suffered. Muireadhach O'Duffy, to whom we have already referred, is here described as senior of Erin, and one of those who co-operated in this work. He has been described by the Four Masters as "chief senior of

Ireland in wisdom and chastity, and the bestowal of jewels and food." He was afterwards promoted to the position of High-bishop of Connaught, but at this period we cannot say what office he held, if he were not abbot of the monastery and head of the School of Tuam. Of King Turlough, "for whom this shrine was made," we have already spoken. Domhnall MacFlanagan O'Duffy, "under whose superintendence this shrine was made" at Roscommon, is described as successor of Coman and Ciaran, and Bishop of Connaught. We know from the *Annals of Lough Cé* that he was then Bishop of Elphin. Perhaps he was afterwards translated to Tuam, and then took the title of Bishop of Connaught. It is highly probable, too, that he brought this shrine along with him from Elphin to Tuam. Of this translation, however, there is no record. Lastly, a prayer is asked for Maelisu Mac Bratdan O'Echan (or Egan), the artist who made this shrine. He was comarb of St. Finnen of Clooncraff, County Roscommon.

It will hardly be contended that O'Echan was anything but a pure Roscommon Celt. The Mac Egans were from time immemorial Brehons in various parts of Connaught, and afterwards in Ormond, in the County Tipperary. It is not unlikely that the artist who made the "Cross of Cong" was a member of this most distinguished literary family.

The shaft of the cross is 2 ft. 6 in. high; the breadth across the arms is 1 ft. 6¾ in. It was made of oak, covered with eight copper plates, and one plate of brass, all adorned with a richly interwoven tracery. "On the central plate on the face, at the junction of the arms, is a boss surmounted by a convex crystal. Thirteen jewels remain of the eighteen which were disposed at regular intervals along the edges, and on the face of the shaft and arms, the spaces are visible for nine others, which were placed at intervals down the centre. Two beads remain of four settings which surrounded the central boss. The shaft terminates below in the grotesque head of an animal, beneath which it is attached to a spherically ornamented ball, surmounting the socket, in which was inserted the pole or shaft for carrying the cross."[1]

Such is the description given by Miss Stokes of the Cross of Cong. But no description can convey an adequate idea of the rare beauty of this peerless cross. It must be seen to be appreciated. It has been conjectured that it was taken from Tuam to Cong either by Archbishop Muireadhach

[1] *Early Christian Art*, by Miss Stokes, page 109.

O'Duffy, who died in Cong A.D. 1150, as we have already seen, or, perhaps, by King Roderick O'Conor, who also ended his chequered life in the same holy retreat, nearly forty years later. It was found by Father Prendergast, P.P., the last Abbot of Cong, in an old oaken chest in Cong, and was purchased from his successor by Professor M'Cullagh, who presented it to the Royal Irish Academy in 1839.

The Chalice of Ardagh, which has been pronounced to be "the most beautiful example of Celtic art ever yet found," also appears to have been a product of the School of Clonmacnoise[1] during the abbacy of the O'Duffys.

It is a two-handed chalice, probably used for the Communion of the laity at a time when the Eucharist was still administered under both species of bread and wine. It is seven inches high, and nine one-half inches in diameter across the mouth; the bowl is four inches deep, and was capable of containing about three pints. The cup is composed of gold, silver, brass, bronze, copper, and lead. The upper rim is of brass, much decayed and split from some local action on that particular alloy; but the bowl itself is of silver, the standard value of which is four shillings per ounce. There is a beautiful band running round the bowl, which contains the names of the Twelve Apostles engraved in uncial letters of the eleventh century. No description can convey an adequate idea of the exquisite beauty of this chalice. It comprised no less than 354 different pieces, put together with the nicest ingenuity, and exhibiting almost every variety of Celtic ornamentation. Yet the leading impression produced by the view of this beautiful cup is chaste and classic elegance of design, combined with admirable beauty of form, and delicacy of execution.

The history of this wonderful chalice, now preserved in the Royal Irish Academy, is very curious, and points to Roscommon or Clonmacnoise as the place where it was wrought.

We are informed in the *Chronicon Scotorum* that "Turlough O'Conor presented three precious things to Ciaran at Cluain, viz., a drinking horn inlaid with gold, a silver cup with gold, and a patena of copper with gold and silver." This cup, with its *mullocc* or patena, was, of course, a chalice; and it was kept for use on the high altar of Clonmacnoise until A.D. 1125; "when the altar of the great stone church of Clonmacnoise was opened, and precious things were taken

[1] See *Christian Inscriptions*, Vol. ii., page 129.

out of it, that is—the carrachan, or model of Solomon's Temple—it was probably a tabernacle—which was given by Maelsechlainn, son of Domhnall, and the cuidin of Donnchadh, son of Flann, and the three articles which Turlough O'Conor gave, that is—a silver goblet and a silver cup, with a golden cross over it, and a drinking horn with gold—and the drinking horn of Ua Riata, King of Aradh, and a silver chalice with a burnishing of gold, and an engraving, and the silver cup of Ceallach, Comarb of Patrick."

But shortly after all these precious articles were 'revealed against the Foreigners of Luimnech,' after having been stolen by Gillacomghain; and he was hanged for stealing them, at Dun Cluana Ithair, having been given up for that purpose by Conor O'Brian, King of Munster. The thief thought to make his escape from Cork, Lismore, and Waterford; but Ciaran always stopped the vessel in which he embarked to cross the sea, so that she could get no wind to fill her sails; and the wretch made a dying declaration at the gallows that he had seen Ciaran with his crozier stopping every ship in which he attempted to escape.

Now it is a curious fact that the Chalice of Ardagh was dug up from the edge of a rath called Reerasta, close to the village of Ardagh, in the County Limerick, and other smaller golden cups, with five fibulae, were found on the same occasion. Were they secreted there by Gillacomghain, or some of his accomplices, the Danes of Limerick, for we are not told that the family of Clonmacnoise recovered *all* the plunder? There is a local tradition that Reerasta was occupied by the Danes of Luimnech; and also that in later times Mass was often celebrated there. It may be then, if not secreted by the Danes, that the chalice was given by the family of Cluain to some of the clergy in the neighbourhood when the thieves were discovered, and that they used it for celebrating Mass in this place during the times of persecution, and secreted the chalice on some occasion when forced to fly for their lives.

It is highly probable, therefore, that this beautiful cup was stolen from Clonmacnoise, was secreted at Reerasta, and was accidentally found, as already described, by a young man, who was digging a portion of the old fort which had been levelled for the purpose of tillage.[1] The artist who made the Cross of Cong for King Turlough, was equally well qualified to make the Ardagh chalice. He was, as we

[1] See *Christian Inscriptions*, Vol. ii., page 129.

have seen, a native of the County Roscommon, he wrought the Cross for King Turlough O'Conor, under the superintendence of Domhnall Mac Flanagan O'Duffy, Bishop of Connaught or Elphin, and Abbot of Roscommon and Clonmacnoise. It is clear that the chalice was made before Mac Egan made the Cross of Cong, yet in all probability it would be difficult to find in all Ireland a second artist who would be capable of executing metal-work with such marvellous fertility of design and delicacy of execution. We think that, on the whole, the evidence justifies us in concluding that it was owing to the munificence of Turlough O'Conor, and the intelligent patronage of the O'Duffys, that this great Western School of Art was created and fostered, which has left so many memorials of its artistic genius at Clonmacnoise Tuam, Boyle, and Cong.

Another most interesting piece of metal-work is the shrine of St. Manchan of Lemanaghan, which seems to have been also a product of the Clonmacnoise School of Art. St. Manchan himself died of the plague in A.D. 664, most likely at his own cell in Lemanaghan which takes its name from the saint—"the grey land of Manchan." Not inappropriately either, for it was built on a gravelly ridge surrounded by a waste of brown bog, so that the contrast between the colouring of the ridge and the bog is very striking. It is situated about three miles north-east of Ferbane, in the King's County, on the right of the road to Clara. The remains of Manchan's cell are still to be seen, and three blessed wells are also close at hand.

In O'Reilly's *Irish Writers*, Manchan is set down as the author of a Latin Treatise, *De Mirabilibus Sacrae Scripturae*, which has been printed amongst the works of St. Augustine. But Dr. Reeves has shown[1] that this treatise on the *Wonders of Holy Scripture* must rather be assigned to an Irish monk of the seventh century named Augustine, of whom hardly anything else is known.

St. Manchan is much better known to moderns on account of the famous shrine or reliquary, which appears to contain some fragments of the bones of the saint, and is, undoubtedly, one of the most beautiful productions of Celtic art, as it has always been considered—opus pulcherrimum quod fecit opifex in Hibernia.[2] The Four Masters bear emphatic testimony to the same effect. A.D. 1166.—"The shrine of Manchan of

[1] See *Pro. Roy. I. Ac.*, vii., p. 514.
[2] See Dr. Monaghan's *Records*, p. 354.

Maothail (Mohill) was covered by Rory O'Conor, and an embroidering of gold was carried over it by him, in as good a style as a relic was ever covered in Ireland." St. Manchan had another oratory at Mohill, County Leitrim.

This shrine is at present preserved in the Catholic Church of Boher, near the Prospect Railway Station, on the Athlone and Portarlington line; and a *fac-simile* may be seen in the Royal Irish Academy. We need not describe it at length here. It is in the usual form of such Celtic shrines, somewhat like the roof of a house—24 inches long, 15 broad, and 19 inches high. On each side there is a large and beautiful cross composed of five bosses, at the extremities elaborately ornamented, and united by the arms of the cross which were covered with plates of enamel, fixed in a yellow ground with red border lines. Above and below the crosses there must have been originally as many as fifty human figures, but at present only ten remain. The metal work throughout was richly gilt, and ornamented with the usual interlaced figures, characteristic of our Celtic ornamentation.

When the shrine was opened it was found to contain a few small fragments of bones, and some pieces of the original box of yew in which they were enclosed, with a few of the silver plates which adorned the original reliquary. As Lemanaghan was originally given to Clonmacnoise as an "Altar-sod," about the year A.D. 645, there can hardly be any doubt that St. Manchan was sent from Clonmacnoise to occupy it, and that it always continued to be a daughter of Clonmacnoise. Hence we are justified in concluding that Rory O'Conor had this beautiful work of art executed by some of the *cerds* of that famous monastery.

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CHAPTER XXIII

IRISH SCHOLARS ABROAD.

"O, pilgrim, if you bring me from some far-off land a sign,
Let it be some token still of the green Old Land once mine;
A shell from the shores of Ireland would be dearer far to me,
Than all the wines of the Rhine-land, or the art of Italie."

—*M'Gee.*

We do not, by any means, propose at present to give an account of the Irish Saints and Scholars, who founded so many monasteries and schools in foreign countries, from th seventh to the eleventh century. The subject is too wide and too important to be discussed in this volume. It will be necessary, however, to give a brief account of a few of those celebrated men, in order to show the character of the scientific and theological training which they received in the Schools of their native land.

I.—St. Virgilius, Archbishop of Salzburg.

St. Virgilius, Archbishop of Salzburg, is one of the most celebrated of those learned men, whom our Irish schools sent forth in swarms during the eighth and ninth centuries. And he was not merely a learned prelate, and a successful champion of orthodox doctrine; he was also a great astronomer, far in advance of his own age, for he taught the sphericity of the earth, and the existence of antipodes, long before Copernicus or his system was known to the scholars of Europe.

The exact place and date of his birth cannot be ascertained, but that he was an Irishman may not for a moment be questioned. In the first place we have the express testimony of the celebrated Alcuin, an almost contemporary writer, who declares that Virgilius was born, reared, and educated in Ireland.[1] Then the author of the poetical epitaph over Virgilius, in his own church of Salzburg, bears the same testimony,[2] affirming that it was the 'Hibernian

[1] "Protulit in lucem quem mater Hibernia primum, instituit, docuit, nutrivit . . . amavit."—*Poemata.*

[2] "Hic pater et pastor, humilis doctusque sacerdos corpore Virgilius pausat, quem Hibernia tellus, Disponente Deo, partes direxit in istas," etc.

land' that sent him, under God's guidance, to Salzburg. His Life, too, written about the year A.D. 1190, by a disciple of Ebenhard, Archbishop of Salzburg, expressly affirms the Irish birth of Virgilius; and such, we may add, has been the unvarying tradition of the church and city of Salzburg.

In our domestic Annals we have first the testimony of the Four Masters, who, A.D. 784, record that "Ferghil, *i.e.*, the Geometer, abbot of Achadh-bo, died in Germany in the thirteenth year of his bishopric;" and as we shall presently see, this was the date of the death of Virgil, the Archbishop of Salzburg, and thirteen years was the duration of his episcopacy. In the *Annals of Ulster*, under date of A.D. 788, we find that:—"Fergil, abbot of Achadh-bo, died"—the year corresponds to A.D. 784 of the Four Masters, and that appears to be the true date.

There can be no reasonable doubt, therefore, that Virgilius of the Latin is equivalent to Fergil of the Irish, as the root-words sufficiently imply; and that Ferghil the Geometer, who died in Germany as a bishop, having been previously abbot of Aghaboe, is the celebrated Virgilius, Archbishop of Salzburg, so widely known to fame as an astronomer and theologian.

Virgil, with a few companions from Ireland, one of whom was a priest—Sidonius or Sedna—arrived in France about the year A.D. 741—the year in which Charles Martel died, and was succeeded in his office of mayor of the palace by the famous Pepin le Bref, father of the still more renowned Charlemagne. Virgil spent some two or three years in the Court of Pepin, who sent him, about A.D. 743, with strong letters of recommendation to the Court of Ottilo, Duke of Bavaria. At this period Bavaria had been partially converted to the faith, by the zealous labours of St. Boniface, the apostle of Germany, afterwards Archbishop of Mentz and Legate of the Apostolic See. Much, however, still remained to be done; and it was the wish of Pepin that Duke Ottilo should avail himself of the services of the two Irish priests, of whose zeal and learning he had ample proofs in the conversion of his own half-Christian subjects. The duke received the friends of Pepin with much consideration; for he seems to have kept them near himself, and entrusted them with his confidence, as we may fairly infer from subsequent events.

The zeal of the Irishmen, however, soon got them into trouble; but what was a source of trouble to them has since proved a useful lesson to all theologians of the Church.

Many of the priests of the period in Germany were by no means learned; so it happened that one of them when baptizing a catechumen made use of this form:—"Ego te baptizo in nomine Patria et Filia et Spiritua Sancta"—which even a boy learning the Latin Grammar can perceive is very different from the orthodox form. The case was referred to Boniface, who declared that the baptism was invalid, and ordered those so baptized to be baptized again. Virgil and his friend, Sidonius, afterwards Archbishop of Bavaria, knew how jealous the Church has always been about re-baptizing those once validly baptized; and they declared that in their opinion the baptism in question was valid. Boniface, however, persisted in his opinion. He was, as he himself says, an Englishman from *Saxonia transmarina*—and though it is highly probable that he was of Irish origin, he did not wish to accept the teaching of the Irish theologians on this occasion. So the matter was referred to Rome; and it so happened that Pope Zachary, a Calabrian Greek, and a man, too, of great learning and holiness, then filled the Chair of St. Peter. His decision, sent by letter to Boniface, declares distinctly that if the minister of the sacrament, through ignorance of Latin, and not from any heretical purpose of introducing a new form, pronounced the words as given above, the baptism must be held to be valid.[1]

This clear and emphatic expression of Catholic doctrine, as every theological student knows, we owe to Virgil and Sidonius. They rightly deemed that this error in the form was not *substantial* but *accidental;* it was not introduced from malice, with a view to pervert the form of the sacrament, but from ignorance; the priest evidently had the intention of doing what the Church does; he corrupted the integrity of the form, but it remained perfectly intelligible to any bystander acquainted with the Latin language, and hence the baptism itself was valid.

Boniface yielded prompt obedience to the Apostolic See, but, although a saint and martyr, he felt sore at the victory gained over him by the Irish strangers,[2] who intruded into

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[1] Virgilius et Sidonius religiosi viri apud Bojoarium provinciam degentes, suis apud nos litteris usi sunt, per quas intimaverunt quod tua reverenda paternitas eis injungeret Christianos denuo baptizare. Sanctissme frater, si is qui baptizavit, non errorem introducens aut heresim sed pro sola ignorantia Romanae locutionis infringendo linguam baptizans dixisset ut supra fati sumus, non possumus consentire ut denuo baptizentur.

[2] There is very good reason to believe that Boniface though born in England, was himself of Irish origin. See *Irish Eccles. Record* for 1884, pages 115, 190.

his spiritual domain, and seemed to supplant him in favour with the Duke Otillo. And, no doubt, there were not wanting interested parties who strove to foment dissensions between these two saints and servants of God. No one, indeed, who knows the history of Boniface, will endorse the spiteful remark of Basnage that he was—"Vir si quis unquam superbus sive zelotes." But he was human like others, and his own letters clearly showed that he felt keenly the victory of Virgil. He waited, however, for a while, and then sent a friend of his, Buchardus of Wirzburg, to Rome with letters for the Pope, in which he brought four serious charges against Virgil. He accused him, as we know from the Pope's answer, first, that this Virgil was making malicious accusations against him, Boniface, because he had been convicted by Boniface of teaching erroneous doctrine;[1] secondly, Boniface charged him with whispering false things to the Duke, with a view of sowing dissension between him, Boniface, and the Duke;[2] thirdly, he accused Virgil of giving out that he was dismissed by the Pope from Rome,[3] in order to get one of the four bishoprics of Bavaria just then vacant. Lastly, he brings against him the most formidable charge of all, that Virgil taught that there was another world, and *other* men under the earth, and another sun and moon.[4] And, in the same letter, Boniface complains that a certain Samson, an Irishman —"genere Scottus"—erred from the way of truth, teaching that a man could become a Christian merely by the imposition of hands, without baptism. Clearly Boniface was hard on the Irishmen then in Bavaria; and the whole tone of the letter shows that he had not forgotten his previous contest with Virgil and Sidonius.

The Pope in his answer deals with these charges with the greatest prudence. He had very great respect for Boniface, but it is clear he is not prepared to accept all his statements without proof. He makes no special remark on the two first charges, for they could be easily explained. But, as to the third, he declares that the alleged statement of Virgil is false, that he was not (*absolutus*) dismissed, or sent home by the Pope in order to get a bishopric in Bavaria. Indeed, as to

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[1] "Malignatur adversum te pro eo quod confundebatur a te, erroneum se esse a Catholica doctrina."

[2] "Immissiones faciens Ottiloni duci Bojoariorum ut odium inter te et illum seminaret."

[3] "Quod a nobis esset absolutus."

[4] "Quod alius mundus et alii homines sub terra sint et sol et luna." See *Epistola* xi. Zachariae ad Bonifacium, Migne's edition, page 943.

this charge, there is no evidence that Virgil was ever in Rome at all; but it is highly probable that both Pepin and Ottilo were anxious for his advancement to a See in Bavaria, and that their zeal was attributed to the time-serving ambition of Virgil himself. The charge is entirely inconsistent with his character; and it is hardly necessary to observe that it is no proof of its truth that it was made in these letters sent to Rome by Boniface. Too many unfounded charges of the kind have been made in Rome both since and before.

As regards the fourth charge, that of teaching that there was another world, and other men, and another sun and moon, it deserves fuller notice at our hands.

It is clear that Virgil held the doctrine of the Antipodes, and that Boniface, not unwilling to find him erring in doctrine, formulated his teaching as above. The words of the Pope thereupon are noteworthy.[1] "Concerning this charge of false doctrine, if it shall be established," says the Pope, "that Virgil taught this perverse and wicked doctrine against God and his own soul, do you then convoke a council, degrade him from the priesthood, and drive him from the Church." But what is this doctrine as represented to the Pope? Certainly not that taught by Virgil, and which he learned in the schools of his native land. The doctrine censured by the Pope, was that there is another world, and another race of men quite different from us, *not children of Adam*, and hence not redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. This was the sense in which the Pope understood the doctrine of the Antipodes, this was the sense in which it was understood by St. Augustine, and for that reason reprobated by him as well as by the Pope. And the very words, in which the accusation against Virgilius is formulated, clearly point to this "perverse and wicked" teaching. The truth of the matter was, that neither Boniface nor the Pope knew astronomy as well as Virgil, and hence they imagined he taught doctrines which were quite different from his real opinions.

It is well to observe that great diversity of opinion prevailed concerning the existence of Antipodes, both amongst the ancient philosophers and the Fathers of the Church.

Plato is said to have been the first who held the existence of Antipodes, and used the word in its present signification.

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[1] "De perversa autem et iniqua doctrina ejus, qui contra Deum et animam suam locutus est; *si clarificatum fuerit* ita eum confiteri quod alius mundus et alii homines sub terra sint, seu sol et luna, hunc, habito concilio, ab ecclesia pelle sacerdotii honore privatum."*

* See Zachary's letter to Boniface loco citato.

But there is no evidence that he himself believed in their actual existence, even though he invented the term which so accurately describes them.

Lactantius, however, in his treatise "De falsa Sapientia Philosophorum," ridicules the notion of Antipodes, and, as he clearly regards it as a philosophical error, we may fairly conclude that some of the ancient philosophers taught their existence.

It would be easy enough to show how unpalatable the doctrine of the Antipodes was to the ecclesiastical authorities of the eighth century; and in what sense the Pope must have understood the alleged teaching of St. Virgilius. What the Pope declared to be perverse and wicked doctrine—not heretical—was that there is another world, and another *race of men*—alii homines—and therefore not Sons of Adam, and another sun and moon to shine upon them. But this certainly was not the teaching of Virgilius, for according to him it was the same world, and the same sun and moon, and the same race of men who dwelt in the opposite regions of the world.

Virgil must have, in his own defence, explained the real meaning of his words to the satisfaction of the Pope, for we find no further mention of the controversy; and we know, too, that in a short time afterwards he was promoted to the See of Salzburg, which would certainly not be sanctioned in Rome if they had any suspicion of his doctrine.

Pagi, indeed, holds that there must have been two different Virgils, one who had the dispute with St. Boniface, and another who was Bishop of Salzburg; and yet he admits that both were in Bavaria in A.D. 746. This hypothesis is intrinsically improbable, and altogether unsupported by evidence. Indeed, the only reason given by Pagi is the silence of the writer of Virgil's Life, published by Canisius, regarding the disputes with Boniface. But the answer is quite simple: the writer of the Life gives very few facts, although he narrates many miracles; and hence from his silence we can infer nothing against the generally received opinion.

Pagi also alleges that Virgil was the fifth Bishop of Salzburg. Here, again, however, he is mistaken, at least if we are to credit the author of the second Life given by Canisius, who makes him the eighth bishop after St. Rudbert. Other writers, however, make him fifth after the founder of the See, following the anonymous author of an old poem on the Bishops of Salzburg, who describes them as:—

> "Advena Virgilius statuens quam plurima *quintus*,
> Multo plura quaerens Arno super omnia *sextus*."

It is almost impossible to fix the exact year in which Virgilius became Bishop of Salzburg. The metrical epitaph on his tomb declares that for nearly forty years he ruled the church of Salzburg; and as the latest year assigned for his death is A.D. 785, this would bring the beginning of his episcopacy before A.D. 750. Another account represents him as consecrated by St. Stephen, successor of Zachary; and as the former did not begin his reign until A.D. 752, we must place the beginning of Virgil's episcopacy after that event. As he spent some years abbot of St. Peter's Monastery in Salzburg before he became bishop, the date given in his Life, written by the disciple of St. Ebenhard, towards the end of the twelfth century, is much more probable—that he was consecrated bishop in succession to John in A.D. 766 or 767. The same writer tells us that for two years after his nomination to the See, he continued to refuse the appointment; and that during this time the duties of the episcopal office were performed by a bishop called Dowd, *Dobda*, a countryman of the saint, who seems to have come with him from Ireland. At last he was prevailed upon to allow himself to be consecrated, but he yielded only to the earnest entreaties of all the neighbouring prelates.

His life was spent in unceasing labour, not only for his own flock, but for the conversion of the neighbouring provinces, especially Carinthia, which was still pagan. He not only sent missionaries to preach the Gospel amongst these half-civilized people, but towards the close of his life he himself paid frequent visits to the newly-established churches, and did much to confirm them in the faith. Hence Virgilius is venerated to this day as the Apostle of Carinthia.

He rebuilt the monastery of St. Peter in a style of great magnificence, for he always loved the good monks of St. Benedict, who had chosen the Irish stranger to be their abbot and father; and when he died, he left his bones amongst them. He also built a stately church in honour of St. Stephen, and a splendid basilica dedicated to St. Rudbert, which he made the cathedral of the diocese, and to which he translated the relics of that saint, the founder and first bishop of the church of Salzburg.[1] When he had these great works completed, he set out on a missionary journey amongst the neighbouring tribes; but finding his end approaching, "he quickly returned," says the writer of his life:—

[1] It was while building this church that the saint so paid his men, that none of them could take out of the money-bag (pelle) more than his labours entitled him to. See the *Lessons* on the saint's Feast.

"And when he came in view of his beloved Salzburg, and its encircling hills, he began to weep copious tears, and he cried out—Haec requies mea, hic habitabo quoniam elegi eam—and having celebrated the Holy Sacrifice, he died without pain—leni correptus morbo—on the fifth day before the Kalends of December, A.D. 784; or according to another, but less probable account, in A.D. 780. His body was buried in the southern wing of the monastery which he himself had spent twelve years in building. There he was honourably buried as became a great High Priest, and his soul went up to enjoy the fellowship of heavenly citizens for endless ages."

We hear no more of St. Virgil for four hundred years, until near the end of the twelfth century, when his Life was written by one who was himself a witness of many of the facts which he relates. "In the year of our Lord's Incarnation, A.D. 1171," he says in the opening paragraph:—

"On the fourteenth day before the Kalends of March, in the twenty-first year of the Pontificate of our Lord Pope Alexander III., the most Serene Prince Frederic being august Emperor of the Romans, and Otto of Witelenspach, most renowned Duke of Bavaria; when the edifice of the aforesaid monastery of St. Peter, which had some years before been destroyed by fire, was being rebuilt at the expense and by the command of the illustrious Pastor Chunrad, Archbishop of Salzburg, Legate of the Apostolic See in Germany, and Cardinal Priest of St. Marcellus, through the co-operating grace of the Holy Spirit, and the suffragant clemency of the Divine Majesty, it came to pass that the body of the blessed Virgilius, which had been hidden from all persons for many centuries, was wonderfully brought to light."

"It happened on a certain day that some stones having fallen from the wall, gave an opportunity to the passers-by to look into the opening, in which they noticed signs of a hollow space, and the outlines of an ancient picture were observed drawn in gold. Thereupon the canons of the church made an investigation; and upon further opening the wall, the tomb and image (depicta imago) of St. Virgilius, eighth Bishop of Salzburg after St. Rudbert, was discovered, with the following inscription:—'Virgilius templum construxit schemate pulchro.' And moreover the day of his death was marked, the fifth before the Kalends of December (27th Nov.) Anno 781."

Then the writer goes on to narrate how the archbishop and the clergy, and all citizens, crowded to the tomb to venerate the sacred relics; and he gives a long list of most

extraordinary miracles which were daily performed at the tomb, but which we cannot stay to transcribe.

The name of St. Virgilius is not found in the Roman Martyrology, says Basnage, but he is always spoken of as a saint in the *Annals of the Benedictines;* and in the Canons of a Council of Salzburg, held in A.D. 1274, the assembled prelates declare that they recognise Rudbert, Virgil, and Augustine, as the patrons of that church, and command, under penalty of excommunication, their feast days to be kept as holidays. It is hardly necessary to add that the festival of Virgilius, Bishop and Confessor, is celebrated by the Irish Church on the 27th November.[1]

II.—Sedulius, Commentator on Scripture.

Another eminent Irish scholar of the Dispersion was Sedulius, the Commentator on Scripture. Sedulius the Elder, of whom we have already spoken at length, is known as the Poet; the present Sedulius is, for the sake of distinction, commonly called Sedulius the Younger, or the Commentator.

Of his personal history unfortunately we know only two facts—first, that he was an Irishman; and secondly, that he was, as his writings abundantly prove, a most distinguished scholar. We cannot even identify him for certain amongst the many Irish scholars, who are known to have borne this name during the eighth and ninth centuries.

There was a Sedulius, who is supposed to have been Bishop of Strathclyde in Scotland, and who was certainly present at a Council held in Rome, A.D. 721.[2] He describes himself under his own hand as a British Bishop of Irish birth;[3] and he was accompanied by another prelate who calls himself Fergustus Episcopus Scotiae Pictus—that is a Pictish Bishop of Scotia, which at that time must mean a Bishop of

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[1] The epitaph on the saint's tomb in St. Peter's Abbey is worth transcribing:—

"Hic pater et pastor humilis doctusque sacerdos
Corpore Virgilius pausat, quem *Hibernia tellus*
Disponente Deo partes direxit in istas,
Quique regebat ovans praesentis culmina sedis
Ferme quater denos, caris cum fratribus annos
A quibus ille et amatus erat, pie quos et amavit.
Interim et extruxit pulchro molimine multa
Templa, loco quaedam nunc cernuntur in isto
Insuper et miseris largus, simul omnibus aptus,
Pro quo, quisquis legis versus orare memento."

[2] See *Haddan and Stubbs*, Vol. ii., part i., page 7.

[3] "Sedulius Episcopus Britanniæ de genere Scotorum, huic constituto a nobis promulgato subscripsi."—*Labb*, vi., 1458.

the Irish Picts. Both happened to be in Rome together, and were invited to assist at this Council and subscribe their names. It is another of the many proofs that indicate the close union between Rome and the Celtic Churches at this period.

The Four Masters, A.D. 785 (*recte* 789), make mention of the death of Siadhal, or Sedulius, 'Abbot of Dublin.' The same entry (A.D. 789) is in the *Annals of Ulster*, but in the *Martyrology of Donegal* he is described as Bishop of Dublin, and in the *Tallaght Martyrology* on the same day (12th Feb.) he is simply called 'Siadal Bishop;' but nothing more is known about him. If there was a Bishop in Dublin, there certainly was no See of Dublin at this period; for the See was certainly of Danish origin.

There was also a Siadhail, abbot and Bishop of Roscommon, who died in A.D. 813.[1] Another Siadhail, or Sedulius, who died in A.D. 828, was abbot of Kildare; and according to Lanigan he was 'unquestionably' the author of the *Commentaries*, which are ascribed by all the learned to some Irishman of that name, who flourished about this period. Lanigan, however, has given no satisfactory evidence of this 'unquestionable' fact; and although it is quite possible that Sedulius of Kildare may have been the author of the *Commentaries on St. Paul's Epistles*, it is just quite as possible that he was Sedulius, the Bishop-abbot of Roscommon, or some Hibernian exile of the same period, who flourished in the Schools of France or Italy.

Whoever he was, he was certainly a learned man. Montfaucon has preserved a Greek psalter,[2] written by this Sedulius, which is of itself quite satisfactory evidence of his Greek scholarship. He was besides an accomplished Latin poet, and his patristic lore is simply marvellous. No doubt his work as a commentator consists, to a very large extent, of extracts from the Fathers of the Church, both Greek and Latin; but so does every commentary of the kind worth reading. Where commentators begin to be original, they generally cease to be orthodox. At best their learning can only succeed in putting the old truths in a new way. It has been insinuated[3] that Sedulius in his *Commentaries on St. Paul* adopted what are now called Calvinistic views about grace and predestination. There is not a shadow of foundation for the charge, except that Sedulius quotes and approves

[1] *Four Masters.* [2] *Palaeographia Graeca*, iii.
[3] See Professor Stokes' *Celtic Church*, page 226.

of the teaching of St. Augustine. But how far St. Augustine was from holding such views, it is quite unnecessary to show in this place. These *Commentaries on St. Paul* are really very valuable, and even at this day are worthy of careful study.

Besides the *Commentaries on St. Paul*, Sedulius also wrote a *Commentary on St. Matthew*, the proper title of which is—*Collectaneum Sedulii in Mattheum ex diversis Patribus excerptum.* He is also said to have written a grammatical commentary on Priscian, and on the *Secunda Editio* of Donatus, works which were both in common use in the ancient schools of Ireland. He was somewhat of a politician also, and wrote a treatise on Politics in Aristotle's sense, not referred to by Lanigan, for it was only discovered in comparatively recent times by Cardinal Mai in the Vatican, and has been published by him in the ninth tome of his *Nova Collectio Scriptorum.* Everything goes to show that he was a man of the very widest culture attainable in that age, and that he, like Virgilius and John Scotus Erigena, of whom we are now about to speak, acquired that culture in the schools of his native land.

III.—John Scotus Erigena.

John Scotus Erigena, a man of Irish birth and education, was by far the most distinguished scholar of the ninth century in Western Europe. He was at once theologian, philosopher, and poet; he could write Greek verses and expound the Scriptures in the Hebrew and the Septuagint; he was familiar with Aristotle and Plato, as well as with St. Basil and St. Augustine, and was not only rector of the Royal School of Paris, but is also said to have been professor of dialectics and mathematics. He was known as the "Master" by excellence, and was spoken of as a "miracle of knowledge." Even in our own time critics of great name have ranked Scotus with Chrysostom, Dante, and Thomas of Aquin, partly from the beauty and sublimity of his thoughts, partly from the originality, depth, and subtlety of his philosophical speculations. No doubt he erred seriously, and was censured justly. He erred, however, not in the spirit of Luther and Calvin, but of Origen and St. Cyprian; for one who ought to know, and was no great friend to the Irish stranger, has attested that he was in all things a holy and humble man, filled with the Spirit of God. But he sailed through unknown seas where there was no chart to guide him. His daring spirit, soaring on strong pinions, essayed untravelled realms of thought, and in the quest of truth he often followed wan-

dering fires; yet, as he himself tells us, in the light of God's revelation and the strength of His grace, the wearied spirit always found its homeward way again. He was in reality the first of the schoolmen, and his very errors, like the wanderings of every explorer of a new country, served to guide those who came after him. Moreover, he has been censured not only for his real errors, but for doctrines which he never held, although condemned under his name; and so it came to pass that he was unduly blamed by those who knew little of his history and less of his teaching, and unduly praised, we think, by those who are much more ready to eulogise him for his errors than for his virtues.

Like many other good things which Ireland has produced, both England and Scotland have striven to make Scotus their own. Thomas Dempster, the saint-stealer, in his *Menologium Scotorum*, published in A.D. 1621, and dedicated to Cardinal Barberini, has endeavoured to prove that Scotus Erigena was a native of North Britain; as, however, his arguments are founded on the similarity in sound between Ayr and Erigena and between Scotus and Scot, we need not now refute them at length. Thomas Gale, an Englishman, who was the first to publish at Oxford, in A.D. 1681, Scotus' treatise, *De Divisione Naturae*, maintains that he was of English birth, and was born at a place called Eringen or Ergerne, in Herefordshire, as that name is very like Erigena—for he gives no other shadow of positive proof! It is now superfluous to show at length, what all modern scholars admit, that "Scotus," in the ninth century, and even down to the eleventh century, was exactly equivalent to "Irishman" now, although of course even then they sometimes spoke of the "Scoti of Alba" as we speak of the "Irish of Glasgow" at present. But when used alone in those early centuries the terms "Scoti" and "Scotia" were applied exclusively to the primitive race and their dwelling-place—the Milesian Scots of Ireland, of whom the Albanian Scots were a colony. In A.D. 812, before the birth of Scotus, Eginhard, the secretary of Charlemagne, says that a fleet of Normans invaded Ireland, "the island of the Scots;" and, after the death of Scotus, Alfred the Great, in his translation of Orosius, speaks of Ireland as "Hibernia, which we call Scotland." So the very name John Scotus is the same as John the Irishman, and this name was given to him by all his contemporaries. Pope Nicholas I. calls him, in a letter to King Charles, "Joannes genere Scotus," and Hincmar, Archbishop of Rheims, who knew him intimately, calls him "Scotus" and "Scotigena,"

or Irish-born. But what settles the question is the way in which Prudentius, in his treatise on Predestination, speaks of Scotus, for Prudentius says he was himself the friend of Scotus—quasi frater—he lived some time with him in the palace of the king, and no one could know better whence Scotus came. "Te Solum," says Prudentius, "omnium acutissimum Galliae transmissit Hibernia." So it was Ireland, then, and not England or Scotland, sent him over to France. Later on in the eleventh century when, after the fusion of the Picts and Scots into one nation, Scotia came to signify Scotland, the cognomen Erigena was given to Scotus to signify that he was not an Albanian but an Irish Scot. We do not find, however, that any of his contemporaries gave him that name, and the form Erigena, from which Dempster infers his Caledonian origin, is not found in any existing MS. copy of his works. In most of them it is written Ierugena, which Dr. Floss, the learned editor of the works of Scotus, published in Migne's Patrology, thinks is derived from the Greek, and signifies "native of the sacred isle"—insula sanctorum. But although Scotus himself was certainly fond of Greek compounds, very few scholars of the tenth and eleventh centuries were able to make them. For our own part we should prefer to adopt the reading Eirugena, which is found in the Florentine and Darmstad manuscripts as being a far simpler and more natural form. Eriu is the older nominative, and its vowel termination would render it better adapted to form a compound than the genitive form Erin, and thus we get Eriugena, which no doubt would very soon be contracted into Erigena.

Unfortunately we know neither the exact date of Erigena's birth, nor where he was born and educated. We find him an inmate of the palace of Charles the Bald in A.D. 851, when he published his book on Predestination. He must have been at that time some time in France, for he was then well known as a distinguished scholar, so that if we assume that he was born about A.D. 820, and came to France about A.D. 850, we cannot be very far astray. We know from a letter of Eric of Auxerre to Charles the Bald, that a crowd of Hibernian philosophers came to France, attracted by the liberality of that prince, and driven out of their own country by the invasion of the Danes.[1] All the Irish

[1] "Quid Hiberniam memorem, contempto pelagi discrimine, pene toto cum grege philosophorum ad littera nostra migrantem," "concrepantibus," says William of Malmesbury- "undique belli fragoribus."

annalists tell us that from A.D. 815 to 845 the Danes under Turgesius plundered, desolated, and burned the whole country, but especially the churches, monasteries, and schools. In A.D. 843 "Turgesius plundered Connaught, Meath, and Clonmacnoise with its oratories;" in the same year "Forannen, the Primate of Armagh, was taken prisoner, with his relics and people" (to the number of 3,000), "and they were carried by the Danes to their ships at Limerick." It is easy to see how young Scotus might be captured by the foreigners, and succeed in making his escape to France, or seek an asylum there, most probably either in this or the next year.

Charles the Bald, son of Louis le Debonaire, and grandson of Charlemagne, was at this time king of Northern France and Burgundy. He had few of the kingly virtues of his great grandsire, but he was a zealous patron of literature, very fond of theological discussions, was present at many French Councils, and on the whole, was far better fitted by nature to be a monk than a monarch. He received the young Irish scholar with great kindness, and treated him with marked distinction. Scotus had apartments in the palace, was made Capital, or head, of the Scholæ Palatinæ, and frequently admitted to the royal table. He was a great Greek scholar, and the king wanted him to translate into Latin the works of Dionysius the Areopagite, a task which none of his subjects was able to accomplish. Moreover, the Irishman was witty as well as wise, and the king loved a joke quite as much as he loved learning. William of Malmesbury, has preserved two of the witticisms of Scotus. On one occasion, when the wine was going round the table, the Irishman by some word or act offended against the etiquette due to royalty. The king, who was sitting opposite to Scotus, good-humouredly rebuked him by asking—"Quid interest inter Scottum et Sottum?" "Tabula tantum," says the witty Hibernian, and the monarch greatly enjoyed this turning of the tables against himself. On another occasion, Scotus was dining at the table of the king with two other clerics. We cannot, indeed, ascertain for certain whether Scotus himself was a cleric or not; he certainly does not appear to have been a priest. These two clerics were very big men, and Scotus was, like some other great men, very small. Three fishes were brought in by an attendant—one small and two large ones. The king beckoned Scotus to divide the fish with his companions. Scotus did so, giving them the small one, and keeping for himself the two big

ones. The king protested against the unfair division. "It is perfectly fair, my Lord the King," said Scotus, "for here," pointing to himself and his plate, "we have one small and two big, and there," pointing to his companions, "they have two big and one small." The king laughed, and probably a fairer division was afterwards made by Scotus.

He might have long enjoyed his honours and emoluments in the palace in peace if he were prudent. But just at this period two fierce theological disputes arose in France, and either his friends at court, or his Irish blood, prompted him to mingle in the *mêlée*.

Just about the time when Erigena arrived in France, began the first and the warmest controversy of the ninth century concerning the abstruse question of Predestination. Most of the French bishops and theologians took part in this discussion, which was hotly debated for twelve years. Its author was a Benedictine monk, of the famous abbey of Fulda, who was called Gotteschalk, or Servant of God. Raban Maur, one of the most learned men of his own time, and for many years head of the great School of Fulda, who was now Archbishop of Mayence, cited Gotteschalk to appear before a Synod and account for his doctrinal novelties. The Council was held on the 1st of October, A.D. 848. Gotteschalk did appear in person, and handed in a profession of faith, which, according to Hincmar, was undoubtedly erroneous.

He was accordingly condemned by the Council, and Raban wrote a letter to Hincmar to inform him that a vagabond monk (gyrovagus), of the diocese of Soissons, held heretical doctrine, and was condemned by the Synod with the approbation of King Louis. He also requests Hincmar to convene a Synod in his own diocese, and condemn his doctrines in like manner. Hincmar was not slow in following this advice. That great bishop, for more than thirty years the central figure of the French Church, was in every way qualified to fill the high place which he occupied as the first prelate and peer in France. He was learned, eloquent, and resolute, a lasting friend, and, to those whom he considered in the wrong, an unrelenting foe. In his youth he had been a monk of the great Abbey of St. Denis, so that between Raban Maur, a Benedictine monk of Fulda, and Hincmar, a Benedictine of St. Denis, the former now the most powerful prince-bishop in Germany, and the latter the first prelate in France, the unfortunate Gotteschalk, a runaway monk of their order, could hope for little mercy. A great Synod of his province was convoked by Hincmar in the palace of

Quiercy. The king was there, and a great number of his bishops and abbots. Gotteschalk was introduced and interrogated, but persisted in his opinions, and, if we may credit Hincmar, was very insolent in his demeanour. So the bishops ordered him to be degraded, and the abbots ordered him to be flogged according to the rule of St. Benedict, and after that to be imprisoned in an ergastulum. A great fire was kindled, Gotteschalk was ordered to take his MS. on Predestination in his hand, and the lash was then applied until he should himself fling the book into the flames, which he was glad to do very soon. He was afterwards imprisoned in the Convent of Hautvilliers, where he remained contumacious for nine years, and died, it is said, in the same spirit.

But the severity of Hincmar defeated his purpose. He was so severely attacked by several French theologians that he found it necessary to ask his friend, Scotus, to come to his assistance, and the "Master" promptly responded to the call. In A.D. 851 he published his *Liber de Prædestinatione*, a short treatise in nineteen chapters, on a very burning question. This book at once raised a tremendous storm on all sides. He adopted a new system of discussion, arguing rather from reason than authority, and dealing his blows indiscriminately on friend and foe. He ranges through all metaphysics, discusses the nature of sin, the origin of evil, the eternal punishment of the wicked, and the qualities of the bodies that will be hereafter united to the glorified and condemned souls. He somewhat contemptuously speaks of his opponents, and acts on those independent principles which he elsewhere so eloquently proclaims in a sentence that has something of the sonorous ring of a Ciceronian period.[1] Wenilo, Archbishop of Sens, at once sent this treatise of Scotus to Prudentius, and he was not very long in pronouncing what he thought of it. The next year he published his great treatise *De Prædestinatione contra Joannem Scotum*, with an introduction addressed to Archbishop Wenilo. We have no hesitation in saying that this introduction is written in language rather vulgar, and by no means charitable. He heaps all manner of abusive epithets on the head of the redoubtable Scotus, and although he declares that he is

[1] "Non ita sum territus auctoritate, aut minus capacium animorum expavesco impetum, ut ea quæ vera ratio clare colligit indubitanterque definit aperta fronte pronuntiare confundar, praesertim cum de talibus non nisi inter sapientes tractandum sit, quibus nil suavius est ad audiendum vera ratione, nil delectabilius ad investigandum, quando quæritur, nil pulchrius ad contemplandum quando invenitur."

animated only by zeal for the Catholic faith, and the affection of true charity, we think he would have given better proof of both by greater moderation in his language. He declares that he found in the book of Scotus the poison of Pelagianism, the madness of Origen, and the wild fury (furiositatem) of the Collyrian heretics. He speaks of the impudence of Scotus in barking at (oblatrantem) the orthodox faith and the Catholic Fathers, and he hints pretty clearly that it was the devil himself who vomited so many blasphemies by the mouth of John and Julian, and so on to the end of the chapter. In the same spirit, but in more moderate language, Florus attacked the book of Scotus, whom he calls a "vaniloquus et garrulus homo," and speaks of his writings as "plena mendacii et erroris." For the present we shall not discuss in what or how far Scotus erred in his book, but he was certainly on the right side in supporting Hincmar, and although neither Florus nor Prudentius held all the opinions of Gotteschalk, it would not be difficult to extract from their writings many propositions, which would need to be interpreted in a very charitable spirit, indeed, before they could be reconciled with the commonly received doctrines of our Catholic theologians.

But Hincmar was not the man to yield to the noisy declamation of the theologians of the South. In A.D. 853 he convened another Synod at Quiercy, in which he formulated with great accuracy his own doctrine on grace and predestination. They are well known as the Capitula Carisiaca.[1]

It is said that Prudentius signed them, but he certainly in a short time afterwards formulated four counter-propositions, which it is not easy to reconcile with Catholic doctrine, and in this proceeding he was countenanced by Remigius of Lyons. Later on, in the Council of Valence in A.D. 855, and in that of Langres in A.D. 859, the southern theologians and bishops attacked the capitula of Hincmar, at least by implication, and denounced the book written by Scotus as a devil's commentary rather than an argument of faith, and said it contained nothing but old women's stories, and Irish porridge nauseous to the purity of faith. They did not expressly mention his name, but there can be no doubt about the

[1] We can only quote the headings :—

1. Quod una tantum sit prædestinatio Dei.
2. Quod liberum hominis arbitrium per gratiam sanetur.
3. Quod Deus omnes homines velit salvos fieri.
4. Quod Christus pro omnibus hominibus passus sit.

The opponents of these propositions could not be orthodox.

reference in the words—"Scotorumque pultes puritati fidei nauseam inferentes." But in the end Hincmar prevailed, and his doctrine was sanctioned in the Synod of Tousi, in the year A.D. 860, where a great many prelates of both parties were assembled from fourteen provinces, with twelve metropolitans, and the three kings at their head—Charles the Bald, Lothaire of Lorraine, and Charles of Provence. So the censures of Florus and Prudentius, and the condemnation of Valence and Langres cannot have much weight in blackening the theological character of Scotus Erigena.

The next discussion in which Scotus is said to have taken part occurred shortly afterwards. It has been stated by many writers that he was the first who denied the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Western Church. Certainly, Berengarius, in the eleventh century, claimed Scotus as his teacher on the new doctrine which he introduced; and the Sacramentarians regarded him as a great apostle of what they called the truth. A book on the Eucharist, attributed to Scotus by Berengarius, was condemned in three synods, and committed to the flames as impious and heretical.

But there is no contemporary evidence to show that Scotus wrote a treatise on the Eucharist, and, on the other hand, there is positive evidence which goes to show the identity of the work attributed to Scotus with the treatise that has certainly been written by Ratramnus. The very words, on account of which Berengarius says the book was ordered to be burnt at the Council of Rome in A.D. 1059, namely—"ea quae in altare consecrantur esse figuram, pignus, et signum Corporis et Sanguinis Christi," and which were used in a heretical sense by Berengarius but not by their author, are found in the *Book of Ratramnus*, the MS. of which still bears his name in uncial letters of the tenth century. Another expression attributed by Ascelinus to the unfortunate Irishman—"specie geruntur ista, non veritate"—are nowhere to be found in the existing writings of Scotus, but are found exactly in the same MS. of Ratramnus. There can be no doubt that Scotus, in his commentary on St. John, did use inaccurate language, but certainly not in a heretical sense.[1] Yet, his language displeased some of his best friends, so that Hincmar in his second book on Predestination seems

[1] As, for instance, when he says—"Spiritualiter enim Christum immolamus, et intellectualiter eum mente, non dente, comedimus." Scotus meant spiritualiter et realiter in the same sense precisely as St. Augustin used similar words to the exclusion of the carnal revolting meaning of the Capharnaites.

to attribute to Scotus—for he does not mention his name—the error of teaching that the Sacrament of the Altar was not the real body and blood, but only a memorial of them, whereas Scotus taught in reality, or certainly meant to teach, that it was both—namely, a memorial, and at the same time a reality. Adrevaldus, too, wrote a treatise—"De Corpore et Sanguine Domini contra ineptias J. Scoti." This is the only contemporary evidence we have concerning the alleged errors of Scotus on the Eucharist. Just 200 years later, however, in consequence of the fame of Scotus, and the similarity of their style, the *Book of Ratramnus* was attributed to Scotus both by Berengarius and most of his contemporaries. So it shared the fate of Berengarius himself, it was condemned by the Council of Paris in A.D. 1050, and in the same year it was anathematised by the Councils of Rome and Vercelli. Nine years later Pope Nicholas II. made Berengarius himself throw the book into the fire in presence of an immense crowd of people at Rome. And so it came to pass that Scotus was censured for opinions which he never held, and for a book which he never wrote.

Almost from his first arrival in France, Scotus had been engaged in translating from the Greek into Latin the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius. In the year A.D. 828 the Greek Emperor, Michael Balbus—the stammerer—had sent, as a present to Louis le Debonaire, a copy in Greek of the writings attributed to Dionysius, the Areopagite. Dionysius, mentioned in the 17th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, was said to have been at first bishop of Athens, and to have been afterwards sent into France by St. Clement, where he preached the Gospel for many years, and died a martyr's death. The works attributed to St. Dionysius, although really written by some forger of the end of the fifth or beginning of the sixth century, were at this time regarded as genuine. Hence, the Greek Emperor's gift was very highly prized in France, and preserved with the greatest care and veneration as the undoubted work of the apostle of the French people, and especially of Paris, where the great Abbey of St. Denis, for many ages the cemetery of the kings of France, was built in his honour. But these writings in Greek were a sealed fountain to most of the French scholars at the time. Hilduin, a monk of St. Denis, was charged with their custody, and commissioned to translate them, but failed in the attempt. When, however, the exiled Irish scholar came to Paris, the king, to his great joy, soon discovered that he was a perfect master of the Greek tongue, and

asked him to undertake the translation of the writings of the Areopagite. Scotus gladly undertook the task imposed upon him by his royal patron, and executed it in such a way as to please the man of all others best qualified to pronounce a critical opinion—Anastasius, the Roman Librarian. In a letter written to the king, in A.D. 875, he declares it to be a wonderful thing that a man like Scotus, a barbarian, living at the end of the world—vir ille barbarus in finibus mundi positus—could understand and translate into another tongue the writings of the Areopagite. But the Holy Spirit, he says, was the chief agent who filled him at once with fire and eloquence—qui hunc ardentem et loquentem fecit—and charity was the mistress who taught him for the instruction and edification of many. He adds that his only fault was to translate too literally, and the cause of that was his great humility, which did not permit him to change the exact order and meaning of the words of so great a writer.

We cannot ascertain for certain the year of its appearance ; it was probably about A.D. 855, but in this case, too, Scotus was unfortunate. Whether it was that the French theologians had given him a bad character in Rome on account of the book on Predestination, or, as others think, that the Greek scholar was considered to be a supporter of Greek influences in the Court of Charles during the Photian intrigues, it is certain that at this time he was no favourite at Rome. Accordingly, when his work appeared, Pope Nicholas wrote a letter to Charles the Bald, in which he complains of the publication of this translation without the usual apostolic sanction—quod juxta morem ecclesiae nobis mitti debet—especially as John the Scot, who translated it, although said to be a man of much learning, was by many persons regarded as not altogether sound in his doctrine—non sapere in quibusdam frequenti rumore dicitur. Therefore the Pope orders Charles either to send the aforesaid John to Rome to give an account of himself, or at least not to permit him to remain any longer at Paris as the head of the University—aut certo Parisiis in studio, cujus capital jam olim fuisse perhibetur, morari non sinatis. This letter was written in the third year of Nicholas's pontificate, either A.D. 861 or 862. We do not know what effect the letter produced, whether the king dismissed Scotus from his high position or not. It is very improbable that he did dismiss him, seeing the way in which Anastasius, himself a Roman, spoke of Scotus twelve years later as a holy, learned, and humble man. Most probably by that time they had got better information concerning Scotus

in Rome, and found out that he was neither so unsound in doctrine, nor so Photian in his tendencies as his enemies made him out to be. At this time, however, when the Pope wrote to Charles, Scotus took very good care not to go to Rome, where he might have met the fate of Gotteschalk; nor does it appear that Charles dismissed his favourite from the palace, although requested to do so by the Pope himself.

Scotus not only translated and wrote extensive commentaries on the writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius, but about the same period composed a profound, original, and eloquent work in five books, which he entitles Περὶ Φυσέως Μεριαμοῦ, seu De Divisione Naturae. This work has been greatly praised, and greatly and justly censured. We shall, however, for the present reserve our judgment on its undoubted merits, as well as on its demerits, and confine ourselves to sketching its eventful history. It is a dialogue between a master and his pupil after the Platonic fashion, not indeed with Plato's unrivalled beauty of form, but with much of the eloquence and subtlety of the Greek mind. No other scholar of the Western Church in any age was so filled with the spirit of the philosophy and theology of the Greeks, and whose mind was so closely akin to the mind of Greece. The Irish, like the Greek mind, has a natural love for speculation, is quick, subtle, and far-seeing, has greater power of abstraction and generalisation—that is to say, greater metaphysical power than the phlegmatic Anglo-Saxon. Scotus was a typical Celt, strongly developing all the intellectual peculiarities of the race. Moreover, he was familiar with Plato, and Aristotle, and the Greek Fathers, far more than with the Latin Fathers. He had, by close study, imbibed the spirit of Neo-Platonic philosophy from the writings of Dionysius, whom he not unnaturally regarded with the reverence due to an apostle, and so his whole soul was made by nature, study, and duty, intensely Greek. No doubt this was in itself one great source of his errors, both real and imaginary, because his critics seeing how he erred in some things where they could fathom his philosophy, imagined he erred in many more where they could scarcely guess at the meaning of his words. Hence William of Malmesbury very justly says of this work of Scotus, "De Divisione Naturae," that it was very useful for the solution of some difficult questions, "Si tamen ignoscatur ei in quibusdum, quibus a Latinorum tramite deviavit dum in Græcos acriter oculos intendit." His eyes were on the Greeks, and his spirit was with the Greeks, and so his teaching and his language in many respects seemed strange and

erroneous to the Latins It has been said that this book of Scotus was corrupted by his enemies the more easily to refute him, and by heretics the more easily to defend their own errors. But the supposition is quite gratuitous, unsupported by evidence, and unnecessary as an explanation of facts His doctrine in many points was attacked in his own time, his errors were palliated by friends and amplified by enemies. In later ages erratic sectaries, who vexed the Church of France in the beginning of the thirteenth century, appealed to the writings of Scotus in defence of their errors, and thus he was made a third time a scape-goat to carry the sins of others. We learn from the Chronicon of the monk Alberic, but from no other source, that in the year A.D. 1225, Honorius III. sent a Brief to the archbishops and bishops of France, in which he passed a severe judgment on the book of Scotus, entitled "Periphysis," for so the monk writes it. The Bishop of Paris had informed the Pope that this work was full of heretical depravity, and had been condemned by the Archbishop of Sens and his suffragans, that it was hid in many monasteries, where cloistered and scholastic men, thinking it a great thing to propound new opinions, spent much time in the study of the book. So the Pope ordered it to be carefully sought after, whenever it was found to be solemnly burned, and inflicted excommunication, *ipso facto*, on those who should knowingly presume to keep it in their possession. This severe prohibition was effective. The MS. copies were everywhere sought out, and nearly all destroyed, and no Catholic dared to publish it. But in the year A.D. 1681, Thomas Gale, of Oxford, printed it at that city. A few years later, in A.D. 1685, the old prohibition was renewed, and the work placed on the Index, where it still remains; although reprinted in Migne's Patrology.

Scotus also wrote several Greek and Latin poems on various subjects, thirteen of which, mostly Latin, are printed in Migne's edition of his works. Like most poems in foreign, and especially in dead languages, they are merely artificial flowers of poesy—stiff, scentless, and lifeless; but they serve to show the familiarity of the writer even in that rude age with the languages of Greece and Rome.

How Scotus ended his life we know not. William of Malmesbury, whom many other authorities blindly follow, states that it was a common report—*ut fertur*—that he was invited to England by King Alfred, that he lectured at Oxford, and afterwards retired to Malmesbury, where he was stabbed to death by his pupils with their pens, or perhaps

penknives (graphiis). His body was at first secretly buried in the Church of St. Laurence, where the crime was committed, but a bright light shining nightly on the spot warned the monks to transfer the holy remains of the martyred scholar to the left corner of the high altar in the great Church of Malmesbury, where they reposed in peace and honour until another abbot, Warinus de Lira, exhumed the bodies of Scotus and other saints, and buried them without honour or ceremony in an obscure corner of the Church of St. Michael. But his memory was long venerated as a holy martyr, and his feast celebrated on the 10th of November, on which day his name was inserted in the Antwerp edition of the *Roman Martyrology*, until Cardinal Baronius had it expunged. The story of William of Malmesbury is altogether improbable, and we have no contemporary evidence in its support. It arose in the beginning from confounding Scotus Erigena, or, as he was sometimes called, Joannes, with another John, abbot of Etheling, who was invited to England by Alfred, about the year A.D. 880. In the letter written by Anastasius in A.D. 875, he not obscurely speaks of John Scotus as already dead, at least he uses the past tense throughout. It is not improbable, therefore, that shortly after the Pope's letter in A.D. 862, Scotus may have deemed it prudent to retire from Paris, and, with an Irishman's love of home, returned to his native country, where he is said to have died in peace and holiness in the year A.D. 874.

It has been said, too, that he travelled to Athens, and visited various parts of the East, and that he was skilled in most of the Oriental languages. But these statements appear unfounded; they are certainly destitute of any reliable authority. What we know for certain is that Scotus was an Irishman, that he was the first scholar of his time, that he acquired his knowledge even of the Greek language, in the schools of his native country. He was loved and honoured by friends who knew him, and misjudged both during his life and after his death by many who knew neither the man himself nor his writings. His career was short and brilliant; comet-like he blazed for a while in the sunshine of royal favour; he appeared and disappeared in a strangely eccentric orbit. For ages he was lost to view, but in our own time is seen again shining in the literary heavens with even more than his ancient splendour. We are not inclined to extol him unduly, neither does it become us to judge him harshly; but whatever may be said of his errors, all must admit that John Scotus Erigena was a man of saintly life, a prodigy of

learning, and an honour to the country which gave him his name and his knowledge.

IV.—Foreign Scholars in Ireland.

We have already spoken of several foreign scholars, who came to our Irish Schools; but there are a few others to whom it is necessary to make more explicit reference.

The hill of Slane, on the banks of the Boyne, near Drogheda, is one of the historic sites of Ireland. It commands a noble prospect of all the swelling plains of Meath and Louth, bounded on the north by the distant Mourne Mountains rising from the sea, and on the south beyond the smoky pall of Dublin, by the many topped summits of the Wicklow Hills. There, close at hand on this same left bank of the river towards Drogheda are Brugh and Dowth and New Grange, the cemeteries of pre-historic kings; while just in front beyond the river is Rosnaree, where the great King Cormac sleeps with his face to the rising sun, the daily herald of his immortal hopes. Further off in the distance to the south and west, may be seen Royal Tara, and Skreen of Columcille, and Kells of the Crosses, and the towers of Trim and all the other storied ruins that once guarded the passes of the Boyne from Newtown of the Normans, by Bective, Navan, and Donore, whence fled the chicken-hearted James, down to the obelisk by yonder bridge that marks the spot where the gallant Schomberg fell.

It was on this hill of Slane that St. Patrick lit his Paschal fire for the first time in Erin, within view of King Laeghaire and his Druids from Tara. And it was here too that Erc, "the sweet spoken judge of Patrick," built his oratory and little cell, which in after ages grew to be a great monastery and a great college. There is now no trace of the oratory of St. Erc at Slane. The ivy-clad ruins that still remain on the hill seem to be of Norman origin, dating probably from the twelfth century. The history of the ancient monastery has likewise disappeared, almost as completely as its buildings. One interesting fact, however, is still preserved by local tradition,[1] and that tradition has been amply confirmed by the researches of scholars in our times. It is said that a king of France was educated long ago at the great College of Slane, but his name and date are forgotten. We are, however, enabled to supply these particulars. St. Sigebert III. was

[1] See Dean Cogan's *Diocese of Meath*, Vol. i., page 58.

king of the Austrasian Franks from A.D. 632 to 656. This pious king was more given to prayer than to warlike enterprise; and so Grimoald, Mayor of the Palace, became virtually ruler of Austrasia. When Sigebert died in A.D. 656, Grimoald, wishing to have the name as well as the power of a king, caused the late king's son, Dagobert, to be tonsured, and then sent Dido, Bishop of Poitiers, to carry off the boy secretly to Ireland, to be educated there as a monk in one of its famous monastic schools. Tradition tells us that the school was Slane, and that Dagobert spent eighteen or twenty years in its halls, and acquired during that long period all the learning of the Scots. Meanwhile Grimoald received the fitting reward of his treason. He was captured by Clovis of Neustria, and put to death with torture, not long after he had sent the young prince to Ireland. When Dagobert was grown to man's estate he returned home to Austrasia, and mounted his father's throne as Dagobert II., by which name the student of Slane College is known in French history.[1] It is obvious that Slane was selected, not because it was the most celebrated school at the time, but because it was in Meath, where the High-kings mostly dwelt; and it was only natural to bring the royal boy to some college near the royal court. It was through the agency of Wilfrid, Archbishop of York, that Dagobert was restored to his friends and his kingdom about the year A.D. 674, after the deposition and death of King Childeric II.

Another eminent saint and scholar of foreign origin, contemporary with Dagobert in Ireland, was Egbert of Northumbria. Bede gives a very interesting account of this eminent man.[2] He was sprung from the nobility of Northumbria, and appears to have been born in A.D. 639.

With another young noble named Ethelun, Egbert went over to Ireland, like the crowds of his countrymen, 'to pursue divine studies, and lead a continent life.' They sojourned in the monastery, called in Irish Rathmelsigi, which Bede's editor and translator[3] foolishly calls 'Melfont.' He meant Mellifont, near Drogheda; but there was no monastery at Mellifont for nearly five hundred years afterwards. As the same learned editor makes Columba's noble monastery of Dair-magh to be Derry, instead of Durrow, we need not

[1] See *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, Arts. 'Sigebert' and 'Dagobert,' and the authorities there cited.

[2] Book iii., chapters iv. and xxvii.

[3] See *Bohn's* Edition, page 163.

attach much importance to his notes on Bede concerning Irish matters. Colgan says that this monastery of Rathmelsigi was in Connaught; but he does not specify, and probably did not know, the exact locality. In the *Martyrology of Donegal*, we find reference to "Colman[1] Rath-Maoilsidhe" (at Dec. 14th), which is in all probability the monastery referred to by Colgan. This Colman is different from Colman of Innisboffin, whose festival day is the 8th of August. It is not improbable that his monastery was situated at the place called Rath-maoil, or Rath-Maoilcath, both of which were situated near Ballina, on the right bank of the Moy. Everything points to the fact that most of the young Northumbrian nobles and ceorls, who came to the West of Ireland in crowds at this period, landed in the estuary of the Moy, and then going southward, took up their abode, or founded their religious houses wherever they could obtain suitable accommodation. St. Gerald's Abbey of Mayo was not then established (in A.D. 664); and so Egbert and his companions put themselves under the guidance of St. Colman, or some of his successors, in this monastery of Rath-Maoilsidhe.

Just then the terrible Yellow Plague made its appearance in Ireland, and carried off one-half of its population. All the companions of Egbert and Ethelun were cut off by the plague; and now they themselves were attacked, and became grievously ill. Then Egbert, whilst he had yet a little strength remaining, rose up in the morning, and going out of the chamber of the sick, he sat down alone, and began to think of his past sins; and he asked God's pardon for them with many tears. He prayed, too, earnestly that God would not yet take him out of the world, but would give him time to atone by his good works for the sins of his youth. And if God deigned to hear his prayer, he vowed never to return again to his native Britain, but to live as a pilgrim in some strange land; and, moreover, to recite the Psalter daily, and to fast continuously for twenty-four hours once a week. When he returned to the sick chamber, Ethelun, his companion, was asleep; but presently awaking, he told Egbert that his prayer was heard by God; then he gently rebuked him, for he had hoped that together they would go into life everlasting. Next day Ethelun died; but Egbert recovered from his sore sickness, and lived to be ninety years of age, when he departed from this life.

[1] Was this the "Colman of the Britons" mentioned in the *Additions to Tirechan?* See Stokes' *Tripartite*, Vol. ii., page 341.

He was ordained a priest; "and his life," says Bede, "adorned the priesthood, for he lived in the practice of humility, meekness, continence, justice, and all other virtues." He loved the Irish greatly, and lived amongst them for fifty years (A.D. 664-715), preaching the Gospel, teaching in his monastery, reproving the bad, and encouraging the good by the bright example of his blameless life. He not only kept his vow, but he added to it, says Bede; for during the whole Lent he took but one meal in the day, and that was nothing but bread in limited quantity, and thin milk from which the cream had been skimmed off. Whatever he got from others—and he got much—he gave to the poor.

For many years he had been resolving in his mind to sail round Britain, and go to Germany to preach the Gospel to the pagan tribes who dwelt there, and who were kindred to his own nation of the Angles. But God had willed otherwise. There was in Egbert's monastery an old monk who had many years before been minister to Boisil, Abbot of Melrose, an Irish foundation in Scotland. Now one morning after matins, Boisil appeared to this aged monk, who at once recognised his old master, and commanded him to tell Egbert that it was God's will that he should give up his proposed journey to Germany, and go rather to instruct the Columbian monasteries in the right method of keeping Easter, and of tonsuring the head.

Egbert fearing that this vision might be a delusion, still continued his preparations for Germany, and did not obey the direction given by Boisil. Then that saint appeared a second time to his minister, and commanded him to make known to Egbert, in a more imperative way, what it was God willed him to do. "Let him go at once," he said, "to Columba's monastery of Hy, *because their ploughs do not go straight*, and he will bring them into the right way." Moreover, the ship in which he was preparing to set out for Germany was wrecked in a storm, and thrown upon the shore, leaving, however, his effects intact. Egbert, taking this as a further manifestation of the Divine will, gave up his project of going to Germany, and set sail for Iona. Wictbert, however, one of his associates in religion in Ireland, went in his stead, and for two years preached the Gospel in Friesland, but reaped no harvest of success amongst the pagans. So he returned once again to Ireland, and gave himself up to serve God during the rest of his life, as he was wont to do before his departure, in great purity and austerity; "so that if he could not be profitable to others by teaching

them the faith, he took care to be useful to his own beloved (Irish) people by the example of his virtues."

Now when this holy father and priest, Egbert, beloved of God, and worthy to be named with all honour, came to the monastery of Iona, he was honourably and joyfully received by the community. He was also a diligent teacher, and carried out his precepts by his example, so that he was willingly listened to by all the members of the community. The effect of his frequent instructions and pious exhortations, was that at length the community of Hy consented to give up the inveterate tradition of their ancestors in religion, and adopt the new discipline, which by this time had been received everywhere else throughout the Irish Church. Now surely, this was, as Bede observes, a wonderful dispensation of Providence, that these very monks of Iona, who were the first to preach the Gospel in Northumbria, should afterwards be persuaded by this Northumbrian priest to accept the correct discipline and true rule of spiritual life. And stranger still, it was on Easter Day, the 24th of April, A.D. 729, that this man of God went to his eternal rest; whereas, but for his exertions, that Easter festival would not have been duly celebrated on that day, but, in accordance with the unreformed system, would have been celebrated in that year towards the end of March, whilst the rest of the Church was observing the fast of Lent.

With Egbert also dwelt in the same monastery the cele- celebrated St. Chad, or Cedd, Bishop of Lichfield. Chad is justly regarded, on account of his learning and holiness, as one of the Fathers of the Anglo-Saxon Church. He was one of four brothers, like Egbert himself, of Northumbrian origin, two of whom became bishops, and two were holy priests. Chad was one of that crowd of Northumbrian nobles, who, in the days of Bishops Finan and Colman, flocked to Ireland for instruction in theology and religious discipline. Bede says expressly that he with the most reverend Father Egbert, when both were youths, led for a long time a monastic life together in Ireland—praying, observing continency, and meditating on the Holy Scriptures. Chad, however, returned after a time to his own country; but Egbert continued in Ireland until he set sail for Iona.

Chad was, as we have already seen, present at the Conference of Whitby in A.D. 664, and having been educated in Ireland, he naturally sympathised with Bishop Colman and the Irish party. He was subsequently appointed to the see of York, but still sympathising with the Irish party, he

was deposed through the influence of Wilfrid. Yet he was sometime after appointed to the See of Lichfield. He was a man of great holiness of life; but his episcopacy at Lichfield only continued for two years and a half. He died probably in A.D. 671 or 672, and was buried in St. Mary's Church; but his bones were afterwards translated to the present Cathedral of Lichfield.

A little later in the same seventh century, the celebrated St. Willibrord, afterwards Archbishop of Utrecht, was a students in our Irish schools, and most probably, we should say, at Mayo of the Saxons. His father Wilgils, was also of the English nobility, but after the birth of his son he retired from the world, and built himself a cell at the mouth of the Humber, where he led a life of the most austere virtue. Willibrord in his youth was trained in the great school of St. Wilfrid at York; but about the age of twenty, in order to finish his education, like most of his countrymen at the time, he passed over to Ireland. This much we know from Bede, who also adds that whilst yet only a priest in Ireland, he led therein the life of a pilgrim—forsaking his earthly country through love of his heavenly country. Willibrord also testified to Bishop Acca and Bishop Wilfrid, that once on a time, when he was in Ireland, the plague overtook a certain student of the Scottish, that is the Irish, race. This young man, though well skilled in literature, had been rather heedless about the welfare of his soul. When he fell sick he at once sent for Willibrord, and telling him how much he feared to die on account of his sins, he besought him, if he had any relics of the good King Oswald, to apply them for his benefit.

Then Willibrord said that he had a portion of the stake on which the pagans fixed the head of the martyred king; and "blessing some water he put into it a chip of the aforesaid oaken stake, and gave it to the sick man to drink. He presently found ease, and recovering from his sickness he lived a long time after; and being entirely converted to God in heart and actions, wherever he came, he spoke of the goodness of his merciful Creator, and the honour of his faithful servant."[1]

It was the holy Egbert, who sent Willibrord with twelve companions to preach the gospel to the Frisians. And shortly after two other priests of the English nation, who had long lived as pilgrims in Ireland, following their example,

[1] *Bede*, Book iii., c. 13.

went to preach in Saxony, where they gained the crown of martyrdom within a few years. This is not the place to narrate at length the apostolic labours of Willibrord and his associates—how he was consecrated by Pope Sergius in Rome, and was commissioned to preach to the Frisians; how completely he succeeded where others had failed; how he laboured there for fifty years in all—during thirty-six of which he was Archbishop of Utrecht. These things are told at length by Alcuin in his beautiful *Life of St. Willibrord*, which also describes the saintly end of the long and laborious career of this venerable servant of God.

It is surely a credit to our Irish schools to have trained up so many learned and apostolic men, like Egbert and Willibrord. It was in Ireland they were trained in divine studies, as Bede testifies; it was in Ireland they learned the continent and self-denying life of all true apostles; and it was from Ireland they went forth to preach the Gospel to the fierce pagan tribes of Germany, where so many of them were privileged to meet a martyr's death.

Another Irish student at this period was Agilbert, afterwards Bishop of Paris. He was, says Bede, a Frank by birth, who came from that country to Ireland, "and lived a long time there for the purpose of studying the Scriptures." Bede seems to imply that he was a bishop before he came to Ireland,[1] for he describes him as a 'Pontifex natione Gallus.' This shows in what high esteem our Irish schools must have been held at this period, when even bishops came from France to study divinity in their halls. Agilbert afterwards passed over to England, and for a time held the See of Dorchester or Winchester. He was present at the Conference of Whitby, and took the side of Wilfrid, but finally returning to his native country he was made Bishop of Paris. The year of his death is not known. It was probably about A.D. 680.

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[1] Agilbert may have been consecrated bishop in Ireland. The following are the words of Bede:—

"Venit in provinciam de Hibernia pontifex quidam nomine Agilberctus, natione quidem Gallus, sed tunc legendarum gratia Scripturarum in Hibernia non parvo tempore demoratus . . . cujus eruditionem atque industriam videns rex rogavit eum, accepta ibi (in Wessex) sede episcopali, suae genti manere pontificem."—*Haddan and Stubbs*, Vol. iii., p. 91.

CHAPTER XXIV.

GAEDHLIC SCHOOLS AND SCHOLARS OF ANCIENT ERIN.

"The Gaedhlic tongue! the Gaedhlic tongue! why should its voice be still,
When all its magic tones with old and golden glories thrill—
When, like an aged bard, it sings departed warriors' might—
When it was heard in kingly halls, where thronged the brave and bright;
When oft its glowing tales of war made dauntless hearts beat high—
When oft its tales of hapless love drew tears from beauty's eye?"

—*Anonymous.*

HITHERTO we have spoken chiefly of the monastic schools, and the clerical scholars of ancient Erin. We are not to assume, however, that the Gaedhlic tongue was not cultivated in those schools, and that the eminent saints of ancient Erin were not excellent Gaedhlic scholars. We know for certain that the contrary was the fact. Several of them, like Columcille, were eminent Gaedhlic poets; many of them, like St. Carthach of Lismore, even wrote their monastic Rules in Gaedhlic; and, of course, even scholars, like Adamnan, who wrote learned treatises in the Latin tongue, must have preached the Gospel, and taught the people in the vernacular language. St. Patrick himself, who was a Briton, found it necessary to do so, and, as far as we can judge, he must have been an accomplished speaker in the ancient Gaedhlic tongue.

Still the monastic schools were more given to the cultivation of the classical languages than to the study of the Gaedhlic; and when their great scholars wished to deal with theological or scientific subjects, they wrote in the Latin language. Even some of our Annalists, when they wished to give special prominence to their entries, wrote in the Latin rather than in the Gaedhlic.

At the same time, we are not to suppose that during this period there were no Gaedhlic schools in the sense in which we now speak of English as opposed to Classical schools—that is, academies in which the Gaedhlic language, and literature, and history were the subjects chiefly, if not

exclusively, taught. On the contrary, we have abundant evidence that there were several schools of this character, in which the vernacular language was cultivated with great success, and not merely the language, but also the history, the antiquities, the laws, and the literature of the nation.

We are even inclined to think that in Celtic Ireland the vernacular language was more carefully cultivated during this period, and that laymen generally had better opportunities of obtaining what would now be called a university education, than they had in any other country of western Europe. This statement is, in our opinion, capable of clear proof from existing monuments; but for the present we need not go beyond the admitted facts that both clerics and laymen from the Continent came to the schools of Erin in large numbers, to acquire the culture of our Celtic schools; whilst on the other hand, when our Irish scholars went abroad during the ninth and tenth centuries, they were at once entrusted with the highest offices in the Continental schools, and proved themselves to be, not only amongst the ablest theologians of the time, but also the first men of that age in Greek and Latin Literature. The history of men like Virgilius, and Dungal, and John Scotus Erigena, proves the truth of this statement beyond denial or controversy.

The Lives of the Saints furnish materials for the history of our monastic schools; but our lay scholars, having no such records of their lives and learning, are forgotten, except in so far as some treatise, or fragment of a treatise, of their composition may have survived the wreck of time.

We find, however, from references in the Brehon Laws, that lay Schools and lay Professors occupied a recognised and honourable position in the social polity of the time.

I.—Organization of the Gaedhlic Professional Schools.

In the Sequel, or Second Part, of the *Crith Gabhlach* the legal rights and social position of the Professors of the Liberal Arts are set down with a considerable degree of fulness and accuracy. We are aware that it has been said[1] that these, and some other portions of the *Crith Gabhlach* "are the fantastic production of an antiquarian lawyer of a strong ecclesiastical bias." It is hardly necessary to question the competency of this writer to pronounce such an opinion. He appears to have been wholly unacquainted with the Irish

[1] By A. G. Richey in the *Introduction*, for which he declares himself alone responsible. Vol. iv., c. vii.

language, and obviously has only a lawyer's knowledge of our ancient Annals. For those very things, regarding the orders, rights, and privileges of the Church, which he so coolly describes as the fantastic production of a lawyer with an ecclesiastical bias, are shown in every page of our Annals to be amongst the recognised institutions of the Celtic tribes in Erin. It is, in fact, quite clear that he admits only as authentic laws those which seem to harmonise with his own pre-conceived notions of ecclesiastical polity; but those which do not fit in with these pre-conceived views, he rejects as fantastic! Such is the critical faculty of some of those to whom the publication of the Brehon Laws has been entrusted.

In this Sequel to the *Crith Gabhlach*,[1] 'profession' is set down as one of the things which give social status in Erin. And, as in the Church, and amongst the land-owning classes, there were several grades, so there were also amongst the professional classes. These grades are set down as seven; but it is not easy for us to realise the degrees of gradation between them, since that state of society has totally passed away; as surely it would be difficult in similar circumstances to discriminate between the various grades in the learned professions that exist amongst ourselves to-day. It would not be easy for us to explain for the Maoris how those entitled to write after their names A.B., or M.A., or LL.D. differ amongst themselves; or in what the Q.C. is superior to the Stuff Gown; and the same difficulty will be found to exist in all the degrees, whether academical or professional, on which men set so much value at present.

In like manner, in ancient Erin, the 'seven grades of wisdom' are carefully distinguished by law, although it is not easy for us in every case to perceive the point of the distinction.

There was a High-professor (*rosaí*), and a simple Professor (*saí*); there was an *anruth* and a *sruth*, that is, a 'noble stream' and a 'stream,' which, in our opinion, have not been at all explained; there was an 'illustrator,' and an 'interrogator,' and a 'pupil'—or, as we should now call them, a grinder, and a tutor, and an undergraduate. The High-professor was also called an *ollamh* and a *saí litre*, that is in modern parlance a LL.D. (speaking of laymen), and a Doctor of Literature. The most important point is that the Ollave was entitled to sit at the king's table as an honoured

[1] Vol. iv., page 355.

guest. In point of knowledge he was qualified to answer all questions in the four great departments of learning—that is, in poetry, literature, history, and, like a LL.D., in canon and civil law.

He was entitled to bring four-and-twenty persons in his retinue, or peripatetic school; and neither he nor they could be denied food without incurring a severe penalty—one-seventh of his death-eric. One of his functions and rights was to be 'in the bosom of his disciples,' always imparting knowledge to them on all suitable occasions.

The *anruth*, or 'noble stream,' was only entitled to half this company, but in other respects he was supposed to be a junior Ollave or Fellow—in the number of his intellectual gifts, in the eloquence of his language, the greatness of his knowledge, and the nobility of his teaching—but he had not yet reached the 'pinnacle' of knowledge, like the full-blown Ollave.

We cannot now discuss at greater length the various other sub-divisions, both amongst masters and pupils, which were almost as numerous as in the Intermediate Schools and Royal University—all put together, including the Senators, Fellows, Teaching-Examiners, and Graduates.

The learned professions were, in like manner, carefully discriminated and sub-divided. Leaving out the Church, it seems that there were at this period three great lay professions—Poetry, Law, and History. Poetry (*filidecht*), generally gets precedence; and the Ollave-poet seems to have been at the very top of the learned professions. The 'bard' at this period is distinguished from the 'poet.' The former is described as a man "without lawful learning but his own intellect;"[1] that is a man who had from nature the gift of music and of song, but who was never regularly trained, and never graduated in the School of Poetry. Not so the *file* or poet. He was trained in all the mysteries of the various kinds of Gaedhlic verse; he could compose *extempore* or in writing; he knew the legal number of recognised poems and tales, and was pronounced qualified to recite them before kings and chieftains, whether in the banquet hall, or on the battle-march. He could eulogise, too, and satirise; and he and all his company were entitled both to fees and refection.

The course in poetry extended over 'twelve years of hard work;'[2] and besides the knowledge of the seven kinds of

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[1] Vol. iv., page 261. [2] See O'Curry. *Lectures*, page 240.

verse, in each of which the Ollave-poet was supposed to be able to compose extemporaneously, he was also required to know seven times fifty tales by heart for public recitation. These tales were of a wild and romantic character, but for that very reason were highly popular with all classes in ancient Erin. They included tales of Battles, Voyages, Cattle-spoils, Sieges, Sorrows, Slaughters, and so on, through the lost list of the legendary poems of Erin. Fortunately many of them still survive in manuscript, and a few have been published; which even in faulty translations are found to be exceedingly interesting and amusing. It was, doubtless, the popular and entertaining character of these romantic stories that placed the Ollave-poet at the head of the learned professions, even on an equality with kings and bishops in point of social dignity. There were seven grades or degrees in this great fraternity, from the *fochloc*, or scholar-poet, up to the great Ollave himself, who was the head of the school, or band of twenty-four that formed his train.

In like manner with the Brehons, there was an Ollave-Brehon who corresponded with a judge of the High Court in our own times; and then there were seven grades of inferior brehonship, descending from this high official to the raw law student, who was just beginning to take out his lectures and eat his dinners—for, in ancient, as in modern Erin, the lawyers made eating an essential part of their professional career. The fees of the Brehon were fixed by law, and to withhold them was a grave offence, for which a distress might be levied after an interval of three days.[1]

Whoever looks over, even in a cursory way, the four large volumes of the ancient Brehon code already published, will readily admit that to be an accomplished lawyer in ancient Erin required long and careful study under competent masters. At length the system grew so intricate and complicated that the Brehonship was confined to a few families, who transmitted from generation to generation the key to the interpretation both of the written and customary law. Every *righ* was entitled to have his own Brehon, who sat on stated days, generally in the open air, for the adjudication of all the causes arising in the tribe. The litigants might, of course, have their own advocates, but they were generally young Brehons of inferior degree belonging to the school of the chief Brehon. Amongst these legal families the MacEgans of Duniry in Galway, and Ormond in Tipperary,

[1] See *Senchus Mor*, p. 231.

became the most celebrated, so that members of that family were employed as judges by most of the kinglets beyond the Shannon.

The Historical Poets or Chroniclers seem to have constituted a separate professional class in Ireland during this period. O'Donnell, in a passage from the Irish Life of St. Columba, clearly defines their duties, and he must have known them well, for the O'Clerys, his own hereditary Chroniclers, were the most illustrious members of that profession that ever appeared in Erin. It was their duty to record—(*a*) the achievements, wars, and triumphs of the kings, princes, and chiefs; (*b*) to preserve the genealogies and define the rights of noble families; (*c*) to ascertain and set forth the limits and extent of the sub-kingdoms and territories ruled over by the princes and chiefs. There is no statement in the Brehon Code as to the duties of the Chronicler so definite as this, because the code supposes that these things were perfectly well known to all the Feni, from their own daily experience.

In the earlier periods of our history these important duties were discharged by the Bards; but by degrees it was found more convenient to confine them to a separate class, which afterwards, like the Brehons, came to be hereditary. As the *righ* was entitled to have his Bard and Brehon, so also he was entitled to have his Chronicler to discharge those duties to which we have referred above. Up to the eleventh century the Chronicles were written in verse, but after that period they began to be written in prose; and in many cases they are written both in prose and verse—the verse being nearly always the older form of the Chronicle.

Many of these Rhyming Chroniclers record merely the local history of their own chieftains; but in other cases the poet-historian took a wider scope, and gave a narrative not only of Irish history, but of universal history, in a brief way, down to the time of St. Patrick. Most of these Chroniclers were laymen, although several of the most distinguished amongst them were monks or priests in some of the great monastic schools.

It is quite clear from various references both in our Annals, and in the Brehon Code, that these three professions were kept quite distinct from the sixth to the twelfth century, that they were taught by different professors, and in different schools—these professors being generally but not always laymen.

Perhaps the earliest school of this character to which

we find any definite reference is the School of Tuaim Drecain. It is doubtless only one of many similar institutions that flourished in ancient Ireland, but as we have more accurate information, although incidental, concerning this establishment, we propose to give an account of this typical seminary in a separate section.

II.—The School of Tuaim Drecain.

St. Bricin's School of Tuaim Drecain is one of those mentioned in O'Curry's catalogue of celebrated schools in ancient Ireland. Moreover, although its founder and rector was a saint, whose festival is found marked in our martyrologies, it seems to have been a lay school of general literature, or, as we should say, a school of arts rather than of scripture or theology. It has besides produced one very distinguished Irish poet, some scraps of whose writings have come down to us, and therefore deserves a special notice at our hands.

Its founder is described in the *Martyrology of Donegal* (5th Sept.) as "Bricin of Tuaim Drecain, in Breifne of Connaught; but it is in Breifne Ui Raghallaigh it is, and he was of the race of Tadhg, son of Cian, son of Ollioll Olum." We find off-shoots of that race of Tadhg, son of Cian, in Bregia, and in Leyney, county Sligo, and elsewhere also, but to which branch of the race he belonged we are not informed.

Tuaim Drecain is now called Tomregan, which very nearly represents the pronunciation of the Irish word. It is a parish situated partly in three baronies and in the two counties of Cavan and Fermanagh, where the Woodford river, after draining several of the Leitrim lakes, flows on to join the river Erne, near Belturbet. The name signifies the tomb or grave of Drecan, some ancient warrior of whom nothing is known. It would, however, be interesting to know if there is any tumulus, or stone circle, in the parish which might help to explain the origin of the name. We know from the *Annals of the Four Masters* that Eochaidh Faebhar-glas, King of Ireland, from A.M. 3707 to 3727, fought a battle at Tuaim Drecon; and it was probably from the tumulus raised over Drecon on this occasion that the place got its name.

St. Bricin flourished during the early years of the seventh century, and, besides his other scholarly acquirements, it seems he had also some knowledge of medicine. Amongst his pupils the most celebrated was Cennfaeladh

the 'learned,' who in his youth had been a distinguished soldier, and took part in the great battle of Magh Rath (now Moira, co. Down), which was fought in the year A.D. 634. On that fatal field he received a very dangerous wound in the head, which was very near bringing his learned career to a premature close. He was, however, carried off from the battle field, and taken to Armagh, whence Senach the Primate, sent him to Tomregan, that he might have the benefit of the surgical skill of Bricin. The saint succeeded in healing the wound in the poet's head, although he had actually lost through the wound a small portion of the brain. This, however, in his case only added to his powers of memory and general intelligence, which goes to show that in some cases the skull is really too thick, and is the better of being trepanned.

At this time St. Bricin was the head of a great lay college at Tuaim Drecain, which consisted of three distinct schools carried on in different buildings, each having its own professor— one a School of the Brehon Law (Feinechas), another a School of Poetry and History, and the third a School of Classical Learning. These schools were, it appears for convenience sake, located at the junction of three streets, so that the pupils could, when necessary, easily pass from one to another.

Now, as soon as Cennfaeladh's wound began to heal, he employed his leisure in attending the lectures delivered in these various schools; and his head having been specially opened, he acquired, and what is more, he retained all the lectures delivered in the different schools, so that he afterwards opened a similar academy himself, and was able to instruct his pupils in all these various branches of knowledge. Poetry, it seems, he made the vehicle of communicating his information, which was quite the usual practice in those early days; and it had this one great advantage when books were so scarce—it greatly helped the memory, thus rendering it much easier for the master to teach, and for the pupil to learn.

Some of the treatises thus composed by Cennfaeladh for the use of his schools have fortunately survived the ravages of time. O'Curry thinks it probable that he was the author of an entire Grammatical Tract which has been preserved in the *Book of Leacan* and the *Book of Ballymote.*

This Tract, O'Curry tells us, is divided into four books. The authorship of the First Book is ascribed to Fenius Farsaidh, or Fenius the Antiquarian, an ancestor of Milesius, who may be regarded as a mythical personage, his name

being introduced to lend an air of antiquity to the work. The Second Book is, for a similar reason, ascribed to Amergin, a son of Milesius. The Third Book is attributed to Ferceirtne the Poet, who flourished in the time of Conor Mac Nessa; but the Fourth Book is clearly the work of Cennfaeladh himself, who, if he did not compose, certainly revised the entire treatise. Cennfaeladh died about A.D. 678; and O'Curry thinks the work was retouched after his death by later scholars—most likely by Cormac Mac Cullinan, or some of his pupils, towards the close of the ninth century.

This most interesting work is unfortunately hitherto unpublished, for few scholars are qualified to undertake the task of its publication. It not only deals with the principles of the Irish grammatical construction, but compares the Gaedhlic forms with the Latin of Priscian, Donatus, and other authors then familiar to Irish scholars; and even to some extent it compares the Irish inflections with those of the Greek and Hebrew languages.

Cennfaeladh also compiled a Law Tract which has been published by the Brehon Law Commissioners; and moreover, he was the author of several historical poems, fragments of which are still extant. His poem on the Migrations of Milesius from Scythia to Spain is complete; but we possess only a fragment of another equally interesting one on the Death of the Ultonian Heroes of the Red Branch. To him also O'Reilly attributes the authorship of the poem on the Teach Midhchuarta, which describes all the furniture and arrangements of the great Mead-Circling House of Tara. So that it may be truly said that few schools in Ireland produced a more distinguished scholar than Bricin's Academy at Tomregan in Breifne.[1]

III.—Cormac Mac Cullinan.

This is, perhaps, the most fitting place to give an account of the life and writings of the celebrated Cormac Mac Cullinan, the Bishop-king of Cashel. It is as a Gaedhlic scholar he is best known to posterity, although his high position, his valour, his piety, as well as his tragical end, have all combined to render his career singularly interesting to his fellow countrymen.

Cormac was born so early as the year A.D. 835, at the very time when almost all Ireland was writhing under the oppression of the Danes. He was sprung from the chief

[1] See O'Curry, Lecture iii., Vol. ii., p. 53.

royal family of Desmond, that is, the Eoghanachts of Cashel. It is well known that the entire province of Munster was divided between two sons of Ollioll Olum—Eoghan, the elder taking Desmond, and Cormac Cas the younger getting Thomond for his principality, with alternate right for both brothers to the sovereignty of the entire province. The Eugenian line, however, contrived to keep the sovereignty of the province for the most part in their family; and, as these kings lived generally at Cashel, the royal family of South Munster came to be called the Eoghanachts of Cashel.

No mention of Cormac is made in our Annals until he was called to the throne of Cashel by his fellow tribesmen, A.D. 900, when he had attained the mature age of sixty-five. The Four Masters, however, tell us that Sneidgius, the wise man of Disert-Diarmada, was his tutor; the latter died A.D. 885 (*recte* 888), as we find it in the more accurate *Chronicon Scotorum*. Disert-Diarmada, now called Castle-Dermott, is a place of ancient fame in the south of the County Kildare. It took its old name from a hermitage founded there by St. Diarmaid, otherwise called Ainle, because he was a 'fresh-complexioned youngling,' as the Gloss on Ængus tells us, when he retired to the hermitage that has borne his name ever since. The ancient round tower still standing, as well as the old stone cross, and the broken shaft of a second cross, show that the old abbey, on whose site the Protestant Church now stands, was a place of great ecclesiastical importance. The Crouched Friars were established there by Walter de Riddlesford, and Thomas, Lord of Offaley, founded a convent for Franciscans in the same place. It was called Castle-Dermott from the castle erected by de Riddlesford in the reign of King John. It was a place of much strength, surrounded by walls, and defended by this strong castle; and hence we find that two Parliaments of the Pale were held here—one in the reign of Edward IV., and the other in A.D. 1499. Its chief glory, however, will always be that it was there Cormac Mac Cullinan was educated, and there he was buried. It gave him knowledge, and when his brief and stormy reign was over, it gave him the rest of the grave.

It seems that during the ninth century at least, the abbots of Disert-Diarmada enjoyed quasi-episcopal jurisdiction. Some of them were certainly bishops; and, no doubt, had a territory which owned their spiritual sway. In A.D. 842, we are told that "Cumsudh, son of Derero and Maenach, son of Sadchadach, who were both bishops and anchorites, died in

one night at Disert-Diarmada." A.D. 895 died Muirghaes, Bishop and Abbot of Disert-Diarmada; and again in A.D. 1038, we hear of the death of a 'distinguished bishop' of Disert-Diarmada.

The learning of Cormac Mac Cullinan was, no doubt, acquired within the walls of this ancient monastic school. Sneidgius, the sage (*egnai*) of Disert-Diarmada, was his tutor, and from the acquirements of the pupil, it is not difficult to infer the learning of the master. We have now no means, however, of knowing how long Cormac remained at Disert-Diarmada.

He was certainly a bishop before he became King of Cashel, but it is difficult to say what See he was placed over, or whether he ever had charge of any See at all. We do not read in any of our Annalists that he was Bishop of Cashel before he became King of Munster; indeed it is very doubtful if he were ever Bishop of Cashel at all. There is no reference made to a Bishop of Cashel before this period, so far as we know, in any of our ancient authorities. It was the seat of the temporal royalty, but it had not yet become the seat of spiritual authority. The Four Masters say that Cormac was King and Bishop, but they do not say he was Bishop of Cashel. The *Annals of Ulster* call him King of Cashel, but do not call him 'bishop' at all. The *Chronicon Scotorum* describes him as "King of Cashel, a most excellent scribe, a bishop, and an anchorite;" but makes no reference to his See. Keating is, so far as we know, the first who calls Cormac, not Bishop, but Archbishop of Cashel. In fact down to the year A.D. 1101, Cashel was simply a royal dun, which gave its name to the kingdom of South Munster. There was up to that time no church or monastery at Cashel, of which we have any information. But in that year a remarkable event took place, thus recorded by the Four Masters: "A meeting of Leath Mogha was held at Caiseal by Muircheartach O'Briain with the chiefs of the laity, and O'Dunan, noble bishop and chief senior with the chiefs of the clergy; and on this occasion Muircheartach O'Briain made a grant, such as no king had ever made before, namely, he granted Caiseal of the kings to the religious, without any claim of laymen or clergymen upon it, but the religious of Ireland in general." Here we find at the beginning of the twelfth century, that for the first time in its history, Cashel was given up for religious purposes, and ceased to be the royal residence of the southern kings. We find down to that time frequent mention in our Annals of the kings

and royal heirs of Cashel, but of no Bishop of Cashel. Thenceforward, however, we hear of the Archbishops, but not of the kings or tanists of Cashel. The thing appears to have been brought about in the following way.

In consequence of the temporal sovereignty of Cashel, the prelates of Emly, in whose diocese it was situated, began to claim metropolitan jurisdiction over all Munster, especially when the O'Brian family began to claim the sovereignty of Ireland during the eleventh century. Hence we find that Domhnall Ua Heni is called in the *Chronicon Scotorum* 'Archbishop of the men of Munster' (Anno 1094). Celsus, the Primate, was anxious to oblige the King of Munster, and, moreover, O'Dunan, successor of O'Heni (from A.D. 1094-1118), was the personal friend and admirer of Celsus. Hence St. Bernard tells us that Celsus consented to establish *de novo* a second metropolitan See in Ireland, subject, however, to the primatial See of Armagh. O'Dunan was the first who *de jure*, if it can be so called, enjoyed the metropolitan dignity in the South of Ireland; and we know that St. Malachy was anxious to obtain the pall for the new See of Cashel, as well as for his own primatial See of Armagh. And it was doubtless to provide a sufficient endowment and a becoming See for the new metropolitan that the king made over his own royal fortress, and a part of his mensal estates for that purpose.

King Murtogh O'Brian was succeeded in the year A.D. 1119 by Cormac Mac Carthy, a pious and munificent prince. He did not reside at Cashel, for it was now church property; and it is highly probable the 'noble senior and chief bishop of Munster' had already established his episcopal palace on the famous Rock. He was not yet, however, formally recognised as archbishop, for he was present at the Synod of Fiadh Mic Ænghusa, which, according to the Four Masters, was held in A.D. 1111, and he is there simply described as 'noble senior of Erin,' and as *Bishop* of Munster, or as others have it, Bishop of Cashel. He was the first prelate who bore that title *de jure*, and he was a man who in every respect seems to have been worthy of the eminent dignity to which he was now elevated. He died at Clonard in the year A.D. 1117, according to the Four Masters, who describe him as "the head of the clergy in Ireland (in merit), and lord of the alms deeds of the West of Europe."

If, as the Four Masters say, his death took place in A.D. 1117, it was just two years before the death of his friend Murtogh O'Brian, "King of Munster and of Ireland,"

the munificent prince who gave over Cashel for religious purposes. Cormac, his successor, was not to be outdone in generosity, so we find that in A.D. 1127 he began to build the beautiful church on the Rock of Cashel, which has ever since been known as Cormac's Chapel. It is sometimes ascribed to Cormac Mac Cullinan, but Petrie conclusively shows that it was begun about A.D. 1127 by Cormac Mac Carthy, and consecrated seven years later in A.D. 1134, as all our annalists declare.

It is a singular fact, too, that Cormac Mac Carthy, shortly after the chapel on the Rock was begun, was driven from his throne by Turlough O'Conor, and was compelled to take refuge at Lismore, and there also "took the staff-bachall"—or crozier[1]—and was honoured with the counsels and friendship of St. Malachy. Hence he is called a bishop-king by a contemporary writer, Maelbrighte, in his copy of the Gospel now preserved in the British Museum. The Four Masters also referring to his murder in A.D. 1138, describe him as Lord of Desmond, and Bishop-king of Ireland; and add, that he was treacherously slain by Turlough, son of Diarmaid O'Brian, a grandson of the previous king. Our own opinion therefore is, that O'Dunan, the noble senior, was the first Bishop of Cashel, that it was Murtough O'Brian gave him his See-lands, and that it was Cormac Mac Carthy, himself a King-bishop, who built the beautiful chapel on the Rock, rather, however, as an episcopal oratory, than as a cathedral properly so called.

Now to return to Cormac Mac Cullinan. He became King of Munster in the year A.D. 900, when, as the *Annals of Ulster* tell us, there was a 'change of kings' at Cashel, viz.: Cormac Mac Cullinan in the place of Cenngegain, that is Finnguine—the former term was, it seems, a nick-name of the previous king, who became unpopular and was deposed by the tribesmen. Next year he was murdered, but it was by his own kinsmen.

There is no doubt that Cormac was, as we have said, a bishop at this period. He was not Bishop of Emly, for the See was then filled. Neither was he Bishop of Lismore, as some writers have asserted, for his namesake, the Bishop of Lismore, lived until A.D. 1119. It is not necessary, indeed, to assume that he had any See. Hitherto he seems to have been a man of studious habits, as he certainly was a man of great learning. Being a member of the royal family of

[1] *Annals of Innisfallen*, anno 1127.

Munster, it would, so to speak, be the right thing to make him a bishop; but, in all probability, he spent most of his time in retirement at Disert-Diarmada, and was no doubt reluctantly called to the throne, as next in blood, by the revolution which deposed his predecessor.

All our annalists agree in representing Cormac as both a pious and learned prince; but we cannot call him either a great king or a great saint. That he was a just man according to the ordinary standard, he gave proof soon after his accession to the throne of Munster. The old rule of alternate succession between the Eugenian and Dalcassian lines had, as the learned Cormac was well aware, been scandalously violated. He resolved, so far as he could, that justice should be done when his reign would come to an end. Calling around him the chiefs both of Desmond and Thomond, he reminded them of the ancient rule of alternate succession, and confessing that the Eugenian line hitherto had enjoyed more than they were entitled to of the sovereign power, he besought the princes of his own house to consent to the succession of a Dalcassian prince to the throne of Munster. The princes of Desmond listened in respectful silence, and pretended to assent to the proposed arrangement, but afterwards declined to carry it out.

The seven years' reign of Cormac was full of stirring events. The first or second year of his reign was marked by "the expulsion of the Gentiles from Ireland, *i.e.*, from the fortress of Ath-Cliath," as the *Annals of Ulster* express it. They had, for some years, been losing ground on the eastern coasts, but at this period met with such a crushing disaster from Cearbhall, King of Leinster, that all the foreigners fled from Dublin, half-dead with terror, having left most of their ships behind them. It was the beginning of the 'forty years' rest,' which poor Ireland then enjoyed from their perpetual incursions. No doubt colonies of Danes still remained in the great sea-port towns, which they had built; but they were too much broken down by defeat to risk any new enterprises, and gladly confined themselves within their walls, spending their time rather in trade and commerce than, as hitherto, in war and rapine.

No sooner, however, did the native princes once more breathe freely, than they turned their arms against each other. Flann Sionna, son of Maelsechnaill, was then King of Ireland. He had already reigned more than twenty years as Ard-righ; and what is more wonderful still, he was destined to reign sixteen years more, and, strangest of all, to die

in his bed. He was a restless and ambitious prince, and seems to have inherited all the ancestral jealousy of the South of Ireland. In A.D. 904 he made a wanton raid into Ossory. Next year he led a hosting against Munster, and in conjunction with Cearbhall, King of Leinster, he plundered all the Golden Vale, from Gowran to Limerick. The men of Munster were now fairly roused, and even the Bishop-king was put upon his mettle. He levied a great army, and marched northwards to meet the troops of Flann and his allies in a fair fight. The rival hosts met on the same field of Magh Lena, which had witnessed the great battle between Conn the Hundred Fighter, and Eoghan Mor. Once more it was North and South arrayed against each other in fratricidal strife, whilst Danish colonies still held all the ports of the kingdom. Of old the North was victorious at Magh Lena; but now fortune favoured the men of Munster. Flann and his allies were completely defeated, and driven off the field. Not content with this victory, the King-bishop crossed the Shannon, and marching into the very heart of Connaught defeated and plundered the Connacians, who were allies of Flann. The hostages of the western provinces were carried off in triumph, and the fleets of Munster sailing up from Killaloe plundered the islands of Lough Ree.

So far no blame can be thrown on the King-bishop. He had merely defended his own territories, and chastised the insolence of an aggressive foe. But the victors were now grown wanton from success, and resolved to carry their triumphant arms into Leinster, as they had already done into Connaught. The pretext for this wanton invasion was the recovery of the old Borrumean tribute, which, it was alleged, the Leinster men had not paid for 200 years, and which the chiefs of Munster were now determined to exact. Cormac was himself entirely opposed to this unjust war. He felt, no doubt, that this alleged non-payment of the tribute was merely a pretext for a war of conquest. But his subjects were full of confidence from previous success; and, moreover, he was urged on to battle by his evil genius, Flaithbeartach, abbot of Inniscathy, a member of the royal house of Munster, and subsequently King of Cashel.

This restless ecclesiastic was the real author of all the evils that followed. He seems to have been a headstrong and impetuous man, fond of strife and prodigal of blood.

Cormac's greatest fault was weakly yielding against his own better judgment to the counsels of this evil adviser, who urged him to prosecute a war which Cormac in his own

conscience believed to be unjust. The Leinster King had sent an embassy to Cormac offering to submit the questions at issue to the decision of a friendly conference—meantime asking a cessation from arms, and offering to give as a hostage the abbot of Cormac's own monastery of Disert-Diarmada. Cormac was willing to accept these terms; but the abbot of Inniscathy spurned them and declared he would alone fight the Leinster men. "Then," said Cormac, "I will not desert you, but I feel the issue of this battle will be fatal to me and mine." Thereupon he made his will, leaving rich gifts in gold and vestments to many churches, and desiring that his body should be buried, if possible, at Cloyne; if not, in Disert-Diarmada, where he was educated, and had spent so many quiet and happy years before he was called to bear the burden of a crown.

The battle was fought at Ballaghmoon, close to the ancient Campus Albus, where the great Synod was held in A.D. 630 with reference to the Paschal question. On this historic field the old quarrel of North against South was once more to be fought out. Flann, the King of Erin, and Cathal, son of Conor, King of Connaught, came to aid the King of Leinster with all their forces. On the other side were, besides Cormac and his chiefs, Ceallach, King of Ossory who, like Cormac himself, had suffered much from Flann's previous incursions, and other subordinate kings. From the first the tide of battle turned against the South. The gallant chieftains of Leath-Mogha would not desert their king, but they had no stomach for the fight. Ceallach of Ossory fled ingloriously from the field, and it is said that one Munster prince, a friend of the king, turned his horse's head from the foe, crying out bitterly, "It is a battle brought on by clerics —let the clerics fight it out." Cormac's horse, it is said, slipped in the blood pools, and fell upon his rider, who was thereupon seized and beheaded by a soldier of the North, on a stone which is still shown at Ballaghmoon. The nobles of the South fell thick around him, and the White Field was made red with the blood of the men of Munster. Amongst the slain were several abbots and other ecclesiastics who had followed the King-bishop to the field, but Flaherty, abbot of Inniscathy, the author of all the mischief, succeeded in effecting his escape.

The head of Cormac, after the battle, was carried by some soldiers to King Flann, but he rebuked them for their brutality, and ordered the body of his fallen foe to be sought for on the field of battle, and buried with the

head at Disert-Diarmada, which was not far from the fatal field.[1]

IV.—Writings of Cormac Mac Cullinan.

Cormac Mac Cullinan is described by the Four Masters "as a king, a bishop, an anchorite, a scribe, and profoundly learned in the Scotic tongue." The *Martyrology of Donegal* adds that although he had been married to the celebrated Gormlaith, daughter of Flann, his conqueror, he had always lived a perfect virgin, sleeping covered only with his thin tunic, and frequently immersed in cold water whilst chanting his psaltery. We, however, are more concerned with the king's writings than with his penances. Enough of his works still remain to prove the truth of the Masters' statement, that he was profoundly versed in the Scotic tongue, and we may add, not only in the language, but in the laws, the literature, the history, and the antiquities of his native country.

Cormac's *Glossary* is a work that is now well known to Irish scholars, thanks to the diligent labour of John O'Donovan and of Dr. Whitley Stokes, by whom it was translated and published in 1868. The book is now a rare and dear one, but invaluable for a student of the Celtic language and literature. It contains quotations from Latin authors, from Irish chronicles, and from the poems of our native bards and ollaves. There are also numerous references to the laws, romances, druidism, and mythology of ancient Erin. From another point of view the work is interesting, not so much for its philological learning, as because it shows the extent and variety of the scholarship, cultivated in our Irish Schools during the ninth century. As O'Curry says—"The author (of the Glossary) traces a great many of the words, either by derivation from, or comparison with, the Hebrew, the Greek, the Latin, the British, and (as he calls it) the Northmantic language, and it contains at least one Pictish word—*Cartait* —almost the only word of the Pictish language that we possess."[2] There is no work in any living European language that gives such evident proof of high culture in the ninth century as this most interesting monument of Celtic learning.

A second great work that has been usually attributed to Cormac is the *Psalter of Caiseal.* O'Donovan in his learned Introduction to the *Book of Rights* explains, we think, very satisfactorily the conflicting statements that have been made

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[1] Keating. [2] See *Lectures on MS. Materials.*

by Irish scholars with reference to this famous compilation. Colgan and Keating, two eminent authorities, both ascribe to Cormac Mac Cullinan the composition of that noble work, "which," says Colgan, "has always been held in the highest estimation." On the other hand, Connell Macgeoghegan, the translator of the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, ascribes it to Brian Boru, and that, too, in the most formal language. Stranger still, Colgan himself, in another passage attributes the famous Chronicle called the *Psalter of Caiseal* to St. Benignus, the favourite disciple of St. Patrick; but he cautiously adds that Benignus began its composition—inchoavit et composuit—which can be well reconciled with what he says of Cormac Mac Cullinan's share in the work. In a word, Benignus began it, and made it suitable to his own time; Cormac enlarged and perfected it, making all the necessary changes in point of language and matter, which the lapse of 350 years imperatively demanded; and finally, in the time of King Brian Boru it may, as Macgeoghegan asserts, have been still further corrected and enlarged to suit the needs of the time, and then formally approved of by that monarch, as well as by his bishops and his nobles.

St. Benignus, though born in Meath, was of Munster origin. St. Patrick sent him to preach especially in those districts which he did not himself visit. Hence Benignus, we are told, went through Kerry and Corcomroe in his missionary labours; but particularly devoted himself to South-western Connaught, and built his chief church at Kilbannon, near Tuam. He also specially blessed that province, the natives of which still affectionately revere the memory of the gentle saint with the sweet voice and winning gracious ways.

Now, when the Munstermen heard of the preference and the blessings which Benignus gave to Galway, they were jealous, and complained that he slighted his own kindred. So to please them, Benignus went down to Caiseal, and remained there from Shrovetide to Easter, composing in his own sweet numbers a learned book, which would immortalise the province of his kinsmen, and be useful, moreover, both to her princes and to her people.

Such was the beginning of the *Psalter of Caiseal*, the great Domesday Book of the South, written in verse, and recording the sub-divisions of the kingdom, the rights and privileges of its various sub-kings, the gifts they were entitled to receive from the King of Caiseal, the boundaries of their territories, and so forth. A portion of this primitive

Psalter of Caiseal appears to have been embodied in the existing work, the authorship of which, although not in its present form, has been rightly attributed to the same St. Benignus.

Cormac Mac Cullinan in his own day undertook to re-edit this *Psalter of Caiseal*, and no man was better qualified for the purpose, both by his office and by his learning. In the accomplishing of his task he was assisted by his secretary, Selbach, the Sage, a Munster poet, whom Colgan describes as a man of singular piety and learning,[1] and also by Ængus, another sage, of whom nothing else is known. Several poems have been likewise attributed to Cormac, but their authenticity is very doubtful.

Colgan, Keating, and Sir James Ware all speak of the *Psalter of Caiseal* as extant in their own time; but it has since unhappily disappeared, although a very considerable fragment is contained in a MS. now in the Bodleian Library of Oxford. That MS. was, O'Donovan tells us, transcribed in A.D. 1453 for Mac Richard Butler, by Shane O'Cleary, doubtless a member of the famous antiquarian family of that name. It contains several ancient poems and other treatises which undoubtedly formed part of the *Psalter of Caiseal* as compiled by King Cormac.

Besides his share in the composition of the *Psalter of Caiseal*, Selbach, Cormac's learned secretary, is also said to have been the author of a work well known to Irish scholars as the *Naoimh-Senchus*, or poetical history of the saints of Erin. It is one of the authorities which Michael O'Clery constantly quotes in the *Martyrology of Donegal;* and Colgan expressly attributes its authorship to Selbach the Sage, or, as he calls him in Latin, Selvacius, and he frequently cites that work under his name.[2] The *Naoimh-Senchus* has also, but with less probability, been attributed to Ængus Ceile De, of whom we have already spoken.

There is an excellent copy of this ancient poem in the *Book of Leacan*;[3] there was another copy in the Burgundian Library of Brussels, which is, we believe, now in the Franciscan Convent, Merchants' Quay, Dublin.

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[1] *Acta SS.*, page 5. [2] See *Acta SS.*, page 5, n. x. [3] Fol. 58, b. a.

CHAPTER XXIV—(*continued*).

OTHER DISTINGUISHED SCHOLARS OF OUR GAEDHLIC SCHOOLS.

I.—Gaedhlic Scholars of the Sixth and Seventh Centuries.

"I'd rather turn one simple verse
True to the Gaelic ear,
Than classic odes I might rehearse
With Senates list'ning near."

—*M'Gee.*

Besides Cennfaeladh and Cormac Mac Cullinan, there were from the sixth to the seventh century at least twelve or thirteen other Gaedhlic writers, whose names cannot be passed over without some notice in a work like this. Our account of these writers, however, must necessarily be very brief, for in many cases little or nothing is known of the history of their lives, and to a great extent their writings are still unpublished. O'Curry[1] and O'Reilly[2] are the two principal authorities in this part of our subject.

The first on O'Curry's list is Amergin Mac Awley (Amalgaidh), the author of the celebrated work known as the *Dinnsenchus*. This ancient and highly interesting topographical poem was, it is said, compiled at Tara, so early as the year A.D. 550, that is, during the reign of Diarmaid Mac Cearbhaill, but it has certainly received some additions from later hands.

Amergin himself is described as chief poet of that monarch; but according to O'Reilly, he must not be confounded with another Amergin Mac Awley, who flourished towards the end of the seventh century, and was the author of some law tracts, copies of which are still extant in the library of Trinity College. The *Dinnsenchus* has been recently published in *fac simile* by Professor Atkinson of Trinity College. The work is specially interesting and valuable on account of the incidental historical references,

[1] *Manuscript Materials*, Lecture iii., page 53, and *Manners and Customs*, Vol. ii., pages 90-178.

[2] *Irish Writers*, page xlvii. to page lxxxv.

which it contains, and the topographical information which it supplies. The stories themselves, though in many instances far-fetched and improbable, are not without their value in illustrating the habits and thoughts of our Celtic ancestors. Copies of this ancient tract are found in the *Book of Leinster*, the *Book of Ballymote*, and there is also an imperfect copy in the *Book of Leacan*, which shows the value that was set upon it by our ancient scholars The published *fac simile* copy is taken from the *Book of Leinster*.

Of Dallan Forgaill, who flourished towards the end of the sixth century, we have already spoken in connection with the Columbian Schools. Besides the *Amhra Cholumchille*, which is still extant, Dallan also composed an *Amhra*, or Elegy, on the death of St. Senan, or Senanus, of Scattery Island, in the estuary of the Shannon. He was recognised during his life as chief poet of all Erin, and he appears to have been on terms of friendly intimacy with Columcille. His death is said to have taken place in A.D. 598, shortly after that of Columcille himself.

Senchan Torpeist, then a young poet of known talents, was called upon to pronounce the usual bardic elegy on the death of the Chief Poet of Erin, and acquitted himself so creditably that he was unanimously chosen to take the vacant chair of Dallan Forgaill.[1] He was not insensible to the responsibilities of his high office; and hence, according to the account in the *Book of Leinster*, shortly after his acceptance of the post of chief poet, he called a meeting of all the *Files* of Erin in order that they might take measures to recover the lost work known as the *Cuilmenn*, and which, it appears, contained the only complete copy of the celebrated historical tale known as the *Tain bo Chuailgne*. How it was recovered is told in prose by O'Curry, and by Ferguson[2] in a poem of marvellous imaginative power, which might have been fitly pronounced, if written in Gaedhlic, by Senchan himself. Senchan flourished during the first half of the seventh century, and though his travelling school was a large one, he appears to have always found a welcome in the court of the King Guaire the Hospitable, who dwelt at Durlus, near Gort, in the county Galway. O'Reilly says that one of Senchan's poems, in which he celebrates the victories of Fergus Mac Roy, is still extant in the *Book of Leacan*.

[1] See O'Curry, page 29.

[2] The "Tain-Quest" in the *Lays of the Western Gael*.

II.—Gaedhlic Scholars of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries.

The ninth was more remarkable than the eighth century for Gaedhlic scholars of distinction. Of these one of the most celebrated was Maelmura of Fathan, called also Maelmura of Othan, for it is the same name when the letter *F* is aspirated and omitted as silent in the pronunciation. Maelmura merely means servant of Mura, the patron saint of Fathan. The parish of Fahan, which takes its name from St. Mura's ancient monastery near the village, is situated on the eastern shore of Lough Swilly, under the shadow of Slieve Snaght, the loftiest mountain of Inishowen. The death of Maelmura is noticed by the Four Masters, A.D. 884, and he is described as "a truly intelligent poet, and erudite historian in the Scotic language." The Masters also quote a *rann*, which declares that—

"There trod not the charming earth, there never flourished at affluent Tara,
The great and fertile Erin never produced a man like the mild fine Maelmura;
There sipped not death without sorrow, there mixed not a nobler face with the dead;
The habitable earth did not close over a historian more illustrious."

These testimonies are extracted from the *Leabhar Gabhala* of the O'Clerys, and sufficiently show the estimation in which Maelmura was held by our ancient Celtic scholars.

There is a poem published in the Irish *Nennius*,[1] which is attributed to Maelmura, and which really appears to be a composition of very considerable merit. The language is very striking, and the Gaedhlic original has a stately rhythm, as well as much vigour both of thought and language. It contains 335 lines, and purports to give poetical account of the origin of the Gaedhil, "men of high renown in stiff battles, whom the mighty stream of Ocean wafted hither to Erin." These epithets are quite Homeric, and are not lavished with the prodigality too common to our Irish bards, but employed with discriminating intelligence to lend a poetic vigour to the historical narration. There is another poem of Maelmura quoted by O'Reilly in praise of Tuathal Techtmar, whom he describes with similar vigour as a flowing ocean, in strength a lion, a wily serpent, and a wounding warrior.

In another poem he gives a catalogue of all the monarchs,

[1] Page 221.

of Erin from this Tuathal to Flann Sionna, the reigning king in his own time. It is highly probable that Maelmura was educated at the monastic School of Fahan, which from its foundation by St. Mura seems to have been a very celebrated establishment. The founder's Book and Bell were long treasured as precious relics in Inishowen.

Flann Mac Lonan was another celebrated historical poet, who flourished during the latter half of the ninth century. He appears to have been a native of South Connaught, and held the high office of Chief Poet of Erin during the earlier years of the reign of Flann Sionna. He is described as Flann O'Guaire in the *Annals of Ulster;* and the Genealogies of the Hy-Fiachrach represent him as ninth in descent from Guaire Aidhne, the celebrated king of the Southern Hy-Fiachrach, who flourished during the first half of the seventh century. It was from the same stock that the O'Clerys derived their descent, so that a love of poetry and history seems to have been hereditary in that tribe. It is evident also from the writings of Flann that he was patronised by Lorcan, king of Thomond, the grandfather of Brian Boru, and also by his son, Cinnedigh, the father of the hero of Clontarf. This King-poet, as he is called, met with an untimely end. He was assassinated by the Ui Fothaith at Loch-Dachaech in Desmond. Loch-Dachaech, the Lake of the two Blind Men, appears to be a part of the estuary of Waterford Harbour;[1] but what motive can have instigated the sons of Corrbuidhe to murder the harmless poet does not appear. He is described by the Four Masters as the Virgil of the race of Scota—the Milesian Irish—Chief Poet of the Gaedhil, and the best poet that was in Ireland in his time. The *Annals of Ulster* give the true date of his death at A.D. 895, where they record how "Flann, son of Lonan O'Guaire, was slain by the Desi of Munster."

Copies of three poems written by Flann still remain in manuscript. The first is a poem of eighty-eight verses, celebrating a great victory, which Lorcan of Kincora gained over Flann Sionna, the King of Erin. The second also, containing forty-eight verses, celebrates the warlike exploits of the same hero, and the third describes his royal residence of Kincora so rich in wealth, and harvest stores, and so beautifully situated on the Shannon just where Lough Derg contracts its waters to force a passage through the hills of Ara to the sea.

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[1] O'Donovan's *Four Masters*, A.D. 891—note.

The two most distinguished poet-historians of the tenth century were Cinaeth O'Hartigan and Eochaidh O'Flinn. Cinaeth is described by Tighernach as the chief of the learned men of Leath Cuinn. He was also Chief Poet of Erin, and was the son of Cernach the Haughty,[1] who was grandson of Aedh Slaine, High King of Tara. Sprung from the royal race of the Southern Hy-Niall, it was only natural that Cinaeth should devote his talents to celebrate the ancient glories of the then deserted Tara, and of the heroes and heroines who once thronged its waste and silent halls. These poems are preserved in the *Dinnsenchus*, and are especially valuable for the information they contain with reference to Tara and the reign of Cormac Mac Art. He also gives an account of the origin of Aicill, and of the Book which takes its name from the hill, and has been published in the third volume of the Brehon Law series.[2]

Eochaid O'Flinn was a still more celebrated poet-historian, and it is quite evident from the care that was taken to preserve his numerous compositions that his works were very highly valued by all our ancient Celtic scholars. We find copies of his poems in the collections at all the great schools, and preserved by our greatest scholars. They are to be found in the *Dinnsenchus*, the *Book of Invasions*, the *Book of Leacan*, the *Book of Ballymote*, the *Book of Glendaloch*, as well as in several other compilations and manuscripts. One of the most important of these is a chronological poem contained both in the *Book of Leinster* and the *Book of Leacan*, in which the writer gives a list of the Ulster Kings from Cimbaoth to Fergus Fogha. Tighernach recognises the historical authority of this poem, which he follows in his own great work, and which, so far as it goes, seems to have been his chief source of information both for his facts and his dates, at least as regards the kings of Emania.[3] In another poem he gives an interesting account of the invasion of Ireland by Partholanus, which has been copied into the *Book of Invasions* by the O'Clerys.

Keating, too, borrows largely from the poems of O'Flinn, of which a very full list may be seen in O'Reilly's *Writers*,[4] but which it is unnecessary for us to reproduce here. We must not suppose that O'Flinn and his contemporaries drew largely on their imagination for the contents of those poems.

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[1] *Annals of Ulster*, A.D. 974 and 663
[2] See page 24 of this present work.
[3] See O'Curry's *Lectures*, p. 521.
[4] See O'Reilly, page lxiv.

They did nothing of the kind. They simply put in form the bardic traditions that were handed down in writing with the greatest care from time immemorial. If they had dared to invent anything new to their learned contemporaries, they would at once have been dismissed from the office of Chroniclers of Erin, and would besides have been severely punished. It is evident, too, that they had earlier documents which they made use of in the composition of their own poems, but which were all unfortunately lost during the Danish invasions. There was, however, always a regular succession of these poets whose duty it was to get by rote the historical traditions of their predecessors, which were thus preserved for posterity.

III.—Gaedhlic Scholars of the Eleventh Century.

Mac Liag, Secretary of Brian Boru, held that office during the reign of Brian in the kingdom of Thomond, and his extant work—*The Wars of the Gaedhill with the Gaill*—shows how thoroughly and conscientiously he discharged his official duties. It was one of the very earliest compositions of this character written in prose; but when he wishes to be particularly eloquent and impressive, and rise to the dignity of some great theme, he has recourse to poetry. To record the events of his own time in Thomond was not, however, his only duty and his only task, although it was undoubtedly his primary work, for the vigorous and warlike Brian kept his hands as a contemporary chronicler pretty full of work. His 'Lament' for Brian after the battle of Clontarf is one of the most beautiful and pathetic poems to be found in any language. Even Clarence Mangan could not reproduce all the touching pathos of the original.

"Oh, where, Kincora! is Brian the Great?
And where is the beauty that once was thine?
Oh, where are the princes and nobles that sate
At the feast in thy halls and drank the red wine?

"They are gone, those heroes of royal birth,
Who plundered no churches, and broke no trust,
'Tis weary for me to be living on earth,
When they, oh, Kincora, lie low in the dust.

"I am Mac Liag, and my home is on the Lake;
Thither often to that palace whose beauty is fled,
Came Brian to ask me, and I went for his sake,
Oh, my grief that I should live and Brian be dead."

Neither Colgan, Keating, nor the Four Masters expressly name Mac Liag as the author of the *Wars of the Gaedhill with the Gaill*.[1] Dr. Todd, the editor of that work in the Rolls Series, declares that Dr. O'Connor had no sufficient authority to justify him in attributing the work to Mac Liag, and declines to do so himself, although he admits that the work was originally compiled by one, who was either an eye-witness of the battle of Clontarf, or who had certainly derived his information from those who were eye-witnesses. Our own opinion is that although there is no direct evidence to prove that the book was written by Mac Liag, the circumstantial evidence, to which we cannot now refer at length, is entirely in favour of that supposition.

This work is exceedingly valuable as the trustworthy record of a contemporary writer during one of the most important epochs of Irish history, and its careful perusal will be found to throw much light on the history of that period. The author is much too fond of indulging in high-flown descriptions, and of unduly multiplying bombastic compounds. But, on the other hand, notwithstanding this wordiness, he frequently writes in a spirit of genuine eloquence, as for instance when he describes the Danish oppression in Ireland, and "the excess of their thirst and hunger for the brave, fruitful, nobly-inhabited, cataractful rivers and bays, and for the pure, smooth-plained, sweet-grassy land of Erinn." He tells how, if there were but one milk-giving cow in the house, she durst not be milked for an infant of one night, nor for a sick person, but must be kept for the steward, or bailiff, or soldier of the foreigners. And however long he might be absent from the house, his share or his supply durst not be lessened; "although there was in the house but one cow, it must be killed for the meal of one night, if the means of a supply could not otherwise be procured."[2]

But the good sword of King Brian soon changed all that. "He conquered, exterminated, enslaved, and bondaged them, so that there was not a winnowing sheet from Benn Edair to Tech Duinn in Western Erin, that had not a foreigner in bondage on it, nor was there a quern without a foreign woman. So that no son of a soldier, or of an officer of the Gaedhil, deigned to put his hand to a flail, or any other labour on earth; nor did a woman deign to put her hands to the grinding of a quern, or to knead a cake, or to wash her

[1] Its Irish title is *Cogadh Gaedhil re Gallaibh*.
[2] See page 51.

clothes, but had a foreign man or a foreign woman to work for them."[1]

This is no doubt a highly-coloured description, but it is graphic in its details, and gives us valuable information as to the state of social life at that period.

Equally graphic and interesting is the sketch which Mac Liag gives of the great achievements of Brian Boru. He tells how after Brian's royal visitation throughout Erin, all his enemies were brought into subjection, and the country enjoyed a period of profound peace and much-needed repose. He enforced the law with a strong hand, and repressed trespass, robbery, and murder. 'He hanged, killed and destroyed' all thieves, robbers, and plunderers throughout Erin. He banished or enslaved the foreigners throughout the length and breadth of the land—their stewards and collectors, their swordsmen and their mercenaries, their tall and comely youths, and their fair and graceful maidens became the bond-servants of the victors. It was then that Erin enjoyed such peace and security that a lone woman journeyed from Tory Island in the north to Cliodhna's loud-voiced wave in the south of Erin, carrying a golden ring on the top of the wand; yet no man ventured to rob, or to insult her. This blessed period of justice and peace, so rare in Erin, has been celebrated both by ancient and by modern bards.[2]

Nor was Brian less enlightened and munificent in cultivating the arts of peace. He erected many noble churches and church towers in Erin, as at Killaloe, Iniscaltra, and Tuam Greine, where the remains of the buildings erected by Brian are still to be seen. He constructed several bridges, causeways, and high roads He strengthened all the royal fortresses of Munster both in the islands and on the mainland. He sent professors and masters to teach wisdom and knowledge, also to buy books in foreign countries, and bring them home from beyond the great sea. This was all the more necessary as the writings and the books in every church and sanctuary of Erin where they were, were all burned or thrown into the lakes and rivers by the plundering Danes. It was Brian himself, who from his own resources gave the means of purchasing this new supply of books beyond the seas.

Such was Brian Boru, a hero in peace and in war, the

[1] See page 117.

[2] It was this narrative that inspired Moore's beautiful lyric—"Rich and Rare."

sword and shield of his country, during whose glorious reign Ireland reached the zenith of her power and prosperity. Mac Liag died shortly after his royal master in A.D. 1016.

Cuan O'Lochain was another very celebrated scholar who flourished during the first quarter of the eleventh century. His writings, his talents as a statesman, and his tragic end have all contributed to his celebrity. The family which derived its descent from Cormac Gaileng, son of Tadhg, grandson of Ollioll Olum, was at first settled in the territory of Ely; but afterwards removed to Gailenga Mor, on the borders of Meath and Longford. This territory took its name from Cormac Gaileng, and retains it to the present day in the name of the barony of Morgallion, which is merely another form of Gailenga Mor. It appears that the O'Lochains were chiefs of this district, and that the poet's family was held in high esteem in Meath.

After the death of King Malachy II. (Maelseachlainn), in the year A.D. 1022, an interregnum of twenty years intervened, during which there was no recognised High King of Erin. A joint government was established during the interregnum; and it is said the regency was administered by Cuan O'Lochain, the Chief Poet of Erinn, and Corcran the Cleric; or, as it is quaintly put in Macgeoghegan's *Annals of Clonmacnoise*—"A.D. 1022—After the death of King Moylesleaghlyn, this kingdom was without a king for twenty years, during which time the realm was governed by two learned men, the one called Cwan O'Lochan, a well-learned temporall man, and chiefe poet of Ireland; the other, Corcran Cleireagh, a devout and holy man, that was chief anchorite of all Ireland, whose most abiding was at Lismore. The land was governed like a free state, and not like a monarchie by them." It is curious that we find no reference to this interregnum in any of our Annals, and hence the truth of Macgeoghegan's statement has been questioned by certain writers. But O'Curry shows[1] that the same statement is made in the *Book of Leinster*, an almost contemporaneous record, although it is there stated, probably by a mistake of the scribe, that this joint government continued for forty or fifty instead of for twenty years.

It was the form of government, however, not the two governors themselves, which continued for twenty years, for the poet-regent was soon slain by the men of Teffia on the borders of his native territory in the County Longford. The sword

[1] *Manners and Customs*, Vol. ii., page 138.

of justice, which the great Brian had wielded so well, was broken at Clontarf and buried in the hero's grave. Once more outrage and lawlessness with the evil spirit of discord spread throughout the land. We know not the motive or circumstances of this great crime perpetrated by the men of Teffia, but Providence itself avenged the poet's death. According to one authority[1] God manifestly wrought a poet's power upon the parties who killed him, for they were put to a cruel death, and their bodies putrified until the wolves and vultures devoured them—a fitting end for the wretches who violated the sacred person of the poet. Macgeoghegan says that he was killed by one of the land of Teffia, and he most probably had heard the living local tradition; "after committing which evil fact, there grew an evil scent and odour of the party that killed him, so that he was easily known amongst the rest of the land. His associate Corcran lived yett, and survived him for a long time after"—that is until A.D. 1040.[2]

O'Curry gives a very full account of six historical poems of which Cuan O'Lochain was the author. One of them to which we have already referred[3] gives an exceedingly interesting account of Cormac Mac Art, and of his great palace at Tara, which the poet describes with great fidelity and minuteness. It has been printed in Petrie's *Antiquities of Tara Hill*. Another highly interesting poem of O'Lochain gives an account of the 'prohibitions' and 'prerogatives' of the High King of Tara, and the provincial sub-kings. This poem may be seen in the *Book of Rights*, edited by O'Donovan. Some of the prohibitions certainly savour of a pagan and superstitious origin, as, for instance, when the High King is forbidden to alight on the plain of Bregia on a Wednesday, or to traverse Cuillenn after sunset, or to launch a ship on the Monday after May-day. But his privileges are innocent enough—to have the salmon of the Boyne, which was a royal river; to eat the fruit of Man, and the deer of Luibnech; to get the bilberries of Bri-Leith, and the cresses of the river Brosnach; to drink of the spring water of Tlachtga, and hunt the hares of Naas. Cuan's legendary poems on the Shannon are also highly interesting, but we cannot refer to them further at present.

Errard Mac Coisé was chief poet to King Malachy II., who died in A.D. 1022, and hence he was a contemporary

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[1] *The Annals of Lough Cé*, A.D. 1024. [2] *Annals of Ulster* and *Four Masters*.
[3] Chapter II., page 21.

both of Mac Liag and Cuan O'Lochain. Both Mac Liag and Mac Coisé were natives of Hy-Many, in the County Galway, and appear to have been rivals in genius, but intimate friends and associates in social intercourse. One of Mac Coisé's most interesting works is a poetic dialogue between the two poets, which reveals their friendship, their talents, and their common love for the history and antiquities of Erin. He appears to have died the year after his royal master in A.D. 1023.

Flann of the Monastery, is, perhaps, the most justly celebrated of all those poet-historians of ancient Erin. O'Reilly calls him "Abbot of the Monastery of Bute," and gives a list of fourteen considerable historical poems still extant in manuscript, of which he is the reputed author. It does not appear, however, that Flann was either an abbot or a monk in holy orders, although he certainly sojourned and taught at Monasterboice, in the County Louth, just as his contemporary, Conn-na-m-Bocht, did at Clonmacnoise. The death of Flann is marked in the *Chronicon Scotorum* at A.D. 1054; and he is described as Ferlegind, or professor of the monastery, and "the last sage of the Gaedhil both in reading and history." In the *Annals of Ulster* he is called Chief-lector of Monasterboice and historical sage—*sai senchusa*—of Erin, under date of A.D. 1056, which is the true date. The Four Masters also describe him as a lector of the monastery of Buite, and the 'paragon'—*sai egna*—of the Gaedhil in literature, in history, in poetry and in science. There is no doubt that here we have a complete list of the subjects taught in what may be called the schools of general literature in ancient Erin. In the *Book of Aicill*,[1] as we have already seen, it is expressly stated that Cennfaeladh attended three schools in Tuaim Drecain, a School of Literature (*leigind*), a School of Law (*feinechas*), and a School of Poetry (*filidechta*); these schools were held in different houses, and taught by three different professors. Cennfaeladh was a soldier, and, therefore, a layman, and hence there is no reference here to a School of Divinity, of the Canons, or of the Scriptures. In the subjects taught by Flann at Monasterboice we find no reference to the *feinechas* or Brehon Laws, because there does not appear to have been a School of Law in the Monastery of Buite. But there was clearly a School of General Literature, and a School of Poetry, and although Flann is described as chief professor in the former school, he is also said to have been—and his writings prove that he was—an accomplished

[1] *Brehon Laws*, Vol. iii., p. 89.

poet. As Ferlegind, it is clear that his duty was to teach classics, including in that term the vernacular Gaedhlic tongue; for it is described as one of the four principal languages of the world. These are Gaedhlic, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. We have already furnished abundant proofs of the cultivation both of Latin and Greek in our Irish schools; and they tried their hand at Hebrew also, but we cannot say much for their success in studying that difficult language, which was then almost entirely unknown in the Western Empire.

It is quite evident, too, that great attention was paid in these schools to the careful and systematic cultivation of the Gaedhlic tongue. This would be essential not only for the successful study of the classical languages, but also for success in the Schools of Poetry and of Law, on both of which so much attention was bestowed.

We have abundant evidence on this point. Besides those scholars already referred to as Ferlegind, in A.D. 937 is recorded by the Four Masters the death of "Finnachta, son of Ceallach, Comarb of Doire, bishop and doctor in the Bearla Feine." This is the second bishop of Derry referred to in our Annals, and it will be observed that he is not described as bishop of Derry, but as comarb of Derry, *i.e.*, of Columcille, who happened, on account of his merit, to be raised to the episcopal rank, although his official title is abbot of Doire-Columcille. It is evident that he must have been a man of great learning, especially in native literature, as he is described as a *saoi*, or doctor, in the *bearla-feine*. O'Donovan thinks that by this is understood the ancient technical dialect of the Brehon Code, and Thady O'Roddy translates the expression as "the law or lawyers' dialect." Zeuss[1] with more probability regards it as the ancient written tongue of the Men of Erin, which, in process of time, became corrupted, and varied into different dialects. The ancient tongue of the Men of Erin was, as the evidence of the glosses in existing MSS. proves, a language which, in the words of Zeuss,[2] was a language regulated by fixed rules and determinate inflections. It was the language of the bards and scholars up to the ninth century, but the ravages of the Danes, and the breaking up of the ancient monarchy caused various dialects to spring up, and destroyed the fixity and purity of the ancient tongue of the Feine. There were,

[1] *Grammatica*, p. xxxiv.

[2] "Lingua formis suis, et regulis certis, circumscripta."

however, still many scholars who gloried in cultivating the pure and ancient language of Erin—the language of its Bards, its Brehons, and its Sages—and these men came to be regarded in course of time as recognised authorities on the ancient tongue, and hence were called saoi, or sages, in language. Such was Finnachta, abbot of Derry, and successor of Columcille; and such also was Flann, of whom we have just been speaking.

It is clear, however, that Flann cultivated the study both of our native and general history with marked success, so that he came to be recognised as one of our highest authorities both by his contemporaries and by his successors. O'Curry[1] gives a very full and interesting account of Flann's most important work—the historical *Synchronisms*. We need not discuss the subject here beyond observing that this treatise by itself furnishes a clear proof of the wide range of historical studies cultivated in the schools of ancient Erin. The work is, in fact, as O'Curry observes, an abridgment of universal history, and certainly goes to show that the author was not only an accomplished Gaedhlic scholar, but also that he must have been familiar with the principal Greek and Latin historians, both pagan and Christian.

Of Flann's personal history little is known. He was of Munster extraction, but seems to have been a native of Eastern Bregia, where his great ancestor Tadhg, son of Cian, son of Ollioll Olum, had established himself as early as the third century of the Christian era. We need not enter into any details regarding his historical poems.[2] Although highly interesting these subjects will never become popular, until the study of our ancient Gaedhlic tongue shall be more generally cultivated both in our schools and in our homes. Most of these poems are preserved inthe *Book of Leinster*, and several of them are to be found in the other great Gaedhlic repositories of our ancient literature. It would be difficult, says O'Curry, to over-estimate the historical value of some of those poems. "They are precisely the documents that supply life and the reality of details to the blank dryness of our skeleton pedigrees. Many a name lying dead in our genealogical tracts, and which has found its way into our condensed chronicles and annals, will be found in these poems, connected with the death, or associated with the brilliant deeds, of some hero whose story we should not willingly lose; while, on the other hand, many an obscure

[1] See O'Curry's Lectures—*Manners and Customs*—Vol. ii., p. 154.
[2] *Lectures*, Vol. i., p. 53

historical allusion will be illustrated, and many an historical spot, as yet unknown to the topographer, will be identified, when a proper investigation of these and other great historical poems preserved in the *Book of Leinster* shall be undertaken as a part of the serious study of the history and antiquities of our country.[1]"

Flann's monastery and school were founded about the beginning of the sixth century by St. Buite or Boetius, who, like Flann himself was sprung from the race of Ollioll Olum, and is said to have died on the same day (December 7, A.D. 521) on which St. Columba was born. He travelled much in Italy, Germany, and Britain and then returned to found a monastery which was to be the place of his resurrection, in his native district. Though founded so early in the fertile plains of Louth, we do not find that St. Buite's monastery produced any distinguished scholars down to the period of Flann himself, whose learning has made it so celebrated. That it was, however, always a place of considerable wealth and influence is sufficiently proved by the highly interesting remains which still exist at Monasterboice. These include a portion of the walls of two very ancient oratories, a round tower, and two sculptured High Crosses, one of which, locally known as St. Boyne's Cross, is considered to be one of the very finest of its class in Ireland.

Of Gilla Coemhain, whose latest poem was written in A.D. 1072, it is unnecessary to speak at length. Like Flann and Mac Liag, he was a historical poet and a cultured Gaedhlic scholar. A Chronological Poem composed by Gilla Coemhain, in A.D. 1072, has recently been published with a translation by Dr. Whitley Stokes.[2] The reader will readily perceive that the author of this poem was a writer of considerable culture and of very general information.

IV.—Discipline of the Lay Colleges.

The discipline in our ancient schools was neither so elaborate nor so minute as in modern seminaries; still in many respects it was perhaps more satisfactory. In the monastic schools the great principle of obedience was the fundamental rule, the observance of which from a sense of religious duty rendered the observance of all other rules easy and even pleasant.

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[1] Lectures—*Manners and Customs*—Vol. ii., page 157.
[2] *Tripartite*, Rolls Series, Vol. ii., page 530.

But in the lay professional schools, of which we have already spoken, the law took formal cognisance of the relations between the professor and his pupils. It established the general principles which were to guide these relations, and severely punished any grievous infraction of these principles

In the *Senchus Mor*[1] we find the following important passage:—"The social connection that is considered between the foster-pupil, and the literary foster-father is, that the latter is to instruct him without reserve, and to prepare him for his degree, and to chastise him without severity; to feed and to clothe him whilst he is learning his lawful profession, unless he obtains it (food and clothing) from another person —and such has been the custom from the school of Fenius Forsaidh onwards. On the other hand, the foster-pupil is to assist his tutor in poverty, and to support him in his old age and (to give him) the honour price of the degree for which he is being prepared, and all the gains of his art whilst he is learning it, and the first earning of his art after leaving the house of his tutor; and moreover, the literary foster-father has power of judgment, and proof, and witness, upon his foster-pupil, as the father has upon his son, and the Church upon the tenant of the Church lands."

The principles enumerated in this passage are eminently just in themselves; they were well suited to the circumstances of the times, and admirably calculated to put down a mercenary spirit, and foster the growth of tender affection between the pupils and their master. As we have already shown, the professional schools were to a great extent peripatetic; and when actually on their rounds the pupils were to be fed, and lodged, and taught by the master. He was bound to communicate all his knowledge and all his art, both theoretical and practical, to his pupils without reserve; and thus prepare them for their professional degree or formal admission to the ranks of the Bards, Brehons, Chroniclers, or Readers, as the case might happen to be. He might chastise the pupil for misconduct, but in so doing the teacher was not to be unduly severe, so as to cause injury to the mind or body of his scholar. He was also to supply him with food, clothing, and lodging, except provision were otherwise made for these purposes. The law even prescribes the quality of the food to which the pupil is entitled as a matter of right. No professor in ancient Erin could keep a Do-the-Boys Hall with impunity. The teacher was a literary foster-father,

[1] Vol. ii., page 349.

and as such, he was bound by the laws of fosterage to supply wholesome food in abundance to his pupils according to the rank of their parents. "What are their victuals? Stirabout (*lithe*) is given to them all, but the flavouring was to be different." It was salt butter for the sons of inferior grades; fresh butter for the sons of chieftains; honey for the sons of kings. The stirabout of oat-meal might be made on water, or on butter-milk, or on new milk, and given to the different classes in like manner.

On the other hand the teacher, or professor, was amply provided for. That provision of the law which compelled the foster pupils to assist their tutors in poverty, and maintain them in old age, was an admirable institution, calculated to preserve the most kindly feelings between both all through their lives. Then the honour price of the degree, and the first fees earned after obtaining it, were no doubt considerable, in order to enable the professor to maintain his pupils at home, whenever they were not at free quarters during their learned excursions and other official visits.

Corporal punishment was certainly not unknown in the monastic schools, as well as in establishments of later date; it was sometimes found necessary to have recourse to corporal punishment even when dealing with young 'saints.' We are told in the *Life of St. Colman Ela* of Lynally in the King's County, that he once punished St. Baithen, the nephew of St. Columcille and his successor in the abbacy of Hy, for neglecting his studies. The boy thereupon fled from the church, in which the school it seems, was taught, to the woods, no doubt, to hide, and avoid both his lessons and the chastisement of his master. There he saw a man building one of the circular wicker-work houses then very common, and observed that although he only worked one rod at a time, the wicker-wall rose up steadily to the roof. "Ah," he said, "if I only learned a little each day, I too should grow learned." Then he took shelter from a shower under the spreading branches of an oak tree. While standing beneath the boughs he observed a drop of water dripping from a leaf and falling on the ground. He made a hole with his heel on the spot where the drop was falling, and soon noticed that the hole was filled. Here he made a similar mental reflection, and, vowing that never again would he neglect his daily task, he returned to his master and grew up to be a very learned and a very holy man.[1]

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[1] O'Curry, *M. & C.*—Vol. ii., p. 33.

We have not in the foregoing pages by any means exhausted the list of our ancient Schools and Scholars. But we have sought to notice all the more frequented schools, and the most celebrated scholars of ancient Erin, who flourished in their native land. It would require a separate volume to do justice to the history of the Irish monks, who bore the name and fame of Scotia to so many foreign countries, in which the memory of their virtues and their learning is still fondly cherished. In these pages, however, we have said enough to vindicate the right of ancient Erin to that glorious title, by which since the twelfth century she has been known to the scholars of all Europe—INSULA SANCTORUM ET DOCTORUM[1]—The Island of Saints and Scholars.

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[1] The earliest authority we know for the first part of this title is the ancient author of St. Alban's Life :—"In hac insula tot viri eximiae sanctitatis fuerunt quod *Insula Sanctorum* nomine appropriato dicebatur." The corresponding Irish form was *Inis na Naomh*. Marianus Scotus, in his Chronicle, also calls it by the same title—Insula Sanctorum—under date of the year 696, but which is really A.D. 589. See Reeves' notes in the *Ulster Journal of Archæology*, vol. vii., p. 228.

GENERAL INDEX.

Abban, St., comes to School of Beg-Erin, 157; visits Rome with his uncle, St. Ibar, 157.

Abban, priest, baptizes St. Finnian, 195.

Abbot, jurisdiction of, in an Irish monastery, 98, 99.

Achadh Duirbchon, church of, founded by St. Finbarr, 477.

Achaia, life of Sedulius (poet) at, 32-33.

Adamnan, ninth abbot of Iona, little known of his early youth, 336; descent of, 337; curious story told of, 337, 338; goes to Iona, 338; made abbot of Iona, 339; pays a visit to Ireland, 339, 340; a second visit, 341, 342; returns to Iona, and writes *Life of Columbkille*, 342; pays a third visit to Ireland and promulgates the "Lex Innocentiae," 342, 537; the works of, 343; death of, 345; his relics brought to Ireland, 345.

Aedh Guaire, murders high steward of King Diarmaid Mac Cerbhaill, 218; the king seeks revenge and is cursed, 218.

Aedh Finn, and his daughter Gelges, 227.

Aedh, son of Brendan, prince, grants a site for School of Durrow, 301.

Aedhan, bishop of Mayo, 539.

Ængus, king of Munster, grants Aran Islands to St. Enda, 169.

Ængus, the Culdee, descent and early life of, 405; lives a solitary and penitential life at Dysert-Enos, 406; goes to monastery of Tallagh, 407; his identity discovered, 408; writings of, 408-412; Dr. Stokes on his writings, 412; death of, 413.

Agha (Achad-Finglass), monastery of, St. Fintan of Clonenagh at, 403.

Aghold (Achadh Abhail), Saint Finnian builds a church at, 199.

Agilbert, bishop of Paris, a student in Ireland, 595.

Agilulph, king of Lombardy, St. Columbanus at the Court of, 377.

Aidan, Saint, bishop of Ferns, 427.

—— sent to preach in Northumbria, 527; appointed bishop of Lindisfarne, 527.

Ailbe of Emly, St., ordained by St. Patrick, 150; Life of, as given in the Salamanca MS., 151; preaches the Gospel in Connaught, 152; the *Life of St. Declan* regarding, 153; evidence against the authenticity of Lives of St. Ailbe and St. Declan, 155.

Ailbhe, daughter of Cormac Mac Art, poem attributed to, 28.

Aileran (the Wise), St., writings attributed to, 206, 207.

Ailill, abbot of Mungret, death of, 510.

Ainmire, king, grants site for School of Derry, to St. Columba, 299.

Alcuin, distinguished scholar, a student at Clonmacnoise, 272, 273.

Aldfrid, king of Northumbria, releases the Irish captives at intercession of Adamnan, 340; spends his youth in Ireland, 468, 469.

Alexander III., Pope, convokes a general Council to Rome, 442; safeguards the independence of the Church in Ireland, 443; conceives a strong regard for St. Laurence O'Toole, 443.

Alexandria, Christian school at, 188.

Alithir, abbot of Clonmacnoise, 270.

Alphabet Ogham, history of, 13; invention of, 14; letters of, 15; inscribed on rods or tablets of wood, 15.

Alphabets, or catechisms of Christian doctrine, St. Patrick writes, 63, 64.

Amergin, poet judge, 6.
Annaghdown, monastery of, founded by St. Brendan, 219.
Annals of Four Masters, quoted, 18, 26, 58, *et seq.*
—— *Ulster*, quoted, 148.
—— *Clonmacnoise*, quoted, 218.
—— *Innisfallen*, copies of, 503, 504.
Annegray, monastery of, St. Columbanus established at, 373.
Apostles, Twelve, of Erin, visit St. Finnian at Clonard, 201.
Aran, Isles of, geographical description of, 169-172; inhabitants of, 172; Pagan remains in, 172-177; the stronghold of a warrior race, 176, 177; St. Enda founds a monastery on, 177; visited by numbers of saints, 177, 178; ancient churches in, 181-187.
Art, Celtic, at Clonmacnoise, 550-565.
Art the Solitary, slain at battle of Magh Mucruimhe, 17.
Artificers of St. Patrick, 66.
Asicus, St., an artificer in metal work, 66, 161; placed over church of Elphin, 161; goes into Donegal, 161; death of, 162.
Asterius, Turcius Ruffus, Consul, 34.
Athens, School of, under a pagan professor, Saints at, 189.
Auxilius, bishop, accompanies St. Patrick to Ireland, 59, 80; founds a church, 60; present at first Irish Synod, 60.

Baithen, abbot of Iona, remarkable for his spirit of prayer, 331; sent to govern the monastery of Heth, 332; death of, 332; character of, 333.
Ballaghmoon, battle of, 611.
Bangor, description of, 367, 368.
Bards, application of the term, 6; functions of, 7; fined for extortion, 7; qualifications required to become chief-poet, 7, 8; chief duty of Historic Poet, 8, 601; course of studies required by law, to become Chief Poet, 8; some distinguished Poets, 8-10; St. Patrick's alliance with, 56, 57; St. Columba protects the, 320-323.
Barinthus, monk, tale told to St. Brendan by, 215.
Barry, Gerald, cited, 197.
Bede, *Chronicles of Picts and Scots*, quoted, 166, 167, 296, *et seq.*
Beg-Erin, island, St. Ibar builds an oratory on, 156; no longer an island, 158, 159; the Danes plunder, 158.
Belisarius, scholastic or general? poem attributed to, 38.
Benignus, Saint, Member of Commission of Nine, 54; meeting with St. Patrick, 54; writings attributed to, 55, 116, 117; elected as choirmaster by St. Patrick, 58; death of, 59, 96, 116; brief story of his life, 114, 115; descent of, 159; monastery of Kilbannon established by, 159, 542.
Beoit, father of St. Ciaran, 259.
Berach, Saint, favourite disciple of St. Kevin, 421.
Bernard, Saint, *Vita Malachiae*, quoted, 393, 394, 395; at Clairvaux, St. Malachy meets, 396.
Bishops, pre-Patrician, in Ireland; the existence of discussed, 150-155.
Bishops and Abbots, lay, 395, 396.
Bite, bishop, placed over Church of Elphin, 161.
Blaithmac, Saint, dies a martyr, 347.
Bobbio, monks of, copy poems of Sedulius, 35; St. Columbanus founds monastery of, 378.
Bodkin, Christopher, archbishop of Tuam, 540.
Books, pre-Patrician, now lost, 29.
—— Caroline, published 386; refuted by Pope, 387.
Book of Armagh, quoted, 58, 59, 60, *et seq.*; history and contents of, 122-124; now in Trinity College, 124.
—— *Aicill*, introduction to, quoted, 24; motive for which it was written, 25.
—— *Ballymote*, quoted, 22, 23.
—— *Durrow*, contents of, 304; now in Trinity College, Dublin, 305.
—— *Kells*, history of, 309, 310; now in Trinity College, Dublin, 310.
—— *Leinster*, quoted, 3, 21, 27, *et seq.*; described, 140.
—— *Lismore*, history and description of, 473, 474.
—— *Rights* (Leabhar Na g-Ceart), authorship of, attributed to St. Benignus, 97; quoted, 54, 259; history and contents of, 116, 117.

Book of Hymns, reference to Saint Brigid in, 135.
Borumha, or cow tribute, remitted, 341, 428.
Bothchonais, church of, situation of, 353.
Brandon Hill, St. Brendan builds an oratory on, 214; description of, 214.
Brecan, Saint, tomb of, discovered in Aran, 183; descent of, 183; and St. Enda, 184; church of, 184.
Bregentz, St. Columbanus and his monks at, 376, 377.
Brehons the, during pre-Christian period, 11; in the reign of Conor MacNessa, 11; Senchus Mor, compiled from legal maxims of, 12.
Brehon Laws, reformed by St. Patrick, 52-66; sources to which they owed their existence, 52; motives that prompted the revision of, 53.
Brendan, of Clonfert, Saint, birth and descent of, 210; baptized, 210; fosterage of, 211; progress in learning, 211; visits school of St. Jarlath, near Tuam, 212, 543, 544; an angel appears to, 213; performs a miracle, 213; receives the order of priesthood, 213; builds an oratory on Brandon Hill, 214; his wanderings through the Atlantic, 215; returns home, 216; founds a monastery on Inis-da-druim (Coney Island), 215; visits Wales and Iona, 217; other places visited then, 217, 218; and St. Ruadhan curse Tara, 218; founds a church in Leinster, 218; founds monasteries of Annaghdown and Inchiquin, 219; founds a monastery on Inishgloria, 219, 220; founds monastery of Clonfert, 220, 221; death of, 221; poems attributed to, 222; baptizes St. Fursey, 227; at school of Ross, 491.
Brendan, of Birr, Saint, founds his monastery at Riverstown (Biorra), 522.
Brian Boru, place of his burial, 113; and Maelsuthain O'Cearbhaill, 501; repairs church of Iniscaltra, 521; achievements of, 622.
Bricin, Saint, *Life of*, 602, 603.
Brigid, Saint, "the mother of all the Saints of Erin," 125; parentage of, 127-129; memorials of, at Faughart, 128, 129; birth of, 129; receives the religious veil, 129, 130; founds school of Kildare, 130, 131; character of, 131; tradition regarding, 132; death of, 132; first of six Lives of, 133-135; second Life of, 135-137; remaining four Lives of, 137.
Brogan Claen, Saint, *Life of St. Brigid*, attributed to, 137.
Bronach, mother of St. Mochae, 123.
Buildings, connected with an Irish monastery, 94-97.
Buite, monastery of, Flann of, 625, 627; founded, 628.
Buite, Saint, founds a monastery, 628.
Burke, MacWilliam, plunders monastery of Mayo, 540.

Caelestius, monk, not of Irish origin, 39; no evidence to show he was either a Briton or Scot, 41; his early life, 41.
Caemhin, of Annatrim, Saint, under care of St. Columba of Terryglass, 400.
Cæsar: *De Bello Gallico*, quoted, 2-4.
Caimin, Saint, descent of, 517; writings attributed to, 517, 518; his influence over public events, 518; characteristic story told of, 518.
Cairell, bishop, placed over convent of Tawnagh, 126.
Cairnech, Saint, member of Commission of Nine, 54; and monastery of Rosnat, 167.
Caius Julius Solinus, Polyhister, 283.
Calphurnius, father of St. Patrick, 44; descent of, 70.
Cannech, Saint, at Glasnevin, 297.
Canons, most celebrated of, attributed to Synod of Patrick, Auxilius and Iserninus, 60, 61.
Caplait, Druid, converted to the faith of Christ, 51.
Carmen Paschale, work, description of, 36.
Carthach the Elder, Saint, trains St. Carthach the Younger at his monastery of Slieve Mis, 448.
Carthach the Younger, Saint, birth and descent of, 447; receives his early training at monastery of Slieve Mis, 448; founds a monastery at Kiltulach, 448; visits monasteries of Bangor, Landelo (now Lynally), and Clonfert-Molua (now Kyle), 448; founds a monastery at Rahan, 449; expelled from Rahan, 450; his journey to the

south, 451, 452; founds monastery of Lismore, 453; retires from community life before death, 454; one of his striking miracles, 454, 455; rule of, 455-457.
Cassian, John, monk, founds school of St. Victor, 190; sketch of his life and writings, 181; the most celebrated disciple of, 191.
Cassiodorus, senator, statesman, and monk, eulogises Sedulius (poet), 35.
Cathaldus of Tarentum, Saint, the *Life of*, 457; place of his birth, 458, 459; descent of, 459; difference of opinion about date of his birth, 459, 460; in school of Lismore, 460; made bishop, 461; his Irish See not determined, 462; goes on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, 462; reforms the licentious people of Taranto, and becomes their bishop, 463, 464; death of, 464; relics of, 464; writings and prophecy attributed to, 465.
Cathedral of Armagh, 113.
Cathedral of Tuam, old, described, 557, 558.
Cathmael, Saint, early life of, 197.
Ceallachan, king of Cashel, plunders monastery of Clonfert, 243.
Ceddi, bishop of Iona, death of, 345.
Ceile De, or Culdee, the appellation, 405.
Celestine, Pope, commissions St. Patrick to undertake his mission to Ireland, 48.
Cellach, son of Cormac Mac Art, abducts the daughter of Sorar, 24.
Celsus, Saint, driven by usurpers from the See of Armagh, 395; death and burial at Lismore, 471.
Celtic Scotland, quoted, 163.
Cennfaeladh, at the battle of Magh Rath, 603; at school of Tuaim Drecain, 603; treatises composed by, 603, 604.
Chad, Saint, educated in Ireland, 593; appointed to the See of Lichfield, 594; death of, 594.
Chalice of Ardagh, description and history of, 562-564.
Charlemagne, king, Dungal's letter to on the two solar eclipses said to have taken place in A.D. 810, 382-384; convenes Synod of Frankfort, 386.
Charles the Bald, patronises John Scotus Erigena, 578, 579; the Pope's letter to regarding Scotus, 584.
Christianity, knowledge of, in Ireland, in third century, 26.
Chronicler (Historic poet), duty of, 8.
Chronicon Scotorum, work, history of, 278-280.
Church, Irish, St. Patrick's provisions for training a native ministry in, 58.
Churches, ancient, in Aran, 181-187; ruined, at Clonmacnoise, 266-269.
Church, Nuns', at Clonmacnoise, description of, 552, 553; founded by Dervorgilla, wife of Tiernan O'Rorke, 553.
Cian, son of Oilioll Olum, branches of family of, 160.
Ciaran of Clonmacnoise, Saint, descent of, 259; is baptized and receives his early training at hands of deacon Justus at Fuerty, 259; at Clonard, 259; at Aran, 179; founds two churches, 261; founds school of Clonmacnoise, 262; death of, 263; his festival day still celebrated, 264; leads an extremely ascetic life, 265.
Cill Cluana, church of, founded by St. Finbarr, 477.
Cin Droma Snechta, book, 29.
Cir, poet, 9.
Claudius, bishop of Turin, an extreme Iconoclast, 389; his reply to the letter of the pious Abbot Theodemir, 390; Dungal's treatise against the doctrine of, 390, 391.
Clonard, relics at, 205.
Clonmacnoise, ruined churches at, 266-270; Celtic Art at, 550-565.
Cluaninis, monastery of, St. Columbanus at, 372.
Cluain Imaine (Clonamery), St. Brendan founds a church at, 218.
Cobthac, professor of Kildare, death of, 138.
Coelan (Chilien), monk, a Life of St. Brigid attributed to, 137.
Coemell, mother of St Kevin, descent of, 414; family of, 415.
Coemhain, Gilla, poet, 628.
Coemlug, father of St. Kevin, descent of, 414; family of, 415.
Cogitosus, monk and writer, cited, 127; his Life of St. Brigid, 135-137.
Coirpri Lifechair, assumes sovereignity of Erin, 24.
Colga, king of Munster, causes St. Cathaldus to be made Bishop, 461.

Colgan, professor of Clonmacnoise, 272; story which proves he was a diligent student of St. Paul's Epistles, 272; his position in Clonmacnoise, 273; writings of, 273, 274.
Colleges, discipline of lay, 628-631.
Colman of Cell Riada, Chamberlain of St. Patrick, 65.
Colman of Dromore, Saint, placed under training of St. Mochae, 143; goes to St. Ailbe of Emly, 143; again visits Noendrum, 144; the first teacher of St. Finnian of Moville, 246.
Colman, abbot of Moville, Saint, regarded as the author of a Latin hymn, 255; English translation of this hymn, by Denis Florence M'Carthy, 255, 256.
Colman, king of North Leinster, and St. Fintan of Clonenagh, 402, 403.
Colman of Mayo, Saint, receives his education in Iona, 526; appointed Bishop of Lindisfarne, 527; on the Easter Controversy, at Conference of Whitby, 527-529; defeated at Whitby, by Wilfrid, 529; leaves Northumbria and retires to island of Innisboffin, 529; founds monasteries of Innisboffin and Mayo, 530; interesting memorials of, in Innisboffin, 531, 532; death of, 533.
Columba of Terryglass, Saint, Fintan of Clonenagh placed under care of, 400; founds a temporary establishment at Clonenagh, 401; descent and early youth of, 513, 514; at Clonard, 514; visits to Rome and England, 514; founds three churches, 514; established at Iniscaltra, 514, 515; again visits Clonard, 515; death of, 515; his body buried first at Iniscaltra afterwards transferred to Terryglass, 516.
Columba, Saint, a typical Celt, 291; birth and descent of, 292; his early life and training, 293; at Moville, 294; places himself under the instruction of a Bard, 294, 295; at Clonard, 295; at Glasnevin, 296; returns to his native territory, 297; founds school of Derry, 298, 299; personal description of, 300; founds school of Durrow, 301; interesting incidents connected with, 302; writes *Book of Durrow*, 304; School of Kells, founded by, 307, writing of *Book of Kells* attributed to, 309; and battle of Cuil-Dreimhne, 310; ordered to leave Ireland for the sin of urging his kinsmen to fight this battle, 311; sets sail for Alba, 312; island of Iona (Hy) granted to, 316; protects the Bards, 320-323; subsequent history of, 323; death of, 324-326; writings of, 326-328; poems and prophecies attributed, to, 329; *Lives of*, 330, 331.
Columbanus, Saint, date of his birth, 371; early life of, 371, 372; leaves his home, and goes to Monastery of Cluaninis, 372; admitted to Bangor, 372; with some companions, go first to England, from thence to Gaul, 372; preaches the Gospel through the towns and villages of Gaul, 373; and his companions get established at Annegray, 373; founds a monastery at Luxeuil, 374; and his monks have to bear a sore trial, 374, 375; driven from Luxeuil, 376; and his monks establish themselves at Bregentz, 376; leaves Bregentz, crosses the Alps, and founds monastery of Bobbio, 377; death of, 378; writings of, 378-380.
Columbian schools, sacred learning in, 318, 319.
Comgall, Saint, at Glasnevin, 297; birth and parentage of, 365; his early youth, 365; becomes a disciple of St. Fintan, 366-402; pays a visit to Clonmacnoise and receives the priesthood there, 367; founds school of Bangor, 367; visited there by St. Columba and some of his followers, 368; performs a miracle, 368; pays a return visit to Columba, 369; death of, 310.
Commission of Nine, members of, 54; real authors of *Senchus Mor*, 55.
Conall Derg, king, family of, 164.
Conall, king, grants the island of Iona to St. Columba, 316; descent of, 317.
Conall, Saint, bishop of Ross, 492.
Conchessa, mother of St. Patrick, 44.
Conchobhar (Connor), deprives poets of exclusive privileges, 7.
Conference, Paris, production of, 388.

Confession of St. Patrick, evidence in favour of its authenticity, 67, 68; the Saint's motive in writing, 69; reference to Saint's personal history and Apostolic labours in, 70-72; shows he was a native of Britain, 72.
Cong, members of O'Duffy family buried at, 539; remains of the abbey of, 558, 559; Rory O'Connor retires to monastery of, to die, 559, 560.
Conla Cainbrethach, distinguished judge, mentioned in introduction to *Senchus Mor*, 11.
Conlath, Saint, selected by St. Brigid to govern her churches and monasteries, 131; an artificer in metal work, 137.
Conmach, Primate of Armagh, gets the clergy exempted from military service, 410.
Conn the Hundred Fighter, descendants of, 16.
Conn-na-m-Bocht, holy man, descendants of, 280.
Convention of Drumceat, the three questions considered at, 321, 322.
Coolbanagher, church of, St. Ængus beholds a vision of angels at, 407.
Corban gives Aran up to St. Enda, 177.
Core, king, member of Commission of Nine, 54.
Corca Laighde, territory of, 490; race of, 490.
Cormac, son of Diarmaid, king of Hy-Kinsellagh, and St. Fintan of Clonenagh, 402, 403.
Cormac, king of Hy-Bairrche, retires to Bangor before his death, 370.
Cormac, bishop and abbot of Glendalough, death of recorded, 425.
Coroticus, king, difference of opinion regarding, 73; the *Book of Armagh* regarding, 75.
Cosgrach, professor of Kildare, death of, 138.
Council of Nice, second, on image worship, 385; censured at Synod of Frankfort, 386; at Paris Conference, 388.
Crimthan, king, 82.
Cronan, of Roscrea, Saint, founds monastery of Roscrea, 523; a specimen of the miracles given in his *Life*, 523; the *Book of Dimma*, 523, 524.
Cross of Tuam, described, 554, 555, 556.
Cross of Cong, history and description of, 560, 561.
Crozier of Lismore, description of, 472, 473.
Cuanna, Saint, descent of, 466; goes to the school of Rahan, 466; founds monastery of Killcooney, 466; made abbot of Lismore, 466; death of, 467.
Cuil-Dreimhne, battle of, 250, 310, 311; story of, regarded by some as the invention of a later age, 311; site of, 312.
Cuilmen, book, 29.
Cuimine the Fair, abbot, *Life of Columba* attributed to, 330; the Paschal Epistle attributed to, 334.
Cummian (the Tall), Saint, birth of, 229; in St. Finbarr's school, 230; his appointment to Clonfert, 230, 231; characteristic story told of, 231; his relations with King Domhnall, 232; the part he played in the Paschal Controversy, 233; and the Synod of Magh Lene, 236, 237; analysis of his Paschal Epistle, 237-240; probably the author of *Liber de Mensura Poenitentiarum*, 240, 241; death of, 241.
Cummian Finn, Saint, writings of, 241.

Daghda, king and poet, 8.
Dagobert, king of Austrasia, a pupil in college of Slane, 590.
Daire, king, member of the Commission of Nine, 54; remarks on, 55; grants a site for Cathedral of Armagh to St. Patrick, 111, 112.
Dairinis, Island of, St. Finnian visits, 195-198.
Dallan Forgaill, chief bard, reorganises and reforms the Bardic Order, 323; compositions of, 616.
Danes, the, plunder Armagh, 120. burn and pillage Louth, 149; plunder Beg-Erin, 158; plunder Clonard, 207; Clonmacnoise, 274, 275; Glendalough, 429; Ross, 493; Mungret, 510; Iniscaltra, 521.
Darerca, mother of St. Ciaran, 259.
Darinia, sister of St. Enda, 169.
Dathi, king, mentioned, 28.
David, Saint, birth and parentage of, 196; founds a great college, 196; appointed archbishop, 196, 197.

Dearbhforgaill, dies in pilgrimage at Glendalough, 430.
Death of St. Columba, 324-326.
Declan, Saint, Life of, 153; evidence against its authenticity, 155.
De Gray, John, bishop of Norwich, 269.
De Lacy, Walter, refounds monastery of Clonard, 208.
De Mensura Orbis Terrarum, treatise, account of its contents, 281, 282, 284-290.
Demetrias, Epistle of Pelagius to, 41.
De Rochford, Simon, transfers See of Meath to Trim, 208.
Derry, See of, established, 357.
Dervorgilla, wife of Tiernan O'Rorke, builds a church at Clonmacnoise, 553.
Dialogue of the two Sages, circumstances which led to, 9.
Diarmaid, king of Meath, makes grants to Clonmacnoise, 271.
Diarmaid, bishop of Iniscaltra, 521.
Dicuil the Geographer, his treatise *De Mensura Orbis Terrarum*, 281; personal history of, 282; where and by whom he was educated, 282-284; sources from which he derived the information contained in his treatise, *De Mensura Orbis Terrarum*, 284; his reference to the Irish pilgrimage to Jerusalem, 285, 286; his reference to Iceland and the Faroë Islands, 286, 287; his reference to the poet, Sedulius, 289, 290.
Discipline, of an Irish monastery, 97-102; of lay colleges, 628-631.
Disert-Diarmada, monastery of, 605.
Doctor in Poetry, qualifications required in early times to become, 7.
Domhnall, king, St. Cummian's relations with, 232; death of, 233.
Donovan, chief of the Hy-Fidhgente, makes Mahoun a prisoner, 484.
Dorbene, abbot of Iona, 336.
Drogonus, archbishop, translates the relics of St. Cathaldus, 464.
Druids, learning of, 1; religious tenets of, 1, 2; the British, 2; places of worship, 3; Irish, 3; worship of, 3; functions of, 4; acquaintance with letters, 4; abodes of Irish, 5; idolatrous practice of sun-worship, 5.
Drumcullen, monastery of, Saint Carthach at, 451.
Duach Galach, descent of, 226.
Dubhthach, chief poet and Brehon, member of Commission of Nine, 54.
Dubricius, bishop of Landaff, consecration of, 196; his monastery at Llancarvan, 196.
Dunchadh, archdeacon of Mungret, death of, 511.
Dungal, theologian, astronomer, and poet, 381; an Irishman, 382; place or date of his birth not fixed, 382; his letter to Charlemagne on the solar eclipses, 382-384; opens a school at Pavia, 385; writes a book in which he defends the Catholic doctrine regarding Iconoclasm, against the trifling of Bishop Claudius, 390, 391; character of his writings, 391, 392; death of, 392.
Dunlaing, king, massacres attendants of Cormac Mac Art, 18.
Dysertenos, Saint Ængus leads a penitential life at, 406.

Eamhnat, mother of St. Moling, 426.
Ecgfrid, king, slain, and his army routed, 340.
Egbert, Saint, of Northumbria, comes to Ireland, 590; studies in Connaught, 591; a vision appears to, 592; sets sail for Iona, 592; death of, 593.
Eithne, mother of St. Columbkille, descent of, 292.
Elegia, poem by Sedulius, description of, 37.
Elitheria, monastery of, founded, 535, 536.
Elphin, monastery at, 160, 161.
Embroideresses, of St. Patrick's household, 66.
Enda of Aran, Saint, descent of, 164; conversion of, 165; gives proof of the sincerity of his conversion, 165, 166; founds a monastery at Killeany, 166; repairs to monastery of Rosnat, 166-168; visits Rome, 168; death of, 168; founds his monastery on Aran, 177; is visited by several of the contemporary saints, 177, 178; leads a simple and austere life, 180, 181.
Eochaid, Tirmcharna, descent of, 226.

Eoghan, king, 111.
Epistle, to Coroticus, of St. Patrick, 73-75; reference made by the Saint to his own personal history in, 74.
Erc, bishop, judge in St. Patrick's household, 65; baptizes St. Brendan of Clonfert, 210; takes Brendan under his own charge, 211; confers the order of priesthood on Brendan, 213; death of, 213.
Ernat, daughter of King Daire, gets enamoured of St. Benignus, 115.
Erigena, John Scotus, of Irish birth and education, 576; the English and Scotch strive to make him their own, 577, 578; in the palace of Charles the Bald, 578, 579; witticisms of, 579; publishes his *Liber de Prædestinatione*, 581; alleged errors about the Real Presence, 583; translates the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius, 584; the Pope complains of its publication without the Apostolic sanction, 585; composes his work, *De Divisione Naturæ*, 586; this Book condemned, 587; death of, 588.
Esker Brenain, church of, 139.
Etan, princess and poetess, 9.
Eu or Augum, monastery of, St. Laurence O'Toole in, 444; his death in, 445.

Fachtna, Saint, birth and early training of, 490; goes to school of Cork, 491; founds monasteries of Molana and Ross, 491; becomes entirely blind, 492; death of, 492.
Family, monastic, members of, 152; virtues and penances practised by, 99-101; ordinary meal of, 101; ordinary dress of, 102.
Fanchea, nun, converts her brother (St. Enda), 164, 165.
Faolain, father of St. Moling, 426.
Faughart, memorials of St. Brigid at, 128, 129; Edward Bruce buried in churchyard of, 128.
Faustinus Arevalus, admits that the story of Sedulius (poet), he being a Spaniard, in fabulous, 31.
Feargus, prince, descendants of, 226.
Fedelmith, king, and St. Finan Cam, 498.
Felire of St. Aengus, described, 409, 410, 411; Dr. Stokes on its authorship, 412.
Feis of Tara, national parliament, in existence before time of Cormac Mac Art, 19; object of, 20; the meetings of, 20.
Felimy (Fedhlimidh), father of St. Columbkille, descent of, 292.
Ferceirtne, royal poet, 9.
Ferdomhach, professor of Kildare, death of, 138.
Ferdomnach, scribe, transcribed Book of Armagh, 103.
Fergus, poet, member of Commission of Nine, 54.
Fiacc of Sletty, Saint, descent of, 81; offers himself for the service of the Church, 83; founds two churches, 83; his life at Sletty, 84; death of, 85; writings of, 85, 86.
Finan Cam, Saint, birth and descent of, 497; founds monastery of Kinnity, 497; evidence which goes to show he was founder of Innisfallen, 497, 498; miracles attributed to, 498, 499.
Finan the Leper, Saint, commonly regarded as founder of Innisfallen, 496; evidence for and against this theory, 496, 497, 498; monasteries mentioned in connection with, 497.
Finan, bishop of Lindisfarne, 527.
Finbarr, Saint, history of his birth, 476; placed under care of a holy man, 477; founds several churches, 477; his retreat in Gougane Barra, 478, 479; founds school of Cork, 480; goes on a pilgrimage to Rome, 481; death of, 482; character of, 483; writing of, 484; tragical event which took place in connection with this writing, 484, 485.
Finchad, Saint, bishop of Ross, 492.
Findath, mother of St. Fintan of Clonenagh, 399.
Findlug, father of St. Brendan of Clonfert, 210.
Findmath, mother of St. Carthach, descent of, 447.
Finloch, father of St. Finnian, descent and family of, 194.
Finn Cummian, 241.
Finnachta, king of Ireland, and Adamnan, 337, 338; remits Borumean tribute, 341, 428; death of, 342.
Finnachta, abbot, 626, 627.
Finnian of Clonard, Saint, descent and birth of, 194; visits the saints of Wales, 195; their history, 196-198; miracles performed in Wales by, 198; returns to Ireland, 198;

founds two churches, 199; founds school of Clonard, 199, 200; lives an austere life, 200; visited at Clonard by all the distinguished saints of Erin, 201; the routine of daily life in school of, 202; his power of expounding the Sacred Scriptures, 203; death of, 204.

Finnian of Moville, Saint, boyhood and education of, 246; goes to monastery of Rosnat (Candida Casa), 247; goes to Rome, 248; returns to Ireland, and brings with him copy of entire Bible, 249; founds school of Moville, 249; Psaltery, copy of, 250, 251; Rule composed by, for his monks, 253, 254; death of, 254; was, it seems, a bishop, 255.

Fintan Corach, Saint, the immediate successor of St. Brendan in Clonfert, 224: encourages the study and practice of sacred psalmody, 225; death of, 225.

Fintan, Munster prince, travels as a soldier of fortune into North Connaught, 226; secretly marries the daughter of king of Connaught, 227.

Fintan Maeldubh, raised to the abbacy of Clonenagh, 404.

Fintan of Clonenagh, Saint, St. Comgall becomes a disciple of, 366, 402; birth and descent of, 399, 400; placed under care of St. Columba of Terryglass, 400; with other saints found a temporary establishment at Clonenagh, 401; founds a permanent establishment there, 401; Rule of, 401; miracles of, 402, 403; death of, 404.

Firaull, father of St. Carthach, descent of, 447.

Fire, "perpetual," of Kildare, 100, 101.

Flaithbeartach, abbot of Inniscathy, and Cormac MacCullinan, 610, 611.

Flann, mother of St. Cummian, sketch of her history, 229; dies a holy nun, 229.

Flann, king, builds a church at Clonmacnoise, 266.

Flann of Monasterboice, prose chronicler, 276.

Flann Failbhe, kindly receives St. Carthach, 452; and St. Finan Cam, 499.

Flann Sionna, king of Ireland defeated at battle of Magh Lena, 609, 610.

Fortchern, Saint, descent and conversion of, 194; said to have founded a school, 195; St. Finnian placed under care of, 195.

Fortunatus, poet, cited, 35.

Fothadh, poet and adviser of King Aedh, decides that the clergy should be exempted from military service, 410.

Fursey, Saint, descent of, 226; history of his birth, 226, 227; baptized and trained by Saint Brendan of Clonfert, 227; founds a monastery, 227.

Gabhren, father of St. Fintan of Clonenagh, 399.

Gelasius, Pope, approves of writings of Sedulius, 34, 35.

—— Primate of Armagh, 121; what is known of his family or birthplace, 358, 359; becomes abbot of Derry, 359; raised to Primacy of Armagh, 359; his reign remarkable for two things, 359; visits Munster and Connaught, 360; convenes and presides over several Synods, 360-362; consecrates St. Laurence O'Toole to be archbishop of Dublin, 362, 436; presides over Synod of Clane, 362, 437; death of, 363.

Gemman, bard, instructs Saint Columbkille, 294; striking incident connected with, 295.

Gennadius, 31; cited, 41.

Gerald, of Mayo, Saint, placed under St. Colman's care, 534; and his brothers come to Ireland, 534, 535; founds a monastery, 535; attends a meeting at Tara, 536, 537; paid a visit by Saint Adamnan, 537; date of his death, 537.

Germanus, Saint, becomes bishop of Auxerre, 47; leads a life of austerity, 47; becomes the tutor of St. Patrick, 47; builds a monastery, 48; is accompanied to Britain by St. Patrick, 48; sends Saint Patrick to Rome, 49.

Gildas, Saint, teaches in School of Armagh, 118; his work, 119; his meeting with St. Finnian, 195.

Giraldus, archbishop, causes the relics of St. Cathaldus to be enclosed in a silver shrine, 464.

Glendalough, topography of, 417, 418; existing ruins at, 422-425; the Danes at, 430.
Gobban Saer, architect or Ollamh-builder, 551, 552.
Godfrey, king of Danes, plunders country round Kells, 348.
Gontran, king of Burgundy, receives St. Columbanus with a warm welcome, 373.
Gotteschalk, monk, his doctrine on Predestination condemned, 580, 581.
Gougane Barra, lake, described, 478, 479; ruins on island in, 479; Father Denis O'Mahony takes up his abode in this lonely retreat, 479.
Graine, wife of Finn Mac Cumhaill, Rath of, at Tara, 22.
Guaire, king of Connaught, 230; characteristic story told of, 231, 518; defeated in battle at Carn Fearadhaigh, 231; at Carn Conaile, 271; death of, 271.
Guigneus, Saint, spends some time in Aran, 179.

Hare Island (Inis Ainghin), Saint Ciaran founds an oratory on, 261.
Henry de Loundres, puts out the fire of St. Brigid at Kildare, 138.
Henry II., St. Laurence O'Toole submits to, 441, 442; Rory O'Connor formally and finally gives up all claim of Ireland to, 442; grants the dying request of St. Laurence O'Toole, 444.
Hincmar, bishop, convenes a Synod at Quiercy, where doctrine of Gotteschalk, regarding Predestination, is condemned, 580, 581; attacked by French theologians, 581; convenes another Synod, and formulates his own doctrine on Grace and Predestination, 582; this doctrine sanctioned, 583.
History of Sligo, quoted, 1.
Honoratus, Saint, retires to island of Lerins, and subsequently founds a school there; becomes third and last teacher of Saint Patrick, 50; made bishop of Arles, 50; the disciple of John Cassian, 191; death of, 191.
Honorius III., enrols St. Laurence O'Toole as canonized Saint, 446.
"Honours," St. Patrick entitled to four, in Irish Church, according to Book of Armagh, 77.
Household of St. Patrick, members of, 65.
Hy-Briuin, race, descent of, 226.
Hymn, St. Sechnall's, circumstance to which it owed its origin, 77-79.
Hymn, "*Sancti Venite*," 80, 81.

Ibar, Saint, a pre-Patrician bishop, 156; his early training, 156; builds his oratory on island of Beg-Erin, 156; is visited in his island retreat by crowds of disciples, 157; and his nephew, St. Abban, visit Rome, 157; death of, 157.
Ildelfonsus, cited, 35.
Illumination, art of, in monastic schools of Kildare, 139.
Imar, king of Danes of Limerick, defeated by Brian Boru, 494.
Inchiquin, island, monastery in, 219.
Inisboffin, monastery of, founded, 530; situation of, 531; memorials of St. Colman in, 531, 532; disagreement between the Irish and English monks of, 533.
Iniscaltra, island, situation of, 512, 513; ruined monuments still remaining at, 519, 520.
Inis-da-druim (Coney Island), St. Brendan founds a monastery on, 216.
Inisgloria (Inis-gluair), island, St. Brendan founds an oratory in, 219; at present, 220.
Innisfallen, island, description of, 505.
Instruction, course of, pursued by Druids, Bards and Brehons, 12.
Instruction, oral, communicated by St. Patrick to his disciples, 62, 63.
Iona (Hy), island, description of, 315, 316; no trace of the original buildings of Columba at present in, 317; churches of a later date in, 317, 318; becomes a celebrated place of pilgrimage, 346; pillaged and plundered, 346.
Iserninus, bishop, accompanies St. Patrick to Ireland, 59, 80; founds a church, 60; present at first Synod held in Ireland, 60.

Isidore of Seville, scholar, cited, 35.
Ita, Saint, the "Brigid of Munster," 127; founds her convent, 211; St. Brendan placed under fosterage of, 211.

JARLATH, Saint, founds college of Cluainfois, 160, 542; descent of, 541, 542; builds a church at Tuam da ghuallan, 544; date of his death 544; relics of, 545.
John of Tritenheim, Benedictine monk, cited, 30.
Judges, ecclesiastical, taught their duties by St. Patrick, 61.
Justus of Fuerty, deacon, St. Patrick gives his own book of ritual to, 63; baptizes St. Ciaran, 259.

KATHLEEN, genuine story of St. Kevin and, 416.
Keating, historian, cited, 20-24.
Keller, Dr., recovers most authentic copy of *Adamnan's Life of St. Columba*, 334, 335.
Kells, memorials of St. Columba at, 308, 309.
Kevin (Coemghen), Saint, descent of, 414; birth of, 415; placed under care of St. Petroc, 415; transferred to the guidance of his uncle, St. Eugenius, 416; flies to the recesses of Glendalough, 416; reasons which induced him to fly from his native district, 416; ordained priest, 417; his bed in Glendalough, 418; life at Glendalough, 418, 419; leaves his cave in Lugduff, 419; founds monastery of Glendalough, 420; meets Saints Columba, Comgall and Canice on hill of Usney in Westmeath, 421; death of, 421.
Kilbannon, monastery of, established by St. Benignus, 159, 542.
Kilcommin, old ruin at, 231.
Kilcooney, monastery of, founded, 466.
Kildare, church of, description of, 133; ancient buildings of, 138.
Killeany, monastery of, founded, 177; existing remains in townland of, 181, 182.
Killossy, church of, 60; etymology of the word, 60.
Kil-mac-nenain (Kilmacrenan), St. Columba spends the years of his youth at.
Kilmore, church of, 146.
Kilnamanagh, monastery of St. Kevin in, 416.
Kings, taught their duties by St. Patrick, 61, 62.
Kinnity, monastery of, founded by St. Finan Cam, 498.

LABOUR, daily, in monastery, 102; religious exercises, 103; study, 103, 104; manual, 104.
Laeghaire, king, and his Druids overcome by St. Patrick, 50, 51; member of Commission of Nine, 54.
Laisren, abbot of Iona, 333.
Laurence, bishop of Canterbury, Millitus of London, and Justus of Rochester admonish the Irish on their errors in reference to Easter, 235.
Leabhar Breac, quoted, 135.
Leabhar-na-h-Uidhre, work, history and contents of, 280, 281.
Learning, in Ireland, in the time of St. Patrick, 42, 43.
Legislation, ecclesiastical, exercised by St. Patrick, 61, 62.
Liber de Mensura Poenitentiarum, work, 240; contents of, 241.
Liberius, poem attributed to, 38.
Life Tripartite, of St. Patrick, description of, 88, 89; date and probable author of, 89, 90.
Life of St. Ailbe of Emly, 151, 152; its authenticity refuted, 155.
Life of St. Abban, quoted, 157.
Lives, six, of St. Brigid, reference to, 133-137.
Lives of St. Columba, 330, 331.
Llancarvan, school of, St. Finnian in, 196; Irishmen in, 197.
Lochru, chief Druid, miraculously destroyed at prayer of St. Patrick, 50, 51.
Loman, Saint, converts St. Fortchern, 184; descent of, 194.
Lomman, king, and St. Patrick, 506, 507.
Lonan Kerr, Saint, spends some time in Aran, 179.
Lorica, of St. Patrick, reason of its composition, 75, 76; the Book of Armagh on, 77.
Lothaire, crowned emperor by the Pope, 385; appoints a conference at Paris, 388; his letter to the Pope, 389.
Lua, founder of Clonfert-Mulloe, at Bangor, 369.
Luchat the Bald, miraculously destroyed, 50, 51.
Lupait, sister of St. Patrick, 66.
Luxeuil, monastery of, established, 374; St. Columbanus and his monks expelled from, 375, 376.

MACAILLE, bishop, gives the religious veil to St. Brigid, 129

Mac Art, Cormac, character of, 16; early training of, 17; his narrow escape from Lughaidh MacCon, 17; avenges wanton massacre of his attendants by Dunlaing, 18; organizes a standing army, "Fenian Militia," 18; literary history of, 19-25; convenes regular meetings of national parliament—Feis of Tara, 20; erects a parliament house, 20, 21; literary works of, 23-25; death and burial of, 26, 27; seems to transmit his talents to his daughters, 27, 28.

Mac Awley, Amergin, poet, author of the *Dinnsenchus*, 615.

Mac Cairthinn, bishop, champion in Saint Patrick's household, 65; St. Patrick founds a church for, 130.

Mac Carthy, Cormac, refounds monastery of Cork, 486; becomes King of Cashel, 607; builds a chapel at Cashel, 608; made bishop, 608.

Mac Cerbhaill, Diarmaid, and his palace at Tara, cursed by Saints Ruadhan and Brendan, 218, 307; slain, 218, 307; and St. Ciaran's prophecy, 262; and copy of St. Finnian's Psaltery, 250; descent of, 306; grants Kells to Saint Columbkille, 307; and battle of Cuil-Dreimhne, 310, 311.

Mac Coise, Errard, chief poet, 624, 625.

Mac Con, Lughaidh, defeats King Art in battle, 17; attempts to seize Cormac Mac Art, 17; killed, 17.

Mac Concumba, learned scribe, 271.

Mac Cosse, lector of Ross, geographical poem of, 494, 495.

Mac Creiche, Saint, spends some time in Aran, 179.

Mac Crimthann, Felim, holds a conference with Niall at Clonfert, 242; plunders Clonmacnoise, 275; retires to a hermitage before his death, 275; death of, 276.

Mac Cullinan, Cormac, his bequest to Glendalough, 429; bequest to Mungret, 510; birth of, 604; called to the throne of Cashel, 605-608; acquires his learning at monastery of Disert-Diarmada, 605, 606; bishop of Cashel, 610; stirring events of his reign, 609, 610; greatest fault of, 610; slain at battle of Ballaghmoon, 611; writings of, 612-614.

Mac Cumhaill, Finn, poet and warrior, 10; is general of Fenian Militia, 19.

Mac Duagh, Colman, founds two churches, 185.

Mac Firbis, Duald, scribe, 278, 279.

Mac Gorman, Finn, copies *Book of Leinster*, 140.

Mac Lenin Colman, Saint, induced St. Brendan to give up his worldly life, 212.

Mac Liag, Brian Boru's secretary, work of, 620, 621.

Mac Lonan, Flann, historical poet, poems written by, 618.

Mac Murrough, Diarmaid, forcibly carries away the Abbess of Kildare, 138; plunders and burns Clonard, 207; death of, 208; his treatment of young St. Laurence O'Toole 433; attack on Dublin, 440.

Mac Nadfraich, Aenghus, king, baptized by St. Patrick, 54.

Mac Nessa, Conor, becomes a benefactor of the poets, 10.

Mac Nisse, abbot of Clonmacnoise, 270.

Mac O'Cluasaigh, Colman, Saint, the tutor of St. Cummian the Tall, 230; his elegy on death of St. Cummian, 241; death of, 242.

Mac Robartaigh (now M'Groarty), family of, appointed custodians of casket which holds copy of St. Finnian's Psaltery, 252; members of, who met their death in defence of this sacred charge, 252; Marianus Scotus, a member of, 349.

Mac Ua Lugair, Dubthach, exhibits judgments and laws of Erin to St. Patrick, 53; his alliance with Patrick, 56, 57; his conversion, 82; their meeting some years later, 82, 83.

Mac Ui Clusaigh, Colman, Saint, nothing known of his personal history, 487; a professor in Cork, 487; hymn composed by, 488, 489.

Maelbrighde, successor of St. Patrick, 120.

Maelcaisil, abbot of Mungret, death of, 511.

Maelgenn, chief of the Druids, shows his magical power, 26.

Maelmuire, Primate of Armagh, had Brian Boru and his son interred at Armagh, 113.

Maelmuire, scribe, work compiled by, 280.

Maelmura, of Fathan, poems attributed to, 617, 618.
Maelruan, Saint, abbot of Tallaght, discovers the identity of St. Ængus, 408; and St. Ængus jointly write the Martyrology of Tallaght, 408, 409.
Maeve, rath of, at Tara, 22; credited with being the author of a poem, 27.
Magh Enna, plain, an angel appears to St. Brendan on, 213; performs a miracle there, 213.
Magh Mucruimhe (near Athenry), great battle fought at, 17.
Magh Slecht, St. Patrick overturns the idols of, 51.
Mahoun, brother of Brian Boru, assassinated, 484; Brian avenges the murder of, 485.
Malachy, Saint, birth and parentage of, 393; ordained a priest, 393; at the College of Lismore, 393; appointed to the abbacy of Bangor, 394; builds an oratory once again at Bangor, 394; made bishop of Connor, 394; founds a monastery at Cashel, 395; transferred to the Primatial See of Armagh, 395; expels the usurpers of the See of Armagh, 396; appointed Papal Legate for all Ireland, 396; death of, at Clairvaux, 397.
Manchan, Saint, shrine of, history and description of, 564, 565.
Mangan, Clarence, poet, cited, 28, 29.
Martin, Saint, supposed relationship with St. Patrick, 44; joins the imperial army, 45; life of at Marmoutier, 45, 46; is made bishop, 45; the father of monasticism in Gaul, 93.
Mathona, sister of St. Benignus, receives the veil from Saint Patrick, 126; founds a church and convent, 126.
Maur, Raban, bishop, 580.
Mayo, See of, annexed to Tuam, 540, 541.
Mercartor, Marius, cited, 40.
Michael the Stammerer, Greek Emperor, his letter to Lothaire, 388.
Missal, Bobbio, 380.
Mobhi Clarainech, Saint, of Glasnevin, 296.
Mochae, Saint, Patrick converts, baptizes and tonsures, 141; descent of, 142; founds monastery of Noendrum, 142; St. Colman placed under the training of, 143; strange story concerning, 144, 145; death of, 144.
Mochta, Saint, birth of, 146; founds church of Kill-mor (Cella-magna), 146; works a miracle, 147; founds school of Louth, 147; St. Patrick visits, 147; Rule of, 148; author of a work, 148, 149; death of, 148.
Mochoroy, Saint, favourite disciple of St. Kevin, 421.
Mocumin, Saint, under care of St. Columba of Terryglass, 400.
Moel, Druid, converted to the faith of Christ, 51,
Moinenn, Saint, the intimate friend and associate of St. Brendan, 222; appointed by St. Brendan to rule Clonfert, 222; things concerning him which are doubtful, 223, 224.
Molana, monastery of, founded by St. Fachtna, 491.
Moling, Saint, descent of, 426; spends some time in monastery of Glendalough, 426; founds a monastery, 426; had a love of useful labour, 427; his austerities and virtues attract a great number of disciples, 427; becomes bishop of Ferns, 427; procures the remission of the cow-tribute, 428; writings ascribed to, 428, 429; death of, 429.
Molloy, chief of Desmond, has Mahoun assassinated, 484, 485.
Monastery, Irish, general view of, 91-94; the buildings connected with, 94-97; discipline of, 97-102; spirit of hospitality in, 100, 101; daily labour of, 102-106.
Monk, the true, 91, 92; at first, 92.
Morals of St. Gregory the Great, a famous book in the schools of Ireland, 117.
Morann, learned judge, mentioned in *Senchus Mor*, 11.
Morini, Bartholomew and Bonaventure, wrote *Life of St. Cathaldus*, 457, 458; quoted, 459, 460.
Mor Rigan, queen and poetess, 8.
Moville, situation of, 245; in ancient times famous for its great religious establishments, 245.
Mucknoi, bishop, receives "seven Books of the Law" from St. Patrick, 63.

Muirgheas, abbot of Mungret, death of, 511.
Munchin, Saint, descent of, 509; builds himself a cell and oratory—Cill-Munchin, 509.
Murtough, father of St. Laurence O'Toole, 433.

Naomh Gilla-na, bishop of Glendalough, 431.
Nechan, Libeus, Saint, spends some time in Aran, 179.
Nectan, king, expels the Columbian monks from his dominions, 345.
Neidhe, poet, 9.
Nessan, abbot of Cork, 485.
Nessan of Mungret, ordained deacon by St. Patrick, 507; his visit to St. Ailbe of Emly, 507, 508; death of, 508.
Ninian, Saint, said to have visited St. Mochae at Noendrum, 143, 246; founds school of Candida Casa (Rosnat), 247; this school under, 166-168.
Noendrum (Mahee island), situation of, 141.

O'Bolcan, Nuada, abbot of Tuam, death of, 545.
O'Brien, Murtough, retires to monastery of Lismore, 470; plunders Mungret, 511; gives over Cashel for religious purposes, 608.
O'Brolchain Maelisa, Saint, retires to a monastic school, 353; a teacher and scholar, 353; said to have founded an oratory at Lismore, 354; death of, 354.
O'Brolchain, Aedh, professor, death of, 354.
O'Brolchain, Maelbrighde, bishop of Kildare, death of, 354.
O'Brolchain, Maelcolaim, bishop of Kildare, death of, 354.
O'Brolchain, Flaithbhertach, comarb of Columcille, procures money and renovates the monastery of Derry, 355, 356; elevated to the episcopal order—See of Derry established, 357; his death as recorded by the *Four Masters*, 357.
O'Brolchain, Domhnall, appointed to the abbacy of Iona, 358; erects a great church there, 358.
O'Brolchain, Flann, abbot of Iona, 358.
O'Cearbhail, Maelsuthain, chief, the intimate friend and counsellor of Brian Boru, 501; a renowned professor, 502; and the three students, 502, 503; regarded as the author or compiler of *Annals of Innisfallen* 503.
O'Cleirigh, Eoghan, bishop of Connaught, death of, 545.
O'Connor, Rory, king, grants tithes to Armagh, 121; is stimulated to resist the attack of the Normans on Dublin, by St. Laurence O'Toole, 441; formally gives up his claims to the kingdom of Ireland, 442; St. Laurence O'Toole travels to England and France in the interest of, 443; retires to abbey of Cong to die, 559, 560.
O'Connor, Cathal. founds a chapel at Clonmacnoise, 268.
O'Connor, Turlough, fleet of, despoils Desmond, 495; Celtic Art during reign of, 547-565; buildings erected during reign of, 557-559; rebuilds Cathedral of Tuam, 557.
O'Curry, cited, 1, 3, 4, *et seq.*
O'Donnell, Cathbarr, got casket made which holds copy of St. Finnian's Psaltery, 252; death of, 252.
O'Donnell, Manus, wrote a life of St. Columba, 330.
O'Drugan, professor in School of Armagh, death of, 121.
O'Duffys, the, 547, 550.
O'Duffy, Cele, Bishop of Mayo, 539.
O'Duffy, Flanagan Ruadh, professor, death of, 548.
O'Duffy, Domhnall, bishop of Elphin death of, 561.
O'Duffy, Muireadhach, high bishop of Connaught, death of, 560.
O'Duffy, Catholicus, high-bishop of Connaught, death of, 549, 555.
Oena, Saint, abbot of Clonmacnoise, 270.
Oengoba, father of St. Ængus, descent of, 405.
O'Flaherty, cited, 19, 22, 23, 305, *et seq.*
O'Flinn, Eochaid, historic poet, poems of, 619.
Ogma, poet, invention of Ogham Alphabet attributed to, 13.
O'Gorman, Florence, professor in Armagh, death of, 121.
O'Hagan, Imar, archbishop, rebuilds church of Armagh, 121.
O'Hanlon, Canon:
—— *Lives of the Irish Saints*, quoted, 38.
—— *Life of St. Brigid*, quoted, 129.

O'Hartigan, Cinaeth, historic poet, 619.
O'Hessian, Hugh, high-bishop of Connaught, 549, 555.
O'Hoisin, Aedh, archbishop of Tuam, 545.
O'Huihair, Patrick, a poet of Innisfallen, 504.
Oisin (Ossian), Erin's greatest poet, 10; story of his relations with St. Patrick, 57.
O'Kelly, Diarmaid, plunders monastery of Clonfert, 243.
O'Kelly, Conor, founds a sepulchral chapel at Clonmacnoise, 268.
O'Leathain, Colman, Saint, a pupil, abbot, and bishop of Lismore, 467.
Ollamh Fodhla, king, reigns and dies at Tara, 19.
O'Lochain, Cuan, poet, quoted, 23; descent of, 623; slain, 624; poems written by, 624.
Olum Ollioll, learned poet, poems written by, 10.
O'Malone (O'Maeileoin), Gillachrist, work attributed to, 279.
O'Manchan, Brehon, death of, recorded, 430.
O'Melaghlin, Donogh, prince of Meath, sentence of excommunication pronounced upon, 361.
O'Moore Moran, lector of Armagh, death of, at Mungret, 511.
O'Mordha Peter, bishop of Clonfert, building of present church of Clonfert (now in Protestant hands), attributed to, 244.
O'Muidhin, Giolla Aedha, abbot and bishop of Cork, 486, 487.
Ona, harper, 9.
Organization, Church, established by St. Patrick, 55, 56.
O'Rorke, Tiernan, plunders Clonard, 207.
O'Rorke, Art, plunders monastery of Clonfert, 243.
O'Rorke, Aedh, plunders monastery of Clonfert, 243.
O'Rorke, Fergal, builds a tower at Clonmacnoise, 268, 269.
Oswald, king of Northumbria, convenes a Synod at Whitby to establish a uniform Easter usage, 527-529.
Ottilo, Duke of Bavaria, St. Virgilius at court of, 567.
O'Toole, Laurence (Lorcan), Saint, authentic life of, 432; descent of, 433; given as a hostage to Dermott M'Murrough, 433; released, 434; placed under the protection of bishop of Glendalough, 434; a diligent scholar, 435; made abbot of Glendalough, 436; discharges the duties with complete success, 436; consecrated archbishop of Dublin, 436; his election inaugurates a new era, 437; reforms the people and clergy of the city of Dublin, 437; lives a life of rigorous austerity, 438; spends Lent in the most secluded spots, 439; stimulates Rory O'Connor and other native princes to unite against the Normans, 441; his loyalty to Rory O'Connor, 442, 443, 444; attends a General Council in Rome, and secures many privileges for the Irish Church, 443; made Apostolic Legate, 443; in monastery of Eu, 444; death of, 445; his remains enclosed in a crystal case, 445; canonized, 446.

Paparo, Cardinal John, Papal Legate, constitutes four archbishops in Ireland for the first time, 361.
Papeus, Saint, spends some time in Aran, 179.
Paschal Controversy, diversity of practice existing, regarding the celebration of the Pasch, 233; the Alexandrian usage—the correct one, 234; the Irish usage, 234, 235; the Irish clergy are admonished by the Pope for adhering to their old usage, 235; the Synod of Magh Lene convened to discuss the subject, 236; the Epistle of St. Cummian the Tall, regarding the celebration of the Pasch, 237-240.
Paschal Epistle of St. Cummian the Tall to the abbot of Hy, analysis of, 237-240.
Patrick, Saint, education of, 43-50; early years of, 44; accompanies Germanus to Britain, 48; visits the island of Lerins, 49; sets out for the task of converting the Irish to Christianity, 50; lights the Paschal fire, 50; miraculous destruction of the chief Druids of Erin at the prayer of, 51; reforms the Brehon Laws, 52; convokes the men of Erin to a conference at Tara, 53; selects a Commission of

Nine to purify the pagan code of laws, 55; establishes a Church organization, 55; establishes a friendly alliance with Arch-Poet of Erin, 56; commences to train up a native ministry, 58; accompanied by bishops and priests on his Irish mission, 59; ecclesiastical legislation of, 61, 62; organizes a peripatetic school, 62, 63; household of, 65; *Confession* of, 67-73; motive of in writing this *Confession*, 69; descent of, 70; escapes from captivity, 71; epistle to Coroticus, 73-75; the *Lorica of*, 75-77; specimen of hymn, translated, 76; Sechnall's hymn of, 77-81; is granted a site, and founds school of Armagh, 111, 112; meeting with St. Benignus, 114; baptizes the two sisters of Fochlut wood, 126; kings' daughters come on a pilgrimage to, 126, 127.

Pelagius, of British birth, 40; gives expression to his heretical views, 40, 41; his meeting with Caelestius, 41.

Petroc, Saint, St. Kevin placed under care of, 415.

Pilgrimage, Irish, to Jerusalem, testimony of Dicuil the Geographer regarding, 285, 286.

Poet, historic, chief duty of, 8.

Preface to St. Jerome's Commentaries on Jeremias, passage in, misunderstood by some Irish scholars, 39.

Prosper of Aquitaine, cited, 40.

Prudentius, on the doctrine of Predestinatian, 581, 582.

Psalter of Caiseal, 612–614.

Psaltery, Gallic, brought from Rome by St. Finnian of Moville, 248, 249; copy of, furtively made by St. Columba, 250, 310; eventful history of this copy, 250-253; now in Royal Irish Academy, in Dublin, 253; inscription on casket which encloses it, 252, 349; workmanship of casket, 253; different custodians of, 252; the casket opened in 1814, 252, 253.

Raban Maur, bishop, and the monk Gotteschalk, 580.

Rachau, See of, as mentioned in *Life of St. Carthach*, not determined, 462.

Rahan, monastery of, founded by St. Carthach, 449; St. Carthach expelled from, 450.

Richards, Colonel Solomon, cited, 120.

Richenau, monastery of, 335.

"River of Trajan," testimony regarding existence of, 285.

Riverstown (Biorra), monastery of, founded by St. Brendan the Elder, 522.

Reeves, bishop, *Adamnan's Life of Columba*, quoted, 288, 291, 292.

Roscrea, monastery of, St. Carthach in, 451; founded by St. Cronan 523.

Rosnat (Candida Casa), monastery of, place and time of its foundation, 166-168, 246, 247; St. Enda goes to study at, 168; is visited by several other saints, 167; St. Finnian of Moville in, 247.

Rossa, member of Commission of Nine, 54.

Ruadhan of Lorrha, curses king of Tara and his palace, 218.

Rufinus of Aquileia (Grunnius), 39.

Rule of St. Carthach, 455-457.

Saigher, St. Carthach, at monastery of, 451.

Saints, first order of, 107; second order of, 107, 108; third order of, 108.

Saint Boniface, on baptism, 568; brings four charges against St. Virgilius, 569–571.

Saltair of Tara, work, attributed to Cormac Mac Art, 23; contents of, 23.

Sancti Venite, hymn, 80, 81.

Sayings of St. Patrick, 87; his saying, "Deo gratias," 112.

Schools, Christian, sketch of, 188-193; the first, 188; developed and enlarged in the fifth century, 190; in the West, 190, 191; St. Patrick did not himself establish, 192, 193.

Schools, Organization of the Gaedhlic Professional, the learned professions, 597-599; Degrees in Poetry, in Law, in History, 600, 601.

School of Aran, St. Enda founds, 177; saints who visited, 177-179.

School of Armagh, observations on, 110, 111; founded by St. Patrick, 112; other ecclesiastical buildings at Armagh, 113; a great theological seminary, 117; teachers of, 118-120; burned and plundered, 120, 121; rebuilt, 121; the *Book of Armagh*, 122-124.

School of Bangor, St. Comgall of, 364-370; founded, 367; Saint Columba and his followers visit, 368; the holiness and miracles of St. Comgall attract crowds to, 369; kings give up their crowns and come to, 369, 370; Saint Columbanus the great glory of, 370-381; Dungal, after Columbanus, the greatest glory of, 381-393; St. Malachy, abbot of, 393-397.
School of Clonard, founded by St. Finnian, 199, 200; visited by all the distinguished saints of Erin, 201; Oral Instruction in, 202; the study of Sacred Scripture in, 202, 203; relics of antiquity at Clonard, 205; plundered by the Irish and Danes, 207; refounded, 208; St. Columba at, 295.
School of Clonenagh, St. Comgall in, 366, 402, situation of, 398, 399; St. Fintan of, 399-404; founded by St. Fintan, 401; rigorous discipline and fasting in, 366, 401, 402; St. Ængus the most remarkable scholar of, 404-413.
School of Clonfert, founded by St. Brendan, 220, 221; St. Moinenn and, 222-224; St. Fintan and, 224, 225; St. Cummian and, 228-231; subsequent history of, 242 243; old cathedral of, 243, 244.
School of Clonmacnoise, situation of, 258; founded by St. Ciaran, 262; ruined churches of, 266-269; inscribed tombstones at, 269, 270; grants made to, 271; scholars of, 272-274; the Danes and Irish plunder, 274, 275; annalists of, 276-281; Dicuil the Geographer likely trained at, 281; Celtic Art at, 550-565.
School of Cork, situation of, 475, 476; St. Finbarr of, 476-484; founded by St. Finbarr, 480; scholars of, 480; exact site of, 480; crowds of holy men come to, 483; during the ninth century, 485, 486; refounded by Cormac Mac Carthy, 486; Giolla Aedh O'Muidhin, abbot and bishop of, 486, 487; St. Colman of, 487-489.
School of Derry, St. Columcille founds, 298; Columcille's original church, 298; Columcille and twelve monks set sail from, 312; famous scholars of, 352-364.
School of Durrow, situation of, 301; founded by St. Columcille, 301; interesting incidents having reference to, 302; Cormac Ua Leathain, in charge of, 303; copy of the Gospels (*Book of Durrow*), written at, 304, 305; no trace at present of any of the ancient buildings of, 305; desolated by Hugh de Lacy, 306.
School of Emly, founded, 131.
School of Glendalough, St. Kevin of, 414-422; founded by St. Kevin, 420; existing ruins in Glendalough, 422-425; St. Moling of, 425-431; the Danes ravage, 429; the native Irish ravage, 430; noble ladies go on a pilgrimage to, 430; St. Laurence O'Toole, 432-446.
School of Iniscaltra, situation of, 512, 513; St. Columba of Terryglass established at, 514; St. Caimin of, 517, 518; crowds of students come to, 518; the ruined monuments still remaining at Iniscaltra, 519, 520; sculptured stones at, 520, 521; the Danes ravage, 521.
School of Innisfallen, by whom founded, 496-499; Maelsuthain O'Cearbhail, a renowned professor of, 502; *Annals of*, 503, 504; poetry cultivated in, 504; description of island of Innisfallen, 505.
School of Iona, the *Port a Churraich*, 314; description of Iona, 315, 316; founded by St. Columcille, 316; no trace of the original buildings founded by Columcille at present, 317; churches of a later date in Iona, 317; scholars of, 331-334; Adamnan, ninth abbot of, 334-347; community of, get a free grant of Kells, 346; pillaged and plundered, 346.
School of Kells, foundation of, 306, 307; chief memorials of Columcille at Kells, 308, 309, the *Book of* 309, 310; ravaged by the Danes, 348; head of the Columbian houses, 348, 349.
School of Kildare, St. Brigid and, 125-130; St. Brigid founds, 130, 131; Kildare becomes a great city and a great school, 132; description of church of, 133; preserves a double line of succession—abbot-bishops and abbesses, 137; ruins of, 138; the perpetual fire of,

139, 140; the art of illumination in, 140, 141.
School of Lismore, founded by St. Carthach, 453; St. Carthach of, 447-457; St. Cathaldus, the great glory of, 457-465; St. Cuanna, abbot of, 466, 467; St. Colman O'Leathain, abbot and bishop of, 467, 468; the Danes ravage, 469; princes retire to, 470; plundered and burned in the twelfth century, 471; situation of, 471; inscribed stones at, 472; the crozier of, 472, 473; the *Book of*, 473, 474.
School of Louth, founded by St. Mochta, 147; St. Patrick visits, 147; burned and pillaged by the Danes, 149.
School of Mayo, founded by St. Colman, 530-532; St. Colman of, 526-533; St. Gerald of, 534-537; St. Adamnan visits, 343, 537; subsequent history of, 538-541.
School of Moville, situation of, 245; founded by St. Finnian, 249; St. Columcille, the most famous pupil of, 249, 294; St. Columcille furtively copies the Psaltery of St. Finnian at, 250; St. Colman, abbot of, 255; produces a distinguished historian — Marianus Scotus, the Chronicler, 256, 257.
School of Mungret, founded by St. Patrick, 507; deacon Nessan of, 507, 508; St. Munchin of, 508, 509; no trace of the ancient buildings now, 509; ravaged by the Danes, 510; plundered by Murtough O'Brien, 511; "the learning of the Mungret women," 511, 512; situation of, 512.
School of Noendrum, St. Mochae founds, 142; St. Colman of Dromore at, 143, 144; friendly relations existing between Rosnat (Candida Casa) in Galloway, and, 144.
School of Ross, founded by St. Fachtna, 491; other abbots and bishops of, 492, 493; ravaged by the Danes, 493.
School of Tuaim Drecain, situation of, 602; St. Bricin, founder of, 602, 603; three schools at Tuaim Drecain, 603.
School of Tuam, founded, 541, 542; situation of, 543; attracts crowds of scholars, 543; St. Brendan visits, 543, 544; St. Jarlath of, 541-545.
Scotus Marianus, the Chronicler, date of his birth, 256; spends his youth in school of Moville, 256; ordained priest, 256; writings of, 257; death of, 257.
Scotus Marianus, Scribe and Commentator, birth and early youth of, 349; leaves Ireland, 349; and his two companions live as recluses in a cell, 350; remarkable for the holiness of his life, 351; his most famous work, 351, 352; death of, 352.
Seanach Garbh, abbot, mentioned in *Ulster Annals*, 225.
Seanross, church of, founded by St. Cronan, 523.
Sechnall (Secundinus), Saint, accompanies St. Patrick to Ireland, 59, 80; descent of, 77; composes a hymn in honour of St. Patrick, 77, 78; little is known of, 79.
Sedulius, poet, evidence that he was of Irish birth, 29-31; mention made of, in ancient MSS., 31, 32; travels of, 38; his dedication of, the *Carmen Paschale*, 32, 33; place and time of his death, 33; the Pope approves of his writings, 35; eulogism of, by critics, 35; author's remarks on writings of, 36-38; his claim to be venerated as a saint, 38; at Achaia, 33; reference in treatise of Dicuil the Geographer, which settles the question of his nationality, 289, 290.
Sedulius, bishop of Britain, subscribed the Acts of the Council of Rome, 30.
Sedulius, Commentator on Scripture, an Irishman, and a distinguished scholar, 574; other Irish scholars of name of, 574, 575; writings of, 574, 575.
Sen, ancient judge, passes first judgment respecting Distress, 11.
Sencha, learned judge, mentioned in *Senchus Mor*, 11.
Senchus Mor, quoted, 6, 7, 8, 11, 53, *et seq.*
Siadhal (Sedulius), bishop of Dublin, death of, 30.
Sigebert of Gembloux, cited, 38.
Sinell of Cell Dareis, bell ringer of St. Patrick, 65.
Sisters, the two—Fedelm and Ethne—receive the religious veil from St. Patrick, 125.
Slainge, king of Firbolgs, the reputed founder of Tara, 19.

Slane, hill of, a historic site, 589; Dagobert, a pupil in college of, 590.
Slieve Bloom mountains, monasteries founded round base of, 398.
Stones, inscribed, discovered in Ireland, 13; in Great Britain, 13; summary of Mr. Brash's conclusions on, 13, 14; geographical distribution of, 14.
Strabo, Walafridus, abbot of Richenau, 335; composes a poem in celebration of martyrdom of St. Blaithmac, 347.
Suibine, anchorite and scribe, 269; learning and death of, 269, 274.
Suibhne, abbot of Iona, 334.
Synod, Nicene, intervenes regarding the celebration of the Pasch, 233.
Synod of Magh Lene, the Roman practice of celebrating the Pasch agreed to at, 236.
—— Whitby, the Easter usage discussed at, 527-529.
—— Bri Mac Taidgh, 356, 357, 361, 362.
—— Holmpatrick, object of, 360.
—— Kells—four archbishops legally constituted in Ireland for the first time, 361.
Synod of Mellifont, object of, 361.
Synod of Clane—professors required to graduate at school of Armagh, 362.
Synod of Athboy, main object for which convened, 362.

Tadhg, grandson of Ollioll Olum, rewarded for his military service by Cormac MacArt, 18.
Tallaght, monastery of St. Ængus, conceals his own identity and enters as a lay brother, 407, 408; the *Martyrology* of, 408, 409.
Tara, ruins at, 22.
Taranto, ancient city of, 463.
Tawnagh, church and convent founded at, 107.
Teach Miodhchuarta — Parliament house—erected at Tara by Cormac MacArt, 20, 21; present state of, 21.
Teach Moling, monastery, situation of, 426; St. Moling's life in, 427.
Teagusc na Riogh, treatise ascribed to Cormac Mac Art, 23.
Tempull-na-Skellig, oratory of St. Kevin, 419.
Terryglass, body St. Columba Mac Crimthann transferred from Iniscaltra to, 516.
Thierry, king of Austrasia, admonished by St. Columbanus for his sins, 375, 376; expels Columbanus from his kingdom, 375, 376.
Theodoric, king, retires to monastery of Lismore, 407.
Tighernach, Boirceach, abbot of Moville, death of, 256.
Tighernach, annalist, personal history of *Annals of*, 277, 278.
Todd, writer, his *St. Patrick* quoted, 73.
Tomrar, plunders monastery of Clonfert and kills some of the monks, 242, 243.
Torbach, primate of Armagh, got Book of Armagh transcribed, 103.
Torna Eigas, poet, poems attributed to, 28.
Torpeist, Senchan, chief bard, 616.
Tuam, cross of, description of, 554; remains of church at, 557.
Tuathal Teachtmar, king, makes a mensal demesne for High King of Tara, 19.
Tuathal Maelgarbh, king, slain by Maelmor, 262.
Turcius Ruffus Asterius, name of two consuls of fifth century, one of whom published *Carmen Paschale*, 34.
Turgesius, plunders and burns Clonfert, Clonmacnoise, &c., 242.

Ua Cobthaich, Muiredhach, bishop of Derry, death of recorded, 357.
Ua Liathain, Cormac, placed in charge of Durrow, 303; leaves Durrow without Columcille's permission, 303; founds a monastery in Tyrawley, 304.
Uisneach, (Usney), meeting of SS. Kevin, Comgall, and Canice, 421.
Ultan, Saint, collects materials for *Life of St. Brigid*, 134.

Virgilius, Saint, archbishop of Salzburg, born and educated in Ireland, 566, 567; travels to France, 567; goes to Bavaria, 567; on the re-baptism of a catechumen, 568; charges brought against by St. Boniface, 569-571; on the doctrine of the Antipodes, 570; becomes bishop of Salzburg, 572; the apostle of Carinthia, 572; rebuilds the monastery of St. Peter, 572; death of, 573; his tomb discovered, 573; epitaph on his tomb, 574.

Wilfrid, archbishop of York, defeats St. Colman of Mayo at the Synod of Whitby, on the Easter usage, 577-529.

238.

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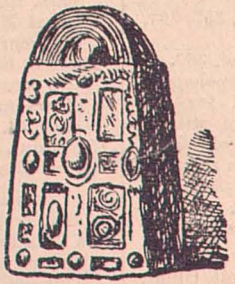

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