

Ireland, Historic and Picturesque eBook

Ireland, Historic and Picturesque

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rock Cashel, Ruins of old cathedral, king Cormac's
chapel and round tower
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Mellifont abbey, co. Louth
holy cross abbey, co. Tipperary
Donegal castle
Tullymore park, co. Down
Thomond bridge, Limerick
salmon Fishery, Galway
O'CONNELL'S statue, Dublin*

IRELAND.

I.

Visible and invisible.

Here is an image by which you may call up and remember the natural form and appearance of Ireland:



Think of the sea gradually rising around her coasts, until the waters, deepened everywhere by a hundred fathoms, close in upon the land. Of all Ireland there will now remain visible above the waves only two great armies of islands, facing each other obliquely across a channel of open sea. These two armies of islands will lie in ordered ranks, their lines stretching from northeast to southwest; they will be equal in size, each two hundred miles along the front, and seventy miles from front to rear. And the open sea between, which divides the two armies, will measure seventy miles across.

Not an island of these two armies, as they lie thus obliquely facing each other, will rise as high as three thousand feet; only the captains among them will exceed a thousand; nor will there be great variety in their forms. All the islands, whether north or south, will have gently rounded backs, clothed in pastures nearly to the crest, with garments of purple heather lying under the sky upon their ridges. Yet for all this roundness of outline there will be, towards the Atlantic end of either army, a growing sternness of aspect, a more sombre ruggedness in the outline of the hills, with cliffs and steep ravines setting their brows frowning against the deep.



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Hold in mind the image of these two obliquely ranged archipelagoes, their length thrice their breadth, seaming the blue of the sea, and garmented in dark green and purple under the sunshine; and, thinking of them thus, picture to yourself a new rising of the land, a new withdrawal of the waters, the waves falling and ever falling, till all the hills come forth again, and the salt tides roll and ripple away from the valleys, leaving their faces for the winds to dry; let this go on till the land once more takes its familiar form, and you will easily call up the visible image of the whole.

As you stand in the midst of the land, where first lay the channel of open sea, you will have, on your northern horizon, the beginning of a world of purple-outlined hills, outliers of the northern mountain region, which covers the upper third of the island. On all sides about you, from the eastern sea to the western ocean, you will have the great central plain, dappled with lakes and ribbed with silver rivers, another third of the island. Then once more, to the south, you will have a region of hills, the last third of Ireland, in size just equal to the northern mountains or the central plain.

The lines of the northern hills begin with the basalt buttresses of Antrim and the granite ribs of Down, and pass through northern Ulster and Connacht to the headlands of Mayo and Galway. Their rear is held by the Donegal ranges, keeping guard against the blackness of the northern seas.

The plain opens from the verge of these hills; the waters that gather on its pleasant pastures and fat fields, or among the green moss tracts of its lowlands, flow eastward by the Boyne or southwestward by the Shannon to the sea.

Then with the granite mountains of Dublin and Wicklow begin the southern hills, stretching through south Leinster and Munster to the red sandstone ridges of Cork and Kerry, our last vantage-ground against the Atlantic.

Finally, encircling all, is the perpetual presence of the sea, with its foaming, thunderous life or its days of dreamy peace; around the silver sands or furrowed cliffs that gird the island our white waves rush forever, murmuring the music of eternity.

Such is this land of Eire, very old, yet full of perpetual youth; a thousand times darkened by sorrow, yet with a heart of living gladness; too often visited by evil and pale death, yet welling ever up in unconquerable life,—the youth and life and gladness that thrill through earth and air and sky, when the whole world grows beautiful in the front of Spring.

For with us Spring is like the making of a new world in the dawn of time. Under the warm wind's caressing breath the grass comes forth upon the meadows and the hills, chasing dun Winter away. Every field is newly vested in young corn or the olive greenness of wheat; the smell of the earth is full of sweetness. White daisies and yellow dandelions star all our pastures; and on the green ruggedness

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of every hillside, or along the shadowed banks of every river and every silver stream, amid velvet mosses and fringes of new-born ferns, in a million nooks and crannies throughout all the land, are strewn dark violets; and wreaths of yellow primroses with crimped green leaves pour forth a remote and divine fragrance; above them, the larches are dainty with new greenery and rosy tassels, and the young leaves of beech and oak quiver with fresh life.

Still the benigance of Spring pours down upon us from the sky, till the darkening fields are hemmed in between barriers of white hawthorn, heavy with nectar, and twined with creamy honeysuckle, the finger-tips of every blossom coral-red. The living blue above throbs with the tremulous song of innumerable larks; the measured chant of cuckoos awakens the woods; and through the thickets a whole world's gladness sings itself forth from the throat of thrush and blackbird. Through the whole land between the four seas benediction is everywhere; blue-bells and the rosy fingers of heath deck the mountain-tops, where the grouse are crooning to each other among the whins; down the hillsides into every valley pour gladness and greenness and song; there are flowers everywhere, even to the very verge of the whispering sea. There, among the gray bent-spikes and brackens on the sandhills, primroses weave their yellow wreaths; and little pansies, golden and blue and purple, marshal their weird eyes against the spears of dark blue hyacinths, till the rich tribute of wild thyme makes peace between them.

The blue sky overhead, with its flocks of sunlit clouds, softly bends over the gentle bosom of the earth. A living spirit throbs everywhere, palpable, audible, full of sweetness and sadness immeasurable—sadness that is only a more secret joy.

Then the day grows weary, making way for the magic of evening and the oncoming dark with its mystery. The tree-stems redden with the sunset; there is a chill sigh in the wind; the leaves turn before it, burnished against the purple sky. As the gloom rises up out of the earth, bands of dark red gather on the horizon, seaming the clear bronze of the sky, that passes upward into olive-color, merging in dark blue overhead. The sun swings down behind the hills, and purple darkness comes down out of the sky; the red fades from the tree-stems, the cloud-colors die away; the whole world glimmers with the fading whiteness of twilight. Silence gathers itself together out of the dark, deepened, not broken, by the hushing of the wind among the beech-leaves, or the startled cluck of a blackbird, or a wood-pigeon's soft murmur, as it dreams in the silver fir.

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Under the brown wings of the dark, the night throbs with mystic presences; the hills glimmer with an inward life; whispering voices hurry through the air. Another and magical land awakes in the dark, full of a living restlessness; sleepless as the ever-moving sea. Everywhere through the night-shrouded woods, the shadowy trees seem to interrupt their secret whispers till you are gone past. There is no sense of loneliness anywhere, but rather a host of teeming lives on every hand, palpable though hidden, remote from us though touching our lives, calling to us through the gloom with wordless voices, inviting us to enter and share with them the mystical life of this miraculous earth, great mother of us all, The dark is full of watching eyes.

Summer with us is but a brighter Spring, as our Winter only prolongs the sadness of Autumn. So our year has but two moods, a gay one and a sad one. Yet each tinges the other—the mists of Autumn veiling the gleam of Spring—Spring smiling through the grief of Autumn. When the sad mood comes, stripping the trees of their leaves, and the fields of their greenness, white mists veil the hills and brood among the fading valleys. A shiver runs through the air, and the cold branches are starred with tears. A poignant grief is over the land, an almost desolation,—full of unspoken sorrow, tongue-tied with unuttered complaint. All the world is lost and forlorn, without hope or respite. Everything is given up to the dirges of the moaning seas, the white shrouds of weeping mist. Wander forth upon the uplands and among the lonely hills and rock-seamed sides of the mountains, and you will find the same sadness everywhere: a grieving world under a grieving sky. Quiet desolation hides among the hills, tears tremble on every brown grass-blade, white mists of melancholy shut out the lower world.

Whoever has not felt the poignant sadness of the leafless days has never known the real Ireland; the sadness that is present, though veiled, in the green bravery of Spring, and under the songs of Summer. Nor have they ever known the real Ireland who have not divined beneath that poignant sadness a heart of joy, deep and perpetual, made only keener by that sad outward show.

Here in our visible life is a whisper and hint of our life invisible; of the secret that runs through and interprets so much of our history. For very much of our nation's life has been like the sadness of those autumn days,—a tale of torn leaves, of broken branches, of tears everywhere. Tragedy upon tragedy has filled our land with woe and sorrow, and, as men count success, we have failed of it, and received only misery and deprivation. He has never known the true Ireland who does not feel that woe. Yet, more, he knows not the real Ireland who cannot feel within that woe the heart of power and joy,—the strong life outlasting darkest night,—the soul that throbs incessantly under all the calamities of the visible world, throughout the long tragedy of our history.

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This is our secret: the life that is in sorrow as in joy; the power that is not more in success than in failure—the one soul whose moods these are, who uses equally life and death.

For the tale of our life is mainly tragedy. And we may outline now the manner in which that tale will be told. We shall have, first, a long, dim dawn,—mysterious peoples of the hidden past coming together to our land from the outlying darkness. A first period, which has left abundant and imperishable traces everywhere among our hills and valleys, writing a large history in massive stone, yet a history which, even now, is dim as the dawn it belongs to. What can be called forth from that Archaic Darkness, in the backward and abyss of Time, we shall try to evoke; drawing the outlines of a people who, with large energies in our visible world, toiled yet more for the world invisible; a people uniform through the whole land and beyond it, along many neighboring shores; a people everywhere building; looking back into a long past; looking forward through the mists of the future. A people commemorating the past in a form that should outlast the future. A people undertaking great enterprises for mysterious ends; whose works are everywhere among us, to this day, imperishable in giant stone; yet a people whose purposes are mysterious to us, whose very name and tongue are quite unknown. Their works still live all around us in Ireland, spread evenly through the four provinces, a world of the vanished past enduring among us into the present; and, so mightily did these old builders work, and with such large simplicity, that what they built will surely outlast every handiwork of our own day, and endure through numberless to-morrows, bridging the morning and evening twilight of our race.

After this Archaic Dawn we shall find a mingling of four races in Ireland, coming together from widely separated homes, unless one of the four be the descendant of the archaic race, as well it may be. From the surging together of these four races we shall see, in almost pre-historic times, the growth of a well-knit polity; firm principalities founded, strong battles fought, a lasting foundation of law. In this Second Epoch, every thing that in the first was dim and vague grows firm in outline and defined. Names, places, persons,—we know them all as if they were of to-day. This is the age which flowered in the heroic days of Emain of Maca, Emain 'neath the beech-trees, the citadel of northeastern Ireland. Here we shall find the court of Fergus mac Roeg, a man too valiant, too passionate, too generous to rule altogether wisely; his star darkened by the gloomy genius of Concobar his stepson, the evil lover of ill-fated Deirdre. Cuculain, too, the war-loving son of Sualtam, shall rise again,—in whom one part of our national genius finds its perfect flower. We shall hear the thunder of his chariot, at the Battle of the Headland of the Kings, when Meave the winsome and crafty queen of Connacht comes against



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him, holding in silken chains of her tresses the valiant spirit of Fergus. The whole life of that heroic epoch, still writ large upon the face of the land, shall come forth clear and definite; we shall stand by the threshold of Cuculain's dwelling, and move among the banquet-halls of Emain of Maca. We shall look upon the hills and valleys that Meave and Deirdre looked on, and hear the clash of spear and shield at the Ford of the river,—and this even though we must go back two thousand years.

To this will follow a Third Epoch, where another side of Ireland's genius will write itself in epic all across the land, with songs for every hillside, and stories for every vale and grove. Here our more passionate and poetic force will break forth in the lives of Find, son of Cumal, the lord of warriors; in his son Ossin, most famous bard of the western lands, and Ossin's son Oscar, before whose might even the fiends and sprites cowered back dismayed. As the epoch of Cuculain shows us our valor finding its apotheosis, so shall we find in Find and Ossin and Oscar the perfect flower of our genius for story and song; for romantic life and fine insight into nature; for keen wit and gentler humor. The love of nature, the passion for visible beauty, and chiefly the visible beauty of our land, will here show itself clearly,—a sense of nature not merely sensuous, but thrilling with hidden and mystic life. We shall find such perfection in this more emotional and poetic side of Irish character as will leave little for coming ages to add. In these two early epochs we shall see the perfecting of the natural man; the moulding of rounded, gracious and harmonious lives, inspired with valor and the love of beauty and song.

Did our human destiny stop there, with the perfect life of individual men and women, we might well say that these two epochs of Ireland contain it all; that our whole race could go no further. For no man lived more valiant than Cuculain, more generous than Fergus, more full of the fire of song than Ossin, son of Find. Nor amongst women were any sadder than Deirdre and Grania; craftier than Meave, more winsome than Nessa the mother of Concoibar. Perfected flowers of human life all of them,—if that be all of human life. So, were this all, we might well consent that with the death of Oscar our roll of history might close; there is nothing to add that the natural man could add.

But where the perfecting of the natural man ends, our truer human life begins—the life of our ever-living soul. The natural man seeks victory; he seeks wealth and possessions and happiness; the love of women, and the loyalty of followers. But the natural man trembles in the face of defeat, of sorrow, of subjection; the natural man cannot raise the black veil of death.

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Therefore for the whole world and for our land there was needed another epoch, a far more difficult lesson,—one so remote from what had been of old, that even now we only begin to understand it. To the Ireland that had seen the valor of Cuculain, that had watched the wars of Fergus,—to the Ireland that listened to the deeds of Find and the songs of Ossin,—came the Evangel of Galilee, the darkest yet brightest message ever brought to the children of earth. If we rightly read that Evangel, it brought the doom of the natural man, and his supersession by the man immortal; it brought the death of our personal perfecting and pride, and the rising from the dead of the common soul, whereby a man sees another self in his neighbor; sees all alike in the one Divine.

Of this one Divine, wherein we all live and live forever, pain is no less the minister than pleasure; nay, pain is more its minister, since pleasure has already given its message to the natural man. Of that one Divine, sorrow and desolation are the messengers, alike with joy and gladness; even more than joy and gladness, for the natural man has tasted these. Of that one Divine, black and mysterious death is the servant, not less than bright life; and life we had learned of old in the sunshine.

[Illustration: In the Dargle, Co. Wicklow]

There came, therefore, to Ireland, as to a land cherished for enduring purposes, first the gentler side, and then the sterner, of the Galilean message. First, the epoch almost idyllic which followed after the mission of Patrick; the epoch of learning and teaching the simpler phrases of the Word. Churches and schools rose everywhere, taking the place of fort and embattled camp. Chants went up at morning and at evening, with the incense of prayer, and heaven seemed descended upon earth. Our land, which had stood so high in the ranks of valor and romance, now rose not less eminent for piety and fervid zeal, sending forth messengers and ministers of the glad news to the heathen lands of northern and central Europe, and planting refuges of religion within their savage bounds. Beauty came forth in stone and missal, answering to the beauty of life it was inspired by; and here, if anywhere upon earth through a score of centuries, was realized the ideal of that prayer for the kingdom, as in heaven, so on earth. Here, again, we have most ample memorials scattered all abroad throughout the land; we can call up the whole epoch, and make it stand visible before us, visiting every shrine and sacred place of that saintly time, seeing, with inner eyes, the footsteps of those who followed that path, first traced out by the shores of Gennesaret.



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Once more, if the kingdom come upon earth were all of the message, we might halt here; for here forgiveness and gentle charity performed their perfect work, and learning was present with wise counsel to guide willing feet in the way. Yet this is not all; nor, if we rightly understand that darkest yet brightest message, are we or is mankind destined for such an earthly paradise; our kingdom is not of this world. Here was another happiness, another success; yet not in that happiness nor in that success was hid the secret; it lay far deeper. Therefore we find that morning with its sunshine rudely clouded over, its promise swept away in the black darkness of storms. Something more than holy living remained to be learned; there remained the mystery of failure and death—that death which is the doorway to our real life. Therefore upon our shores broke wave after wave of invasion, storm after storm of cruelest oppression and degradation. In the very dust was our race ground down, destitute, afflicted, tormented, according to prophecy and promise. Nor was that the end. Every bitterness that the heart of man can conceive, that the heart of man can inflict, that the heart of man can endure, was poured into our cup, and we drained it to the dregs. Of that saddest yet most potent time we shall record enough to show not only what befell through our age of darkness, but also, so far as may be, what miraculous intent underlay it, what promise the darkness covered, of our future light; what golden rays of dawn were hidden in our gloom.

Finally, from all our fiery trials we shall see the genius of our land emerge, tried indeed by fire, yet having gained fire's purity; we shall see that genius beginning, as yet with halting speech, to utter its most marvelous secret of the soul of man. We shall try at least to gain clear sight of our great destiny, and thereby of the like destiny of universal man.

For we cannot doubt that what we have passed through, all men and all nations either have passed through already, or are to pass through in the time to come. There is but one divine law, one everlasting purpose and destiny for us all. And if we see other nations now entering that time of triumph which passed for us so long ago, that perfecting of the natural man, with his valor and his song, we shall with fear and reverence remember that before them also lie the dark centuries of fiery trial; the long night of affliction, the vigils of humiliation and suffering. The one Divine has not yet laid aside the cup that holds the bitter draught,—the drinking of which comes ever before the final gift of the waters of life. What we passed through, they shall pass through also; what we suffered, they too shall suffer. Well will it be with them if, like us, they survive the fierce trial, and rise from the fire immortal, born again through sacrifice.



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Therefore I see in Ireland a miraculous and divine history, a life and destiny invisible, lying hid within her visible life. Like that throbbing presence of the night which whispers along the hills, this diviner whisper, this more miraculous and occult power, lurks in our apparent life. From the very gray of her morning, the children of Ireland were preoccupied with the invisible world; it was so in the darkest hours of our oppression and desolation; driven from this world, we took refuge in that; it was not the kingdom of heaven upon earth, but the children of earth seeking a refuge in heaven. So the same note rings and echoes through all our history; we live in the invisible world. If I rightly understand our mission and our destiny, it is this: To restore to other men the sense of that invisible; that world of our immortality; as of old our race went forth carrying the Galilean Evangel. We shall first learn, and then teach, that not with wealth can the soul of man be satisfied; that our enduring interest is not here but there, in the unseen, the hidden, the immortal, for whose purposes exist all the visible beauties of the world. If this be our mission and our purpose, well may our fair mysterious land deserve her name: Inis Fail, the Isle of Destiny.

II.

The great stone monuments.

Westward from Sligo—Town of the River of Shells—a tongue of land runs toward the sea between two long bays. Where the two bays join their waters, a mountain rises precipitous, its gray limestone rocks soaring sheer upwards, rugged and formidable. Within the shadow of the mountain is hidden a wonderful glen—a long tunnel between cliffs, densely arched over with trees and fringed with ferns; even at midday full of a green gloom. It is a fitting gateway to the beauty and mystery of the mountain.

Slowly climbing by stony ways, the path reaches the summit, a rock table crowned with a pyramid of loose boulders, heaped up in olden days as a memorial of golden-haired Maeve. From the dead queen's pyramid a view of surpassing grandeur and beauty opens over sea and land, mingled valley and hill. The Atlantic stretches in illimitable blue, curved round the rim of the sky, a darker mirror of the blue above. It is full of throbbing silence and peace. Across blue fields of ocean, and facing the noontday brightness of the sun, rise the tremendous cliffs of Slieve League, gleaming with splendid colors through the shimmering air; broad bands of amber and orange barred with deeper red; the blue weaves beneath them and the green of the uplands above.

The vast amber wall rises out of the ocean, and passes eastward in a golden band till it merges in the Donegal highlands with their immeasurable blue. Sweeping round a wide bay, the land draws nearer again, the far-away blue darkening to purple, and then to green and brown. The sky is cut by the outlines of the Leitrim and Sligo hills, a row of rounded peaks against the blue, growing paler and more translucent in the southern distance.

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Under the sun, there is a white glinting of lakes away across the plain, where brown and purple are blended with green in broad spaces of mingling color. To the west the ground rises again into hills crowded behind each other, sombre masses, for ages called the Mountains of Storms. Far beyond them, vague as blue cloud-wreaths in the blue, are the hills that guard our western ocean. From their sunset-verges the land draws near again, in the long range of the Mayo cliffs,—fierce walls of rock that bar the fiercer ocean from a wild world of storm-swept uplands. The cliffs gradually lessen, and their colors grow clearer, till they sink at last toward the sand-banks of Ballysadare, divided from us only by a channel of shallow sea.

The whole colored circle of sea and land, of moor and mountain, is full of the silence of intense and mighty power. The ocean is tremulous with the breath of life. The mountains, in their stately beauty, rise like immortals in the clear azure. The signs of our present works are dwarfed to insignificance.

Everywhere within that wide world of hill and plain, and hardly less ancient than the hills themselves, are strewn memorials of another world that has vanished, sole survivors of a long-hidden past. A wordless history is written there, in giant circles of stone and cromlechs of piled blocks, so old that in a land of most venerable tradition their very legend has vanished away.

Close under us lies Carrowmore, with its labyrinth of cromlechs and stone circles, a very city of dead years. There is something awe-inspiring in the mere massiveness of these piled and ordered stones, the visible boundaries of invisible thoughts; that awe is deepened by the feeling of the tremendous power lavished in bringing them here, setting them up in their ordered groups, and piling the crowns of the cromlechs on other only less gigantic stones; awe gives place to overwhelming mystery when we can find no kinship to our own thoughts and aims in their stately grouping. We are in presence of archaic purposes recorded in a massive labyrinth, purposes darkly hidden from us in the unknown.

There are circles of huge boulders ranged at equal distances, firmly set upright in the earth. They loom vast, like beads of a giant necklace on the velvet grass. There are cromlechs set alone—a single huge boulder borne aloft in the air on three others of hardly less weight. There are cromlechs set in the midst of titanic circles of stone, with lesser boulders guarding the cromlechs closer at hand. There are circles beside circles rising in their grayness, with the grass and heather carpeting their aisles. There they rest in silence, with the mountain as their companion, and, beyond the mountain, the ever-murmuring sea.

Thus they have kept their watch through long dark ages. When sunrise reddens them, their shadows stretch westward in bars of darkness over the burnished grass. From morning to midday the shadows shrink, ever hiding from the sun; an army of wraiths, sprite-like able to grow gigantic or draw together into mere blots of darkness. When day

declines, the shadows come forth again, joining ghostly hands from stone to stone, from circle to circle, under the sunset sky, and merging at last into the universal realm of night. Thus they weave their web, inexorable as tireless Time.

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There are more than threescore of these circles at Carrowmore, under Knocknarea. Yet Carrowmore is only one among many memorials of dead years within our horizon. At Abbey-quarter, within the town-limits of Sligo itself, there is another great ring of boulders, the past and the present mingling together. On the northern coast, across the Bay of Sligo, where the headland of Streedagh juts forth into the sea, there is another giant necklace of gray blocks ranged upon the moor. Farther along the shore, where Bundoran marks the boundary of Donegal, a cromlech and a stone circle rise among the sand-banks. All have the same rugged and enduring massiveness, all are wrapped in the same mystery.

Eastward from Sligo, Lough Gill lies like a mirror framed in hills, wreathed with dark green woods. On a hill-top north of the lake, in the Deer-park, is a monument of quite other character—a great oblong marked by pillared stones, like an open temple. At three points huge stones are laid across from pillar to pillar. The whole enclosure was doubtless so barred in days of old, a temple of open arches crowning the summit of the hill. The great ruin by the lake keeps its secret well.

Another ring of giant stones rests on a hillside across the lake, under the Cairn hill, with its pyramid crown. All these are within easy view from our first vantage-point on Knocknarea, yet they are but the outposts of an army which spreads everywhere throughout the land. They are as common in wild and inaccessible places as on the open plain. Some rise in lonely islands off the coast; others on the summits of mountains; yet others in the midst of tilled fields. They bear no relation at all to the land as it is to-day. The very dispersion of these great stone monuments, scattered equally among places familiar or wild, speaks of a remote past—a past when all places were alike wild, or all alike familiar.

Where the gale-swept moors of Achill Island rise up toward the slope of Slievemore Mountain, there are stone circles and cromlechs like the circles of Carrowmore. The wild storms of the Atlantic rush past them, and the breakers roar under their cliffs. The moorland round the towering mountain is stained with ochre and iron under a carpet of heather rough as the ocean winds.

Away to the south from Slievemore the horizon is broken by an army of mountains, beginning with the Twelve Peaks of Connemara. Eastward of these hills are spread the great Galway lakes; eastward of these a wide expanse of plain. This is the famous Moytura of traditional history, whose story we shall presently tell. Ages ago a decisive battle was fought there; but ages before the battle, if we are not greatly misled, the stone circles of the plain were already there. Tradition says that these circles numbered seven in the beginning, but only two remain unbroken.

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Between Galway Bay and the wide estuary of the Shannon spread the moorlands of Clare, bleak under Atlantic gales, with never a tree for miles inward from the sea. Like a watch-tower above the moorlands stand. Slieve Callan, the crown of the mountain abruptly shorn. Under the shoulder of the great hill, with the rolling moorlands all about it, stands a solitary cromlech; formed of huge flat stones, it was at first a roomy chamber shut in on all four sides, and roofed by a single enormous block; the ends have fallen, so that it is now an open tunnel formed of three huge stones.

The coast runs southward from the Shannon to the strand of Tralee, the frontier of the southern mountain world, where four ranges of red sandstone thrust themselves forth towards the ocean, with long fiords running inland between them. On a summit of the first of these red ranges, Caherconree above Tralee strand, there is a stone circle, massive, gigantic, dwelling in utter solitude.

We have recorded a few only out of many of these great stone monuments strewn along our Atlantic coast, whether on moor or cliff or remote mountain-top.

There are others as notable everywhere in the central plain, the limestone world of lakes and rivers. On a green hill-crest overlooking the network of inlets of Upper Erne there is a circle greater than any we have recorded. The stones are very massive, some of them twice the height of a tall man. To one who stands within the ring these huge blocks of stone shut out the world; they loom large against the sky, full of unspoken secrets like the Sphinx. Within this mighty ring the circle of Stonehenge might be set, leaving a broad road all round it on the grass.

From Fermanagh, where this huge circle is, we gain our best clue to the age of all these monuments, everywhere so much like each other in their massive form and dimensions, everywhere so like in their utter mystery. Round the lakes of Erne there are wide expanses of peat, dug as fuel for centuries, and in many places as much as twelve feet deep, on a bed of clay, the waste of old glaciers. Though formed with incredible slowness, this whole mass of peat has grown since some of the great stone monuments were built; if we can tell the time thus taken for its growth we know at least the nearer limit of the time that divides us from their builders.

Like a tree, the peat has its time of growth and its time of rest. Spring covers it with green, winter sees it brown and dead. Thus thin layers are spread over it, a layer for a year, and it steadily gains in thickness with the passing of the years. The deeper levels are buried and pressed down, slowly growing firm and rigid, but still keeping the marks of the layers that make them up. It is like a dry ocean gradually submerging the land. Gathering round the great stone circles as they stand on the clay, this black sea has risen slowly but surely, till at last it has covered them with its dark waves, and they rest in the quiet depths, with a green foam of spring freshness far above their heads.

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At Killee and Breagho, near Enniskillen, the peat has once more been cut away, restoring some of these great stones to the light. If we count the layers and measure the thickness of the peat, we can tell how many years are represented by its growth. We can, therefore, tell that the great stone circle, which the first growth of peat found already there, must be at least as old, and may be indefinitely older. By careful count it is found that one foot of black peat is made up of eight hundred layers; eight hundred summers and eight hundred winters went to the building of it. One foot of black peat, therefore, will measure the time from before the founding of Rome or the First Olympiad to the beginning of our era. Another foot will bring us to the crowning of Charlemagne. Yet another, to the death of Shakespeare and Cervantes. Since then, only a few inches have been added. Here is a chronometer worthy of our great cromlechs and stone circles.

Some of these, as we saw, rest on the clay, with a sea of peat twelve feet deep around and above them. Every foot of the peat stands for eight centuries. Since the peat began to form, eight or ten thousand years have passed, and when that vast period began, the great monuments of stone were already there. How long they had stood in their silence before our chronometer began to run we cannot even guess.

At Cavancarragh, on the shoulder of Toppid Mountain, some four miles from Enniskillen, there is one of these circles; a ring of huge stone boulders with equal spaces between stone and stone. A four-fold avenue of great blocks stretches away from it along the shoulder of the hill, ending quite abruptly at the edge of a ravine, the steep channel of a torrent. It looks as if the river, gradually undermining the hillside, had cut the avenue in halves, so that the ravine seems later in date than the stones. But that we cannot be quite sure of. This, however, we do certainly know: that since the avenue of boulders and the circle of huge red stones were ranged in order, a covering of peat in some parts twelve feet thick has grown around and above them, hiding them at last altogether from the day. In places the peat has been cut away again, leaving the stones once more open to the light, standing, as they always stood, on the surface of the clay.

Here again we get the same measurement. At eight hundred annual layers to the foot, and with twelve feet of peat, we have nine thousand six hundred years,—not for the age of the stone circles, but for that part of their age which we are able to measure. For we know not how long they were there before the peat began to grow. It may have been a few years; it may have been a period as great or even greater than the ten thousand years we are able to measure.



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The peat gradually displaced an early forest of giant oaks. Their stems are still there, standing rooted in the older clay. Where they once stood no trees now grow. The whole face of the land has changed. Some great change of climate must lie behind this vanishing of vast forests, this gradual growth of peat-covered moors. A dry climate must have changed to one much damper; heat must have changed to cold, warm winds to chilly storms. In the southern promontories, among red sandstone hills, still linger survivors of that more genial clime—groves of arbutus that speak of Greece or Sicily; ferns, as at Killarney, found elsewhere only in the south, in Portugal, or the Canary Islands.

[Illustration: Muckross Abbey, Killarney.]

On the southwestern horizon from Toppid Mountain, when the sky is clear after rain, you can trace the outline of the Curlew hills, our southern limit of view from Knocknarea. Up to the foot of the hills spreads a level country of pastures dappled with lakes, broken into a thousand fantastic inlets by the wasting of the limestone rock. The daisies are the stars in that green sky. Just beyond the young stream of the Shannon, where it links Lough Garra to Lough Key, there is a lonely cromlech, whose tremendous crown was once upheld by five massive pillars. There is a kindred wildness and mystery in the cromlech and the lonely hills.

Southward again of this, where the town of Lough Rea takes its name from the Gray Lake, stands a high hill crowned by a cromlech, with an encircling earthwork. It marks a green ring of sacred ground alone upon the hill-top, shut off from all the world, and with the mysterious monument of piled stones in its centre; here, as always, one huge block upheld in the air by only lesser blocks. The Gray Lake itself, under this strange sentry on the hill, was in long-passed ages a little Venice; houses built on piles lined its shores, set far enough out into the lake for safety, ever ready to ward off attack from the land. This miniature Venice of Lough Rea is the type of a whole epoch of turbulent tribal war, when homes were everywhere clustered within the defence of the waters, with stores laid up to last the rigors of a siege.

The contrast between the insecurity and peril of the old lake dwellings and the present safety of the town, open on all sides, unguarded and free from fear, is very marked. But not less complete is the contrast between the ancient hamlet, thus hidden for security amid the waters, and the great cromlech, looming black against the sky on the hill's summit, exposed to the wildness of the winds, utterly unguarded, yet resting there in lonely serenity.

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A little farther south, Lough Gur lies like a white mirror among the rolling pasture-lands of Limerick, set amongst low hills. On the lake's shore is another metropolis of the dead, worthy to compare with Carrowmore on the Sligo headland. Some of the circles here are not formed of single stones set at some distance from each other, but of a continuous wall of great blocks crowded edge to edge. They are like round temples open to the sky, and within one of these unbroken rings is a lesser ring like an inner shrine. All round the lake there are like memorials—if we can call memorials these mighty groups of stone, which only remind us how much we have forgotten. There are huge circles of blocks either set close together or with an equal space dividing boulder from boulder; some of the giant circles are grouped together in twos and threes, others are isolated; one has its centre marked by a single enormous block, while another like block stands farther off in lonely vastness. Here also stands a chambered cromlech of four huge flat blocks roofed over like the cromlech under Slieve Callan across the Shannon mouth.

The southern horizon from Lough Gur is broken by the hills of red sandstone rising around Glanworth. Beside the stream, a tributary of the Blackwater, a huge red cromlech rises over the greenness of the meadows like a belated mammoth in its uncouth might. To the southwest, under the red hills that guard Killarney on the south, the Sullane River flows towards the Lee. On its bank is another cromlech of red sandstone blocks, twin-brother to the Glanworth pile. Beyond it the road passes towards the sunset through mountain-shadowed glens, coming out at last where Kenmare River opens into a splendid fiord towards the Atlantic Ocean. At Kenmare, in a vale of perfect beauty green with groves of arbutus and fringed with thickets of fuchsia, stands a great stone circle, the last we shall record to the south. Like all the rest, it speaks of tremendous power, of unworldly and mysterious ends.

The very antiquity of these huge stone circles suggests an affinity with the revolving years. And here, perhaps, we may find a clue to their building. They may have been destined to record great Time itself, great Time that circles forever through the circling years. There is first the year to be recorded, with its revolving days; white winter gleaming into spring; summer reddening and fading to autumn. Returning winter tells that the year has gone full circle; the sun among the stars gives the definite measure of the days. A ring of thirty-six great boulders, set ten paces apart, would give the measure of the year in days; and of circles like this there are more than one.



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In this endless ring of days the moon is the measurer, marking the hours and weeks upon the blue belt of night studded with golden stars. Moving stealthily among the stars, the moon presently changes her place by a distance equal to her own breadth; we call the time this takes an hour. From her rising to her setting, she gains her own breadth twelve times; therefore, the night and the day are divided each into twelve hours. Meanwhile she grows from crescent to full disk, to wane again to a sickle of light, and presently to lose herself in darkness at new moon. From full moon to full moon, or from one new moon to another, the nearest even measure is thirty days; a circle of thirty stones would record this, as the larger circle of thirty-six recorded the solar year. In three years there are thrice twelve full moons, with one added; a ring of thirty-seven stones representing this would show the simplest relation between sun and moon.

The moon, as we saw, stealthily glides among the fixed stars, gaining her own width every hour. Passing thus along the mid belt of the sphere, she makes the complete circuit in twenty-seven days, returning to the same point among the stars, or, if it should so happen, to the same star, within that time. Because the earth has meanwhile moved forward, the moon needs three days more to overtake it and gain the same relative position towards earth and sun, thus growing full again, not after twenty-seven, but after thirty days. Circles of twenty-seven and thirty days would stand for these lunar epochs, and would, for those who understood them, further bear testimony to the earth's movement in its own great path around the sun. Thus would rings of varying numbers mark the measures of time; and not these only, but the great sweep of orbs engendering them, the triumphal march of the spheres through pathless ether. The life of our own world would thus be shown bound up with the lives of others in ceaseless, ever-widening circles, that lead us to the Infinite, the Eternal.

All the cromlechs and circles we have thus far recorded are in the western half of our land; there are as many, as worthy of note, in the eastern half. But as before we can only pick out a few. One of these crowns the volcanic peak of Brandon Hill, in Kilkenny, dividing the valleys of the Barrow and Nore. From the mountain-top you can trace the silver lines of the rivers coming together to the south, and flowing onward to the widening inlet of Wexford harbor, where they mingle with the waters of the River Suir. On the summit of Brandon Hill stands a great stone circle, a ring of huge basalt blocks dominating the rich valleys and the surrounding plain.



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In Glen Druid of the Dublin hills is a cromlech whose granite crown weighs seventy tons. Not far off is the Mount Venus cromlech, the covering block of which is even more titanic; it is a single stone eighty tons in weight. Near Killtarnan village, a short distance off, is yet another cromlech whose top-most boulder exceeds both of these, weighing not less than ninety tons. Yet vast as all these are, they are outstripped by the cromlech of Howth, whose upper block is twenty feet square and eight feet thick, a single enormous boulder one hundred tons in weight. This huge stone was borne in the air upon twelve massive pillars of quartz, seven feet above the ground, so that a man of average height standing on the ground and reaching upward could just touch the under surface of the block with his finger-tips. Even a tall man standing on the shoulders of another as tall would quite fail to touch the upper edge of the stone. If we give this marvelous monument the same age as the Fermanagh circles, as we well may, this raising of a single boulder of one hundred tons, and balancing it in the air on the crest of massive pillars may give us some insight into the engineering skill of the men of ten thousand years ago.

Across the central plain from Howth Head the first break is the range of Loughcrew hills. Here are great stone circles in numbers, not standing alone like so many others, but encompassing still stranger monuments; chambered pyramids of boulders, to which we shall later return. They are lesser models of the three great pyramids of Brugh on the Boyne, where the river sweeps southward in a long curve, half-encircling a headland of holy ground.

From near Howth to the Boyne and north of it, the coast is low and flat; sandhills matted with bent-grass and starred with red thyme and tiny pansies, yellow and purple and blue. Low tide carries the sea almost to the horizon, across a vast wilderness of dripping sand where the gulls chatter as they wade among the pools. Where the shore rises again towards the Carlingford Mountains, another cromlech stands under the shadow of granite hills.

A long fiord with wooded walls divides the Carlingford range from the mountains of Mourne. The great dark range thrusts itself forth against the sea in somber beauty, overhanging the wide strand of Dundrum Bay. The lesser bay, across whose bar the sea moans under the storm-winds, is dominated by the hill of Rudraige, named in honor of a hero of old days; but under the shadow of the hill stands a more ancient monument, that was gray with age before the race of Rudraige was born. On five pillars of massive stone is upreared a sixth, of huge and formidable bulk, and carrying even to us in our day a sense of mystery and might. The potent atmosphere of a hidden past still breathes from it, whispering of vanished years, vanished races, vanished secrets of the prime.

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There are two circles of enormous stones on the tongue of land between Dundrum Bay and Strangford, both very perfect and marked each in its own way from among the rest. The first, at Legamaddy, has every huge boulder still in place. There is a lesser ring of stones within the first circle, with many outliers, of enormous size, dotted among the fields. It looks as if a herd of huge animals of the early world had come together in a circle for the night, the young being kept for safety within their ring, while others, grazing longer or wandering farther from the rest, were approaching the main herd. But nightfall coming upon them with dire magic turned them all to stone; and there they remain, sentient, yet motionless, awaiting the day of their release. By fancies like this we may convey the feeling of mystery breathing from them.

On the hill-top of Slieve-na-griddle is another circle of the same enormous boulders. A cromlech is piled in the midst of it, and an avenue of stones leads up to the circle. Its form is that of many circles with enclosed cromlechs at Carrowmore, though in these the avenue is missing. The thought that underlies them is the same, though they are separated by the whole width of the land; a single cult with a single ideal prompted the erection of both.

At Drumbo, on the east bank of the Lagan before it reaches Belfast Lough, there is a massive cromlech surrounded by a wide ring of earth piled up high enough to cut off the sacred space within from all view of the outer world. Like the earthwork round the cromlech of Lough Rea, it marks the boundary of a great nature temple, open to the sky but shut off from mankind. Even now its very atmosphere breathes reverence.

At Finvoy, in northern Antrim, among the meadows of the Bann, there is a cromlech within a great stone circle like that on Slieve-na-griddle in Down, and like many of the Carrowmore rings. The Black Lion cromlech in Cavan is encircled with a like ring of boulders, and another cromlech not far off rivals some of the largest in the immense size of its crowning block.

Three cromlechs in the same limestone plain add something to the mystery that overhangs all the rest. The first, at Lennan in Monaghan, is marked with a curious cryptic design, suggesting a clue, yet yielding none. There is a like script on the cromlech at Castlederg in Tyrone, if indeed the markings were ever the record of some thought to be remembered, and not mere ornament. The chambered cromlech of Lisbellaw in Fermanagh has like markings; they are too similar to be quite independent, yet almost too simple to contain a recorded thought.

We come once more to Donegal. On the hill-top of Beltaney, near Raphoe, there is a very massive circle formed of sixty-seven huge blocks. Here again the Stonehenge ring might be set up within the Irish circle, leaving an avenue eight paces wide all round it. The sacred fire was formerly kindled here to mark the birth of Spring. The name of the old festival of Beltane still lingers on the hill. At Culdaff in north Donegal, at the end of

the Inishowen peninsula, stands another great stone circle, with which we must close our survey of these titanic monuments.



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We have mentioned a few only among many; yet enough to show their presence everywhere throughout the land, in the valleys or on mountain summits, in the midst of pastures or on lonely and rugged isles. One group, as we have seen, cannot be younger than ten thousand years, and may be far older. The others may be well coeval. Their magnitude, their ordered ranks, their universal presence, are a startling revelation of the material powers of the men of that remote age; they are a testimony, not less wonderful, of the moral force which dedicated so much power to ideal ends. Finally, they are a monument to remind us how little we yet know of the real history of our race.

III.

The cromlech builders.

In every district of Ireland, therefore, there remain these tremendous and solemn survivors of a mighty past. The cromlechs, with their enormous masses upheld in the air, rising among the fertile fields or daisy-dotted pastures; the great circles of standing stones, starred everywhere, in the valleys or upon the uplands, along the rough sides of heather-covered hills. They have everywhere the same aspect of august mystery, the same brooding presence, like sentinels of another world. It is impossible not to feel their overshadowing majesty. Everywhere they follow the same designs in large simplicity; inspired by the same purpose, and with the same tireless might overcoming the tremendous obstacles of their erection; they are devoted everywhere not to material and earthly ends, but to the ideal purposes of the invisible and everlasting, linked with the hidden life of those who pass away from us through the gates of death.

Can we find any clue to the builders of these grand and enduring memorials, the conditions of their building, the age of our land to which they belong? If we wisely use the abundant knowledge of the past already in our possession, there is good reason to believe we can, establishing much with entire certainty and divining more.

The standing stones and cromlechs, as we know, are everywhere spread over Ireland, so that it is probable that throughout the whole country one is never out of sight of one of these solemn monuments. Their uniform and universal presence shows, therefore, a uniform race dwelling everywhere within the four seas, a universal stability and order, allowing such great and enduring works to be undertaken and completed. We must believe, too, that the builders of these giant stone monuments were dominant throughout the land, possessing entire power over the labor of thousands everywhere; and even then the raising of these titanic masses is almost miraculous.

But the history of the standing stones and cromlechs is not a page of Irish history only, nor can we limit to our own isle the presence of their builders, the conditions of dominion and order under which alone they could have been raised. We shall gain our

first trustworthy clue by tracing the limits of the larger territory, beyond our island, where these same gray memorials are found.

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[Illustration: Brandy Island, Glengarriff.]

The limits of the region in which alone we find these piles and circles of enormous stones are clearly and sharply defined, though this region itself is of immense and imposing extent. It is divided naturally into two provinces, both starting from a point somewhere in the neighborhood of Gibraltar or Mount Atlas, and spreading thence over a territory of hundreds of miles.

The southern cromlech province, beginning at the Strait of Gibraltar, extends eastward along the African coast past Algiers to the headland of Tunis, where Carthage stood, at a date far later than the age of cromlechs. Were it not for the flaming southern sun, the scorched sands, the palms, the shimmering torrid air, we might believe these Algerian megaliths belonged to our own land, so perfect is the resemblance, so uniform the design, so identical the inspiration. The same huge boulders, oblong or egg-shaped, formidable, impressive, are raised aloft on massive supporting stones; there are the same circles of stones hardly less gigantic, with the same mysterious faces, the same silent solemnity. Following this line, we find them again in Minorca, Sardinia and Malta; everywhere under warm blue skies, in lands of olives and trailing vines, with the peacock-blue of the Mediterranean waves twinkling beneath them. Northward from Minorca, but still in our southern cromlech province, we find them in southeastern Spain, in the region of New Carthage, but far older than the oldest trace of that ancient city. In lesser numbers they follow the Spanish coast up towards the Ebro, through vinelands and lands of figs, everywhere under summer skies. This province, therefore, our southern cromlech province, covers most of the western Mediterranean; it does not cover, nor even approach, Italy or Greece or Egypt, the historic Mediterranean lands. We must look for its origin in the opposite direction—towards Gibraltar, the Pillars of Hercules.

From the same point, the Pillars of Hercules, begins our second or northern cromlech region, even larger and more extensive than the first, though hardly richer in titanic memorials. From Gibraltar, the cromlech region passes northward, covering Portugal and western Spain; indeed, it probably merges in the other province to the eastward, the two including all Spain between them. From northern Spain, turning the flank of the giant Pyrenees at Fontarrabia, the cromlech region goes northward and ever northward, along the Atlantic coast of France, spreading eastward also through the central provinces, covering the mountains of the Cote d'Or and the Cevennes, but nowhere entering north Italy or Germany, which limit France to the east. There is a tremendous culmination of the huge stone monuments on the capes and headlands of Brittany, where France thrusts herself forward against the Atlantic, centring in Carnac, the metropolis of a bygone world. Nowhere are there greater riches of titanic stone,

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in circles, in cromlechs, in ranged avenues like huge frozen armies or ordered hosts of sleeping elephants. From Brittany we pass to Ireland, whose wealth, inherited from dead ages, we have already inventoried, and Britain, where the same monuments reappear. More numerous to the south and west, they yet spread all over Britain, including remote northern Scotland and the Western Isles. Finally, there is a streamer stretching still northeastward, to Norway and some of the Baltic Islands.

We are, therefore, confronted with the visible and enduring evidence of a mighty people, spreading in two main directions from the Pillars of Hercules—eastward through Gibraltar Strait to sunny Algeria, to southern Spain and the Mediterranean isles; and northward, along the stormy shores of the Atlantic, from within sight of Africa almost to the Arctic Circle, across Spain, Portugal, France, Ireland, Britain, and the lands of the Baltic and the North Sea. Throughout this vast territory there must have been a common people, a common purpose and inspiration, a common striving towards the hidden world; there must have been long ages of order, of power, of peace, during which men's hearts could conceive and their hands execute memorials so vast, so evidently meant to endure to a far distant future, so clearly destined to ideal ends. There must have been a great spiritual purpose, a living belief in the invisible world, and a large practical power over natural forces, before these huge monuments could be erected. Some of the stones upheld in the air in the Irish cromlechs weigh eighty or ninety or a hundred tons. If we estimate that a well-built man can lift two hundred pounds, it would demand the simultaneous work of a thousand men to erect them; and it is at least difficult to see how the effort of a thousand men could be applied.

We are led, therefore, by evidence of the solidest material reality to see this great empire on the Atlantic and along the western Mediterranean; this Atlantean land of the cromlech-builders, as we may call it, for want of a better name. As the thought and purpose of its inhabitants are uniform throughout its whole vast extent, we are led to see in them a single homogeneous race, working without rivals, without obstacles, without contests, for they seem everywhere to have been free to choose what sites they would for their gigantic structures. And we are irresistibly led to believe that these conditions must have endured throughout a vast extent of time, for no nation which does not look back to a distant past will plan for a distant future. The spiritual sweep and view of the cromlech-builders are, therefore, as great as the extent of their territory. This mysterious people must have had a life as wonderful as that of Greece or Rome or Egypt, whose territories we find them everywhere approaching, but nowhere invading.



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What we now know of the past history of our race is so vast, so incredibly enormous, that we have ample space for such a territory, so widespread, so enduring, as we have seen demanded by the position of the cromlechs and standing stones; more than that, so overwhelming are the distances in the dark backward and abysm of time, to which we must now carry the dawn of human history, that the time needed for the building of the cromlechs may seem quite recent and insignificant, in view of the mightier past, stretching back through geologic ages. The nineteenth century may well be called the age of resurrection, when long-forgotten epochs of man were born again into our knowledge. We can carry back that knowledge now to the early Miocene period, to which belong the human relics found by the Abbe Bourgeois on the uplands of Thenay, in central France; and no one believes that the early Miocene age can be as recent as a million years ago. A vast space separates the Thenay relics from the later traces of man found in Pliocene sands with the bones of the archaic meridional elephant,—at a date when the German ocean was a forest, full of southern trees and huge beasts now long since departed from the earth. A period hardly less vast must separate these from the close of the glacial age, when man roamed the plains of Europe, and sketched the herds of mammoths as they cropped the leaves. That huge beast, too, has long since departed into the abyss; but man the artist, who recorded the massive outline, the huge bossed forehead, the formidable bulk of the shaggy arctic elephant, engraved in firm lines on a fragment of its tusk,—man still remains. Man was present when rhinoceros and elephant were as common in Britain as they are to-day in Southern India or Borneo; when the hippopotamus was as much at home in the waters of the Thames as in the Nile and Niger; when huge bears like the grizzly of the Rockies, cave-lions and sabre-toothed tigers lurked in Devon caverns or chased the bison over the hills of Kent. Yet this epoch of huge and ferocious monsters, following upon the Age of Ice, is a recent chapter of the great epic of man; there lies far more behind it, beyond the Age of Ice to the immensely distant Pliocene; beyond this as far as the early Miocene; beyond this, again, how much further we know not, towards the beginningless beginning, the infinite.

We are, therefore, face to face with an ordered series of almost boundless ages, geologic epochs of human history succeeding each other in majestic procession, as the face of our island was now tropical, now arctic; as the seas swelled up and covered the hills, or the bottom of the deep drove back the ocean and became dry land, an unbroken continent. The wild dreams of romance never approached the splendid outlines of this certain history.

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There are dim outlines of man throughout all these ages, but only at a comparatively recent date have we traditions and evidence pointing to still surviving races. At a period of only a few thousand years ago, we begin to catch glimpses of a northern race whom the old Greeks and Romans called Hyperboreans or Far-Northerners; a race wild and little skilled in the arts of life; a race of small stature, slight, dusky, with piercing eyes, low brows, and of forbidding face. This race was scattered over lands far north of the Mediterranean, dwelling in caves and dens of the earth, and lingering on unchanged from the days of mammoth and cave-bear. We have slight but definite knowledge of this very ancient race—enough to show us that its peculiar type lingers to this day in a few remote islands on the Galway and Kerry coast, mingled with many later races. This type we find described in old Gaelic records as the Firbolgs, a race weak and furtive, dusky and keen-eyed, subjected by later races of greater force. Yet from this race, as if to show the inherent and equal power of the soul, came holy saints and mighty warriors; to the old race of the Firbolgs belong Saint Mansuy, apostle of Belgium, and Roderick O’Conor, the last king of united Ireland. In gloomy mountain glens and lonely ocean islands still it lingers, unvanquished, tenacious, obscurely working out its secret destiny.

This slight and low-browed race, of dark or sallow visage, and with black crisp hair, this Hyperborean people, is the oldest we can gain a clear view of in our island’s history; but we know nothing of its extension or powers which would warrant us in believing that this was the race which built the cromlechs. Greek and Roman tradition, in this only corroborating the actual traces we ourselves possess of these old races, tells us of another people many thousand years ago overrunning and dominating the Firbolgs; a race of taller stature, of handsome features, though also dark, but with softer black hair, not crisp and tufted like the hair of the dwarfish earlier race. Of this second conquering race, tall and handsome, we have abundant traces, gathered from many lands where they dwelt; bodies preserved by art or nature, in caverns or sepulchres of stone; ornaments, pottery, works decorative and useful, and covering several thousand years in succession. But better than this, we have present, through nearly every land where we know of them in the past, a living remnant of this ancient race, like it in every particular of stature, form, complexion and visage, identical in character and temper, tendency and type of mind.



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In Ireland we find this tall, dark race over all the west of the island, but most numerous in Kerry, Clare, Galway and Mayo; in those regions where, we know, the older population was least disturbed. In remote villages among the mountains, reached by bridle-paths between heath-covered hills; in the settlements of fishermen, under some cliff or in the sheltered nook of one of our great western bays; or among the lonely, little visited Atlantic islands, this dark, handsome race, with its black hair, dark-brown eyes, sallow skin and high forehead, still holds its own, as a second layer above the remnant of the far more ancient Firbolg Hyperboreans. We find the same race also among the Donegal highlands, here and there in the central plain or in the south, and nowhere entirely missing among the varied races towards the eastern sea.

[Illustration: Sugar Loaf Mountain, Glengarriff.]

But it is by no means in Ireland only that this tall, dark, western race is found. It is numerous represented in the nearest extension of the continent, among the headlands and bays and isles of Brittany—a land so like our own western seaboard, with its wild Atlantic storms. Following the ocean southward, we find the same race extending to the Loire, the Garonne, the Pyrenees; stretching somewhat inland also, but clinging everywhere to the Atlantic, as we also saw it cling in Ireland. In earlier centuries, long before our era opened, we find this same race spread far to the east,—as far, almost, as the German and Italian frontier,—so that at one time it held almost complete possession of France. South of the Pyrenees we find it once more; dominant in Portugal, less strongly represented in Spain, yet still supplying a considerable part of the population of the whole peninsula, as it does in Ireland at the present day. But it does not stop with Spain, or even Europe. We find the same race again in the Guanches of the Canary islands, off the African coast; and, stranger still, we find mummies of this race, of great antiquity, in the cave-tombs of Teneriffe. Further, we have ample evidence of its presence, until displaced by Moorish invaders, all along northern Africa as far as Tunis; and we come across it again amongst the living races in the Mediterranean isles, in Sardinia, Sicily and Southern Italy. Finally, the Tuaregs of the Central Sahara belong to the same type. Everywhere the same tall, dark race, handsome, imaginative; with a quite definite form of head, of brow, of eyes; a well-marked character of visage, complexion, and texture of hair.

Thus far the southern extension of this, our second Irish race; we may look for a moment at its distribution in the north. Across the shallow sea which separates us from Britain we find the same race, clinging always to the Atlantic seaboard. It dominates south Wales, where its presence was remarked and commented on by the invading Romans. It is present elsewhere through the Welsh mountains, and much more sparsely over the east of England; but we have ample evidence that at one time this tall, dark race held the whole of England in undisputed possession, except, perhaps, for a remnant of the Hyperborean dwarfs. In the west of Scotland, and especially in the Western Isles, it is once more numerous; and we find offshoots of the same race in the dark-haired Norwegians,—still holding to the seaboard of the Atlantic.



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Such is the distribution of this once dominant but now dwindled race, which has gradually descended from the summit of power as ancient Rome descended, as Greece descended, or Assyria or Egypt. But we can look back with certainty to a time when this race, and this race only, held complete possession of all the lands we have mentioned, in north or south, in Europe or northern Africa; holding everywhere to the Atlantic coast, or, as in the Mediterranean isles, evidently pressing inward from the Atlantic, past the Pillars of Hercules, through the Strait of Gibraltar.

It is evident at once that the territory of this race corresponds exactly, throughout many countries, with the territory of the cromlechs and standing stones; where we find the one, as in Ireland, Brittany, Spain, we find the other; where the one is absent, as in Germany, or northern Italy or Greece, the other is likewise absent. The identity is complete. We are justified, therefore, in giving the same provisional name to both, and calling them Atlantean, from their evident origin not far from Atlas, and their everywhere clinging to the Atlantic coast. We can find traces of no other race which at all closely fulfills the necessary conditions of uniform and undisputed extension, through a long epoch, over the whole cromlech region—the only conditions under which we can conceive of the erection of these gigantic monuments, or of the long established and universally extended spiritual conditions which make possible such vast ideal enterprises.

In this race, therefore, which we have called Atlantean, we find the conditions fulfilled; of this race, and of no other, we still find a lingering remnant in each of the cromlech countries; and we hardly find a trace of this race, either now or in the past, in the lands which have no cromlechs or standing stones.

We have already seen that the standing stones of Cavancarragh, four miles from Fermanagh, were, within the memory of men still living or of their fathers, buried under ten or twelve feet of peat, which had evidently formed there after their erection. We have here a natural chronometer; for we know the rate at which peat forms, and we can, therefore, assign a certain age to a given depth. We have given one mode of reckoning already; we find it corroborated by another. In the Somme valley, in northern France, we have a Nature's timepiece; in the peat, at different levels, are relics of the Roman age; of the Gaulish age which preceded it; and, far deeper, of pre-historic races, like our Atlanteans, who preceded the Gauls. The date of the Roman remains we know accurately; and from this standard we find that the peat grows regularly some three centimeters a century, or a foot in a thousand years.

On the mountain side, as at Cavancarragh, the growth is likely to be slower than in a river valley; yet we may take the same rate, a foot a thousand years, and we shall have, for this great stone circle, an antiquity of ten or twelve thousand years at least. This assumes that the peat began to form as soon as the monument was completed; but the contrary may be the case; centuries may have intervened.



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We may, however, take this as a provisional date, and say that our cromlech epoch, the epoch of the Atlantean builders, from Algeria to Ireland, from Ireland to the Baltic, is ten or twelve thousand years ago; extending, perhaps, much further back in the past, and in certain regions coming much further down towards the present, but having a period of twelve thousand years ago as its central date. It happens that we have traditions of a great dispersion from the very centre we have been led to fix, the neighborhood of Atlas or Gibraltar, and that to this dispersion tradition has given a date over eleven thousand years ago; but to this side of the subject we cannot more fully allude; it would take us too far afield.

We have gone far enough to make it tolerably certain, first, that these great and wonderful monuments were built when uniform conditions of order, uniform religious beliefs and aspirations, and a uniform mastery over natural forces extended throughout a vast region spreading northward and eastward from Mount Atlas or Gibraltar; we have seen, next, that these conditions were furnished when a well-defined race, whom we have called Atlantean, was spread as the dominant element over this whole region; and, finally, we have seen reason to fix on a period some eleven or twelve thousand years ago as the central period of that domination, though it may have begun, and probably did begin, many centuries earlier. The distribution of the cromlechs is certain; the distribution of the race is certain; the age of one characteristic group of the monuments is certain. Further than this we need not go.

When we try to form a clearer image of the life of this tall archaic race of cromlech-builders, we can divine very much to fill the picture. We note, to begin with, that not only do they always hold to the Atlantic ocean as something kindred and familiar, but that they are found everywhere in islands at such distances from the nearest coasts as would demand a certain seamanship for their arrival. This is true of their presence in Malta, Minorca, Sardinia; it is even more true of Ireland, the Western Isles of Scotland, the Norwegian Isles; all of which are surrounded by stormy and treacherous seas, where wrecks are very common even in our day. We must believe that our tall, dark invaders were a race of seamen, thoroughly skilled in the dangerous navigation of these dark seas; Caesar marveled at, and imitated, the ship-building of the natives of Brittany in his day; we equally admire the prowess of their sons, the Breton fishermen, in our own times. We find, too, that in the western districts and ocean islands of our own Ireland the tall, dark race often follows the sea, showing the same hereditary skill and daring; a skill which certainly marked the first invaders of that race, or they would never have reached our island at all. We are the more justified in seeing, in these dark cromlech-builders, the Fomorians of old Gaelic tradition, who came up out of the sea and subjugated the Firbolgs.

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Even to those familiar with the geological record of man it is sufficiently startling to find that the Firbolgs, the early dwarfish race of Hyperboreans, in all probability were ignorant of boats; that they almost certainly came to our island dry-shod, as they had come earlier to Britain, migrating over unbroken spaces of land to what afterwards became the isle of Erin; for this race we find everywhere associated with the mammoth—on the continent, in Britain, in our own island—and the mammoths certainly never came over in ships. Needless to say, there is abundant geological evidence as well, to show our former union with continental Europe,—though of course at a time immensely more remote than ten or twelve thousand years ago.

We are, therefore, led to identify our Atlantean race of hardy seamen with the Fomorians who came up out of the sea and found the furtive Firbolgs in possession of our island; and to this race, the Fomorians of the sea, we credit the building of cromlechs and standing stones, not only among ourselves, but in Norway, in Britain, in Brittany, in Spain, in Africa.

We shall presently pick up the thread of tradition, as we find it in Ireland, and try to follow the doings and life of the Fomorian invaders; but in the meantime we may try to gain some insight into the most mysterious and enduring of their works. The cromlechs which have been excavated in many cases are found to contain the funereal urns of a people who burned their dead. It does not follow that their first and only use was as tombs; but if we think of them as tombs only, we must the more marvel at the faith of the builders, and their firm belief in the reality and overwhelming import of the other world which we enter at death. For of dwellings for the living, of fortresses or storehouses, of defences against the foes who later invaded them, we find few traces; nothing at all to compare with their massive mausoleums. The other world, for them, was a far weightier concern than this, and to the purposes of that world, as they conceived it, all their energies were directed. We can hardly doubt that, like other races who pay extreme reverence to the dead, their inner vision beheld these departed ones still around them and among them, forming with them a single race, a single family, a single life. This world was for them only the threshold of the other, the place of preparation. To that other their thoughts all turned, for that other they raised these titanic buildings. The solemn masses and simple grandeur of the cromlechs fitly symbolize the mood of reverence in which they drew near to the sublime world of the hidden; the awe with which their handiwork affirmed how greatly that world outweighs this. At these houses of the dead they were joined in spirit and communion with those who had passed away; once more united with their fathers and their fathers' fathers, from the dim beginning of their race. The air, for them, was full of spirits. Only the dead truly lived.



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The circles of standing stones are also devoted to ideal ends. Though the men who set them up could have built not less wonderful forts or dwellings of stone, we find none of these; nor has any worldly purpose ever been assigned to the stone circles. Yet there seems to be a very simple interpretation of their symbology; the circle, through all antiquity, stood for the circling year, which ever returns to its point of departure, spring repeating spring, summer answering to summer, winter with its icy winds only the return of former winters: the circling year and its landmarks, whether four seasons, or twelve months, or twenty-seven lunar mansions, through one of which the wandering moon passes in a day. We should thus have circles of twelve or twenty-seven stones, or four outlying stones at equal distances, for the four seasons, the regents of the year. By counting the stones in each circle we can tell to which division of the year they belonged, whether the solar months or the lunar mansions.

But with all ancient nations the cycle of the year was only the symbol of the spiritual cycle of the soul, the path of birth and death. We must remember that even for ourselves the same symbolism holds: in the winter we celebrate the Incarnation; in spring, the Crucifixion; in summer, the birth of the beloved disciple; in autumn, the day of All Souls, the feast of the dead. Thus for us, too, the succeeding seasons only symbolize the stages of a spiritual life, the august procession of the soul.

We cannot think it was otherwise with a people who lived and built so majestically for the hidden world; these great stone circles symbolized for them, we must believe, the circling life of the soul, the cycle of necessity, with the door of liberation to the home of the blest, who have reached perfect freedom and go no more out. We may picture in imagination their solemn celebrations; priests robed, perhaps, in the mingled green and purple of their hills, passing within the circle, chanting some archaic hymn of the Divine.

IV.

The de Danaans.

In the dim days of Fomorian and Firbolg, and for ages after, Erin was a land of forests, full of wild cattle and deer and wolves. The central plain was altogether hidden under green clouds of oak-woods, full of long, mysterious alleys, dimpled with sunny glades, echoing in spring and summer to the songs of innumerable birds. Everywhere through the wide and gloomy forests were the blue mirrors of lakes, starred with shaggy islands, the hanging hills descending verdant to the water's edge. Silver rivers spread their network among the woods, and the lakes and the quiet reaches of the rivers teemed with trout and salmon. The hilly lands to the north and south showed purple under the sky from among their forests, oak mingling with pine; and the four seas beat around our island with their white fringe of hovering gulls. Over all, the arch of the blue, clearer and less clouded then than now. A pleasant land, full of gladness and mystery.



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We can but obscurely image to ourselves the thoughts and deeds of the earliest dwellers in our island. We know that they were skilled in many arts of peace and inured to the shock of war. The sky spread above them as over us, and all around them was the green gloom of the forests, the whiteness of lakes and rivers, the rough purple of the heather. The great happenings of life, childhood and age and death, were for them what they are for us, yet their blood flowed warmer than ours. Browned by wind and sun, wet by the rain and the early dew of the morning, they delighted in the vigor of the prime. Their love for kindred, for their friends and lovers, was as ours; and when friends and kindred passed into the darkness, they still kept touch with their souls in the invisible Beyond.

[Illustration: River Erne, Belleek.]

The vision of our days is darkened by too much poring over earthly things; but the men of old, like many of our simpler races now, looked confidently and with intent faith across the threshold. For them the dead did not depart—hidden but from their eyes, while very near to their souls. Those in the beyond were still linked to those on earth; all together made one undivided life, neither in the visible world alone nor in the hidden world alone, but in both; each according to their destinies and duties. The men of old were immeasurably strong in this sense of immortality—a sense based not on faith but on knowledge; on a living touch with those who had gone before. They knew both over-world and under-world, because they held their souls open to the knowledge of both, and did not set their hearts on earthly things alone. A strong life close to the life of the natural world, a death that was no separation, the same human hearts as ours,—further we need not go in imagining that far-off time.

A third people was presently added to these two, at an epoch fixed by tradition some four thousand years ago. A vivid picture of their coming has been handed down to us, and this picture we shall reproduce, as many circumstances and particulars of our knowledge drawn from other sources concur to show that our old legend is near to the truth, both in time and happenings.

The name these newcomers bore was Tuata De Danaan, the De Danaan tribes; they were golden-haired and full of knowledge, and their coming was heavy with destiny for the dark races of Fomor and Firbolg. Even to-day, mysterious whispers of the De Danaans linger among the remote valleys and hillsides of our island, and truth is hidden in every legend of their deeds. They have borne a constant repute for magical knowledge, and the first tradition of their coming not only echoes that repute, but shows how first they came by it.

The De Danaans came from the north; from what land, we shall presently inquire. They landed somewhere on the northeast coast of our island, says the tradition; the coast of Antrim was doubtless the place of their arrival, and we have our choice between Larne and the estuary of the Foyle. All between, lofty cliffs face a dark and angry sea, where

no one not familiar with the coast would willingly approach; their later course in the island makes it very probable that they came to the Foyle.



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There, still within sight of the Caledonian isles and headlands hovering in blue shadows over the sea, they entered, where the sun rose over long silver sands and hills of chalk, with a grim headland on the west towering up into sombre mountains. Once within the strait, they had a wide expanse of quiet waters on all sides, running deep among the rugged hills, and receiving at its further end the river Foyle, tempting them further and further with their ships. Up the Foyle went the De Danaan fleet, among the oak-woods, the deer gazing wide-eyed at them from dark caverns of shadow, the wolves peering after them in the night. Then, when their ships would serve them no further, they landed, and, to set the seal on their coming, burned their boats, casting in their lot with the fate of their new home. Still following the streams of the Foyle, for rivers were the only pathways through the darkness of the woods, they came to the Lakes of Erne, then, as now, beautiful with innumerable islands, and draped with curtains of forest. Beyond Erne, they fixed their first settlement at Mag Rein, the Plain of the Headland, within the bounds of what afterwards was Leitrim; and at this camp their legend takes up the tale.

It would seem that the Fomorians were then gathered further to the west, as well as in the northern isles. The Firbolgs had their central stronghold at Douin Cain, the Beautiful Eminence, which, tradition tells us, later bore the name of Tara. The chief among their chiefs was Eocaid, son of Ere, remembered as the last ruler of the Firbolgs. Every man of them was a hunter, used to spear and shield, and the skins of deer and the shaggy hides of wolves were their garments; their dwellings were built of well-fitted oak. To the chief, Eocaid, Erc's son, came rumor of the strangers near the Lakes of Erne; their ships, burned at their debarking, were not there to tell of the manner of their coming, and the De Danaans themselves bruited it abroad that they had come hither by magic, borne upon the wings of the wind. The chiefs of Tara gathered together, within their fort of earth crowned with a stockade, and took counsel how to meet this new adventure. After long consultation they chose one from among them, Sreng by name, a man of uncommon strength, a warrior tried and proven, who should go westward to find out more of the De Danaans.

Doubtless taking certain chosen companions with him, Sreng, the man of valor from among the Firbolgs, set forth on his quest. As in all forest-covered countries, the only pathways lay along the river-banks, or, in times of drought, through the sand or pebbles of their beds. Where the woods pressed closest upon the streams, the path wound from one bank to the other, crossing by fords or stepping-stones, or by a bridge of tree-trunks. So went Sreng, careful and keen-eyed, up the stream of the Blackwater, and thence to the Erne, and so drew near to the Plain of the Headland, where was the De Danaan camp. They, too, had word of his coming from their scouts and hunters, and sent forth Breas, one among their bravest, to meet the envoy.



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They sighted each other and halted, each setting his shield in the earth, peering at his adversary above its rim. Then, reassured, they came together, and Breas first spoke to Sreng. After the first words they fell, warrior-like, to examining each other's weapons; Sreng saw that the two spears of Breas the De Danaan were thin, slender and long, and sharp-pointed, while his own were heavy, thick and point-less, but sharply rounded.

Here we have a note of reality, for spears of these two types are well known to us; those of Sreng were chisel-shaped, round-edged, socketed celts; the De Danaan lances were long and slender, like our spears. There are two materials also—a beautiful golden bronze, shining and gleaming in the sunlight, and a darker, ruddier metal, dull and heavy; and these darker spears have sockets for greatly thicker hafts. Both also carried swords, made, very likely, the one of golden, the other of dull, copper-colored bronze.

Then, putting these pleasant things aside, they turned to weightier matters, and Breas made a proposal for the De Danaan men. The island was large, the forests wide and full of game, the waters sweet and well-stocked with fish. Might they not share it between them, and join hands to keep out all future comers? Sreng could give no final answer; he could only put the matter before the Firbolg chiefs; so, exchanging spears in sign of friendship and for a token between them, they returned each to his own camp.

Sreng of the Firbolgs retraced his path some four-score miles among the central forests, and came to the Beautiful Eminence, where the Firbolgs had their settlement. Eocaid, Erc's son, their chieftain, called the lesser chiefs around him, and Sreng made full report of what he had seen and heard. The Firbolgs, pressed on by their fate, decided to refuse all terms with the De Danaans, but to give them battle, and drive them from the island. So they made ready, each man seeing to the straps of his shield, the burnishing of his thick sword and heavy spear. Eyes gleamed out beneath lowering brows all about the dwellings of Tara, and hot words were muttered of the coming fight. The dark faces of the Firbolgs were full of wrath.

Breas, returning to the camp of the Tuata De Danaan, gave such account of the fierceness and strength of Sreng, and the weight and sturdiness of his weapons, that the hearts of the golden-haired newcomers misgave them, and they drew away westward to the strip of land that lies between the lakes of Corrib and Mask. There, tradition tells us, they made an encampment upon the hill of Belgadan, near the stream that flows through caverns beneath the rocks from the northern to the southern lake. From their hill-top they had clear view of the plain stretching eastward, across which the Firbolg warriors must come; to the right hand and to the left were spread the great white waters of the lakes, stretching far away to the northern and southern verge of the sky. Islands dotted the lakes, and trees mirrored themselves in the waters. Behind them, to the westward, rose a square-topped mountain, crowned by a clear tarn; and, behind that, tier upon tier of hills, stretching dark and sombre along Lough Mask to the north, and spreading westward to the twelve crystal hills of Connemara.



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Across the plain to the east, then called the Plain of Nia, but thereafter Mag Tuiread or Moytura, the Plain of the Pillars, lay the forests, and thence issued forth the hosts of the Firbolgs, encamping on the eastern verge of the open space. Nuada, the De Danaan king, once more sought a peaceful issue to their meeting, but Erc's son Eocaid refused all terms, and it was plain to all that they must fight.

It was midsummer. The air was warm about them, the lake-shores and the plain clothed in green of many gently blended shades. The sun shone down upon them, and the lakes mirrored the clear blue above. From their hill of encampment descended the De Danaans, with their long slender spears gleaming like bright gold, their swords of golden bronze firmly grasped, their left hands gripping the thong of their shields. Golden-haired, with flowing tresses, they descended to the fight; what stately battle-song they chanted, what Powers they called on for a blessing, we cannot tell; nor in what terms the dark-browed Firbolgs answered them as they approached across the plain. All that day did the hosts surge together, spear launched against spear, and bronze sword clashing against shield; all that day and for three days more, and then the fate of the Firbolgs was decided. Great and dire was the slaughter of them, so that Erc's son Eocaid saw that all was lost. Withdrawing with a hundred of his own men about him, Eocaid was seeking water to quench his thirst, for the heat of the battle was upon him, when he was pursued by a greater band of the De Danaans, under the three sons of Nemed, one of their chieftains.

Eocaid and his bodyguard fled before Nemed's sons, making their way northeastward along the Moy river, under the shadow of the Mountains of Storms, now wrongly named Ox Mountains. They came at last to the great strand called Traig Eotaile, but now Ballysadare, the Cataract of the Oaks,—where the descending river is cloven into white terraces by the rocks, and the sea, retreating at low tide, leaves a world of wet sand glinting under the moonlight. At the very sea's margin a great battle was fought between the last king of the Firbolgs with his men, and the De Danaans under Nemed's sons; so relentless was the fight along the tideways that few remained to tell of it, for Erc's son Eocaid fell, but Nemed's three sons fell likewise, The three De Danaan brothers were buried at the western end of the strand, and the place was called The Gravestones of the Sons of Nemed, in their memory. The son of Erc was buried on the strand, where the waves lap along the shore, and his cairn of Traig Eotaile still stands by the water-side, last resting-place of the last ruler of the Firbolgs.



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Meanwhile the fighting had gone on at Mag Tuiread by the lakes, till but three hundred of the Firbolgs were left, with Sreng, the fierce fighter, at their head. Sreng had gained enduring fame by meeting Nuada, the De Danaan king, in combat, and smiting him so that he clove the shield-rim and cut down deep into Nuada's shoulder, disabling him utterly from the battle. Seeing themselves quite outnumbered, therefore, the survivors of the Firbolgs with Sreng demanded single combat with De Danaan champions, but the victors offered them worthy terms of peace. The Firbolgs were to hold in lordship and freedom whichever they might choose of the five provinces; the conquerors were to have the rest.

Sreng looked around among his band of survivors,—a little band, though of great valor,—and he remembered the hosts of his people that had entered the battle three days before, but now lay strewn upon the plain; and thinking that they had done enough for valor he accepted the offered terms, choosing the Western Province for his men. In memory of him it was called Cuigead Sreing for generations, until Conn of the Five-Score Battles changed the name for his own, calling the province Connacht, as it is to this day.

It fared less well with the victors, and with their victory were sown seeds of future discord. For Nuada, the king, being grievously wounded, was in no state to rule, so that the chief power was given to Breas, first envoy of the De Danaans. Now Breas was only half De Danaan, half Fomor, and would not recognize the De Danaan rites or laws of hospitality, but was a very tyrannous and overbearing ruler, so that much evil came of his government. Yet for seven years he was endured, even though meat nor ale was dispensed at his banquets, according to De Danaan law.

Mutterings against Breas were rife among the chiefs and their followers when the bard Cairbre, whose mother Etan was also a maker of verses, came to the assembly of Breas. But the bard was shown little honor and given a mean lodging,—a room without fire or bed, with three dry loaves for his fare. The bard was full of resentment and set himself to make songs against Breas, so that all men repeated his verses, and the name of Breas fell into contempt. All men's minds were enkindled by the bard, and they drove Breas forth from the chieftainship. Breas fled to his Fomor kindred in the isles, with his heart full of anger and revenge against the De Danaans.

He sought help of his kindred, and their design was told to the Fomorian chieftains—to Balor of the Evil Eye, and to Indec, son of De Domnand, chiefs of the Isles. These two leaders gathered ships from all the harbors and settlements of the Fomorians, from the Hebrides, the Shetlands, and far-distant Norway, so that their fleet was thick as gulls above a shoal of fish along the north shores of Erin.



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Coming down from the northern isles, they sighted the coast of Erin, the peaks of the northwestern mountains rising purple towards the clouds, with white seas foaming around them. Past towering headlands they sailed; then, drawing in towards the shore, they crept under the great cliffs of Slieve League, that rose like a many-colored wall from the sea to the sky—so high that the great eagles on their summits were but specks seen from beneath, so high that the ships below seemed like sea-shells to those who watched them from above. With the wall of the cliffs on their left hand, and the lesser headlands and hills of Sligo on their right, they came to that same strand of Ballysadare, the Cataract of the Oaks, where the last of the Firbolgs fell. Drawing their long ships up on the beach, with furled sail and oars drawn in, they debarked their army on the shore. It was a landing of ill-omen for the Fomorians, that landing beside the cairn of Eocaid; a landing of ill-omen for Indec, son of De Domnand, and for Balor of the Evil Eye.

It was the fall of the leaf when they came; the winds ran crying through the forests, tearing the leaves and branches from the oaks, and mourning among the pines of the uplands. The sea was gray as a gull's back, with dark shadows under the cliffs and white tresses of foam along the headlands. At evening a cold wind brought the rain beating in from the ocean. Thus the Fomorians landed at the Cataract of the Oaks, and marched inland to the plain now called Tirerril in Sligo. The murky sky spread over the black and withered waste of the plain, hemmed in with gloomy hills, wild rocks and ravines, and with all the northern horizon broken by distant mountains. Here Indec and Balor, and Breas the cause of their coming, fixed their camp. They sent a message of defiance to the De Danaans, challenging them to fight or surrender. The De Danaans heard the challenge and made ready to fight.

Nuada, now called the chieftain of the Silver Arm, because the mischief wrought by Sreng's blow on his shoulder had been hidden by a silver casing, was once more ruler since Breas had been driven out. Besides Nuada, these were De Danaan chieftains: Dagda, the Mighty; Lug, son of Cian, son of Diancect, surnamed Lamfada, the Long Armed; Ogma, of the Sunlike Face; and Angus, the Young. They summoned the workers in bronze and the armorers, and bid them prepare sword and spear for battle, charging the makers of spear-haft and shield to perfect their work. The heralds also were ready to proclaim the rank of the warriors, and those skilled in healing herbs stood prepared to succor the wounded. The bards were there also to arouse valor and ardor with their songs.



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Then marching westward to the plain of the battle among the hills, they set their camp and advanced upon the Fomorians. Each man had two spears bound with a thong to draw them back after the cast, with a shield to ward off blows, and a broad-bladed sword of bronze for close combat. With war-chants and invocations the two hosts met. The spears, well poised and leveled, clove the air, hissing between them, and under the weight of the spear-heads and their sharp points many in both hosts fell. There were cries of the wounded now, mingled with battle-songs, and hoarse shouting for vengeance among those whose sons and brothers and sworn friends fell. Another cast of the spears, seaming the air between as the hosts closed in, and they fell on each other with their swords, shields upraised and gold-bronze sword-points darting beneath like the tongues of serpents. They cut and thrust, each with his eyes fixed on the fierce eyes of his foe.

They fought on the day of the Spirits, now the Eve of All Saints; the Fomorians were routed, and their chieftains slain. But of the De Danaans, Nuada, once wounded by Sreng of the Firbolgs, now fell by the hand of Balor; yet Balor also fell, slain by Lug, his own daughter's son.

Thus was the might of the Fomorians broken, and the De Danaans ruled unopposed, their power and the works of their hands spreading throughout the length and breadth of the land.

Many monuments are accredited to them by tradition, but greatest and most wonderful are the pyramids of stone at Brugh on the Boyne. Some nine miles from the sandy seashore, where the Boyne loses itself in the waves, there is a broad tongue of meadowland, shut in on three sides southward by the Boyne, and to the northeast cut off by a lesser stream that joins it. This remote and quiet headland, very famous in the annals, was in old days so surrounded by woods that it was like a quiet glade in the forest rimmed by the clear waters of the Boyne. The Mourne Mountains to the north and the lesser summits on the southern sky-line were hidden by the trees. The forest wall encircled the green meadowland, and the river fringed with blue forget-me-nots.

In this quiet spot was the sacred place of the De Danaans, and three great pyramids of stone, a mile apart along the river, mark their three chief sanctuaries. The central is the greatest; two hundred thousand tons of stone heaped up, within a circular wall of stone, itself surrounded by a great outer circle of standing stones, thirty in number, like gray sentinels guarding the shrine. In the very heart of the pyramid, hushed in perpetual stillness and peace, is the inmost sanctuary, a chamber formed like a cross, domed with a lofty roof, and adorned with mysterious tracings on the rocks. Shrines like this are found in many lands, whether within the heart of the pyramids of Egypt or in the recesses of India's hills; and in all lands they have the same purpose. They are secret and holy sanctuaries, guarded well



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from all outward influence, where, in the mystic solitude, the valiant and great among the living may commune with the spirits of the mighty dead. The dead, though hidden, are not passed away; their souls are in perpetual nearness to ours. If we enter deep within ourselves, to the remote shrine of the heart, as they entered that secluded shrine, we may find the mysterious threshold where their world and our world meet.

In the gloom and silence of those pyramid-chambers, the De Danaans thus sought the souls of their mighty ones—the Dagda, surnamed the Mighty, and Lug the Long-Armed, and Ogma of the Sunlike Face, and Angus the Young. From these luminous guardians they sought the inbreathing of wisdom, drawing into themselves the might of these mightier ones, and rising toward the power of their immortal world. And to these sacred recesses they brought the ashes of their mighty dead, as a token that they, too, had passed through the secret gateway to the Land of the Ever Young.

Some thirty miles to the west of Brugh, on the Boyne, a low range of hills rises from the central plain, now bearing the name of Slieve na Calliagh, the Witch's Hill. In the days of the great forest this was the first large open space to the west coming from Brugh, and, like it, a quiet and remote refuge among the woods. On the hillsides of Slieve na Calliagh are other pyramids of stone, in all things like those of Brugh, and with the same chambered sanctuaries, but of lesser size; belonging, perhaps, to a later age, when the De Danaans were no longer supreme in the land, but took their place beside newcomer invaders. These lesser shrines were also sacred places, doorways to the hidden world, entrance-gates to the Land of the Ever Young. There also was beheld the vision of the radiant departed; there also were fountains of baptism, basins wrought of granite brought hither from the distant hills of Mourne or Wicklow. As in all lands, these fountains were used in the consecration of the new birth, from which man rises conscious of his immortality.

In harmony with this faith of theirs, our present tradition sees in the De Danaans a still haunting impalpable presence, a race invisible yet real, dwelling even now among our hills and valleys. When the life of the visible world is hushed, they say, there is another life in the hidden, where the Dagda Mor and Ogma and Lug and Angus still guard the De Danaan hosts. The radiance of their nearness is all through the land, like the radiance of the sun hidden behind storm-clouds, glimmering through the veil.

[Illustration: White Rocks, Portrush]



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In the chambers of those pyramid-shrines are still traces of the material presence of the De Danaans; not only their baptismal fonts, but more earthly things—ornaments, beads of glass and amber, and combs with which they combed their golden locks. These amber beads, like so many things in the De Danaan history, call us to far northern lands by the Baltic, whence in all likelihood the De Danaans came; for in those Baltic lands we find just such pyramid shrines as those at Brugh and on the hillsides of Slieve na Calliagh, and their ornaments are the same, and the fashion of their spear-heads and shields. The plan of the Danish pyramid of Uby is like the pyramids of Newgrange and Nowth and Dowth by the Boyne, and the carvings on King Gorm's stone by the Baltic are like the carvings of stones in our own island. On the Baltic shores, too, of most ancient date and belonging to forgotten times, are still found fragments and even perfect hulls of just such long ships as were needed for the Danaans' coming, like the ships they burnt along the reaches of the Foyle.

By the Baltic, too, and nowhere else, were there races with hair yellow as their own amber, or, as our island bards say, "so bright that the new-molten gold was not brighter; yellow as the yellow flag-lilies along the verges of the rivers." Therefore, in character of race, in face and feature, in color and complexion, in the form and make of sword and spear and shield, in their knowledge of ships and the paths of the sea, as in their ornaments and decorative art, and in those majestic pyramids and shrines where they sought mystic wisdom, and whither they carried the ashes of their dead, as to a place of sacred rest—in all these the life of the De Danaans speaks of the Baltic shores and the ancient race of golden-haired heroes who dwelt there. The honoring of bards, the heraldic keeping of traditions and the names of ancestors, also speak of the same home; and with a college of heraldic bards, well-ordered and holding due rank and honor, we can well see how the stories of their past have come down even to our days, lingering among our hills and valleys, as the De Danaan themselves linger, hidden yet not departed.

The traditional time of their coming, too, agrees well with all we know. Without bronze tools they could not have carved the beautifully adorned stones that are built into the pyramids by the Boyne; yet there is a certain early ruggedness about these stones that falls far short of the perfection of later times. Early in the bronze age, therefore, they must be placed; and the early bronze age, wherever its remoteness can be measured, as in the Swiss lakes or the peat-mosses of Denmark, cannot be less than four thousand years ago, thus well agreeing with our De Danaan tradition. We are, therefore, led to believe that the tale told by these traditions is in the main a true one; that the races recorded by them came in the recorded order; that their places of landing are faithfully remembered; that all traditions pointing to their earlier homes are worthy of belief, and in full accord with all our other knowledge.



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V.

Emain of Maca.

B.C. 50—A.D. 50.

The battles of Southern and Northern Moytura gave the De Danaans sway over the island. After they had ruled for many centuries, they in their turn were subjected to invasion, as the Firbolg and Fomorian had been before them. The newcomers were the Sons of Milid, and their former home was either Gaul or Spain. But whether from Gaul or Spain, the sons of Milid were of undoubted Gaelic race, in every feature of character and complexion resembling the continental Gauls.

We must remember that, in the centuries before the northward spread of Rome, the Gauls were the great central European power. Twenty-six hundred years ago their earlier tribal life was consolidated into a stable empire under Ambigatos; Galicia in Eastern Austria and Galicia in Western Spain mark their extreme borders towards the rising and setting sun.

Several centuries before the days of Ambigatos, in the older period of tribal confederation, was the coming of the Gaelic Sons of Milid to Ireland. Tradition places the date between three and four thousand years ago. Yet even after that long interval of isolation the resemblance between the Irish and continental Gaels is perfect; they are tall, solidly built, rather inclined to stoutness; they are fair-skinned, or even florid, easily browned by sun and wind. Their eyes are gray, greenish or hazel, not clear blue, like the eyes of the Baltic race; and though fair-haired, they are easily distinguished from the golden-haired Norsemen. Such are the descendants of the Sons of Milid. Coming from Gaul or Spain, the Sons of Milid landed in one of the great fiords that penetrate between the mountains of Kerry—long after so named from the descendants of Ciar. These same fiords between the hills have been the halting-place of continental invaders for ages; hardly a century has passed since the last landing there of continental soldiers; there was another invasion a century before that, and yet another a hundred years earlier. But the Sons of Milid showed the way. They may have come by Bantry Bay or the Kenmare River or Dingle Bay; more probably the last, for tradition still points to the battlefield where they were opposed, on the hills of Slieve Mish, above the Dingle fiord.

But wherever they debarked on that southwestern coast they found a land warm and winning as the south they had left behind—a land of ever-green woods, yew and arbutus mingling with beech and oak and fir; rich southern heaths carpeting the hillsides, and a soft drapery of ferns upon the rocks. There were red masses of overhanging mountain, but in the valleys, sheltered and sun-warmed, they found a refuge like the Isles of the Blest. The Atlantic, surging in great blue rollers, brought the

warmth of tropical seas, and a rich and vivid growth through all the glens and vales responded to the sun's caress.



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The De Danaans must ere this have spread through all of the island, except the western province assigned to the Firbolgs; for we find them opposing,—but vainly opposing,—the Sons of Milid, at the very place of their landing. Here again we find the old tradition verified; for at the spot recorded of old by the bards and heralds, among the hills by the pass that leads from Dingle to Tralee Bay, numberless arrow-heads have been gathered, the gleanings after a great combat. The De Danaans fought with sword and spear, but, unless they had added to their weapons since the days of Breas and Sreng, they did not shoot with the bow; this was, perhaps, the cause of their defeat, for the De Danaans were defeated among the hills on that long headland.

From their battlefield they could see the sea on either hand, stretching far inland northward and southward; across these arms of the sea rose other headlands, more distant, the armies of hills along them fading from green to purple, from purple to clear blue. But the De Danaans had burned their boats; they sought refuge rather by land, retreating northward till they came to the shelter of the great central woods. The Sons of Milid pursued them, and, overtaking them at Tailten on the Blackwater, some ten miles northwest of Tara, they fought another battle; after it, the supremacy of the De Danaans definitely passed away.

Yet we have no reason to believe that, any more than the Fomorians or Firbolgs, the De Danaans ceased to fill their own place in the land. They seem, indeed, to have been preponderant in the north, and in all likelihood they hold their own there even now; for every addition to our knowledge shows us more and more how tenacious is the life of races, how firmly they cling to their earliest dwellings. And though we read of races perishing before invaders, this is the mere boasting of conquerors; more often the newcomers are absorbed among the earlier race, and nothing distinctive remains of them but a name. We have abundant evidence to show that at the present day, as throughout the last three thousand years, the four races we have described continue to make up the bulk of our population, and pure types of each still linger unblended in their most ancient seats; for, though races mingle, they do not thereby lose their own character. The law is rather that the type of one or other will come out clear in their descendants, all undefined forms tending to disappear.

Nor did any subsequent invasion add new elements; for as all northern Europe is peopled by the same few types, every newcomer,—whether from Norway, Denmark, Britain or Continental Europe,—but reinforced one of these earlier races. Yet even where the ethnical elements are alike, there seems to be a difference of destiny and promise—as if the very land itself brooded over its children, transforming them and molding them to a larger purpose. The spiritual life of races goes far deeper than their ethnic history.

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It would seem that with the coming of the Sons of Milid the destiny of Ireland was rounded and completed; from that time onward, for more than two thousand years, was a period of uniform growth and settled life and ideals; a period whose history and achievements we are only beginning to understand. At the beginning of that long epoch of settled life the art of working gold was developed and perfected; and we have abundance of beautiful gold-work from remote times, of such fine design and execution that there is nothing in the world to equal it. The modern work of countries where gold is found in quantities is commonplace, vulgar and inartistic, when compared with the work of the old Irish period. Torques, or twisted ribbons of gold, of varying size and shape, were worn as diadems, collars, or even belts; crescent bands of finely embossed sheet-gold were worn above the forehead; brooches and pins of most delicate and imaginative workmanship were used to catch together the folds of richly colored cloaks, and rings and bracelets were of not less various and exquisite forms.

We are at no loss to understand the abundance of our old goldsmiths' work when we know that even now, after being worked for centuries, the Wicklow gold-mines have an average yearly yield of some five hundred ounces, found, for the most part, in nuggets in the beds of streams flowing into the two Avons. One mountain torrent bears the name of Gold Mines River at the present day, showing the unbroken presence of the yellow metal from the time of its first discovery, over three thousand years ago. It seems probable that a liberal alloy of gold gave the golden bronze its peculiar excellence and beauty; for so rich is the lustre, so fine the color of many of our bronze axes and spears, that they are hardly less splendid than weapons of pure gold. From the perfect design and workmanship of these things of gold and bronze, more than from any other source, we gain an insight into the high culture and skill in the arts which marked that most distinctively Irish period, lasting, as we have seen, more than two thousand years.

Early in this same epoch we find traditions of the clearing of forests, the sowing of cornfields, the skill of dyers in seven colors, earliest of which were purple, blue and green. Wells were dug to insure an easily accessible supply of pure water, so that we begin to think of a settled population dwelling among fields of golden grain, pasturing their cattle in rich meadows, and depending less on the deer and wild oxen of the forest, the salmon of lake and river, and the abundant fish along the shores.

Tradition speaks persistently of bards, heralds, poets and poetesses; of music and song; of cordial and generous social life; and to the presence of these bards, like the skalds of the Northmen, we owe pictures, even now full of life and color and movement, of those days of long ago.



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At a period rather more than two thousand years ago, a warrior-queen, Maca by name, founded a great fort and citadel at Emain, some two miles west of Armagh, in the undulating country of green hills and meadows to the south of Lough Neagh. The ramparts and earthworks of that ancient fortress can still be traced, and we can follow and verify what the ancient bards told of the greatness of the stronghold of Maca. The plans of all forts of that time seem to have been much the same—a wide ring of earthwork, with a deep moat, guarded them, and a stockade of oak stakes rose above the earthwork, behind which the defenders stood, firing volleys of arrows at the attacking host. Within this outer circle of defence there was almost always a central stronghold, raised on a great mound of earth; and this was the dwelling of the chief, provincial ruler, or king. Lesser mounds upheld the houses of lesser chiefs, and all alike seem to have been built of oak, with plank roofs. Safe storehouses of stone were often sunk underground, beneath the chief's dwelling. In the fort of Emain, as in the great fort of Tara in the Boyne Valley, there was a banqueting-hall for the warriors, and the bards thus describe one of these in the days of its glory: "The banquet-hall had twelve divisions in each wing, with tables and passages round them; there were sixteen attendants on each side, eight for the star-watchers, the historians and the scribes, in the rear of the hall, and two to each table at the door,—a hundred guests in all; two oxen, two sheep and two hogs were divided equally on each side at each meal. Beautiful was the appearance of the king in that assembly—flowing, slightly curling golden hair upon him; a red buckler with stars and beasts wrought of gold and fastenings of silver upon him; a crimson cloak in wide descending folds upon him, fastened at his breast by a golden brooch set with precious stones; a neck-torque of gold around his neck; a white shirt with a full collar, and intertwined with threads of gold, upon him; a girdle of gold inlaid with precious stones around him; two wonderful shoes of gold with runings of gold upon him; two spears with golden sockets in his hand."

We are the more disposed to trust the fidelity of the picture, since the foundations of the Tara banquet-hall are to be clearly traced to this day—an oblong earthwork over seven hundred feet long by ninety wide, with the twelve doors still distinctly marked; as for the brooches and torques of gold, some we have surpass in magnificence anything here described, and their artistic beauty is eloquent of the refinement of spirit that conceived and the skill that fashioned them. Spear-heads, too, are of beautiful bronze-gold, with tracings round the socket of great excellence and charm.

[Illustration: Powerscourt Waterfall, Co. Wicklow]



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For a picture of the life of that age, we cannot do better than return to Emain of Maca, telling the story of one famous generation of warriors and fair women who loved and fought there two thousand years ago. The ideal of beauty was still the golden hair and blue eyes of the De Danaans, and we cannot doubt that their race persisted side by side with the Sons of Milid, retaining a certain predominance in the north and northeast of the island, the first landing-place of the De Danaan invaders. Of this mingled race was the great Rudraige, from whom the most famous rulers of Emain descended. Ros was the son of Rudraige, and from Roeg and Cass, the sons of Ros, came the princes Fergus and Factna. Factna, son of Cass, wedded the beautiful Nessa, and from their union sprang Concobar, the great hero and ruler of Ulster—in those days named Ulad, and the dwellers there the Ulaid. Factna died while Concobar was yet a boy; and Nessa, left desolate, was yet so beautiful in her sadness that Fergus became her slave, and sued for her favor, though himself a king whose favors others sued. Nessa's heart was wholly with her son, her life wrapt up in his. She answered, therefore, that she would renounce her mourning and give her widowed hand to Fergus the king, if the king, on his part, would promise that Nessa's son Concobar should succeed him, rather than the children of Fergus. Full of longing, and held in thrall by her beauty, Fergus promised; and this promise was the beginning of many calamities, for Nessa, the queen, feeling her sway over Fergus, and full of ambition for her child, won a promise from Fergus that the youth should sit beside him on the throne, hearing all pleadings and disputes, and learning the art of ruling. But the spirit of Concobar was subtle and strong and masterful, and he quickly took the greater place in the councils of the Ulaid, until Nessa, still confident in her charm, took a promise from Fergus that Concobar should reign for one year.

Fergus, great-hearted warrior, but tender and gentle and fond of feasts and merrymaking, was very willing to lift the cares of rule from his shoulders to the younger shoulders of Nessa's son, and the one year thus granted became many years, so that Fergus never again mounted his throne. Yet for the love he bore to Nessa, Fergus willingly admitted his stepson's rule, and remained faithfully upholding him, ever merry at the banquets, and leading the martial sports and exercises of the youths, the sons of chieftains, at the court. Thus Concobar, son of Nessa, came to be ruler over the great fort of Emain, with its citadel, its earthworks and outer forts, its strong stockade and moat; ruler of these, and of the chiefs of the Ulaid, and chief commander of all the fighting-men that followed them. To him came the tribute of cattle and horses, of scarlet cloaks and dyed fabrics, purple and blue and green, and the beryls and emeralds from the mountains of Mourne where the sea thunders in the caves, near the great fort of Rudraige. Fergus was lord only of the banqueting-hall and of the merrymakings of the young chiefs; but in all else the will of Concobar was supreme and his word was law.



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It happened that before this a child had been born, a girl golden-haired and with blue eyes, of whom the Druids had foretold many dark and terrible things. That the evil might not be wrought through this child of sad destiny, the king had from her earliest childhood kept her securely hidden in a lonely fort, and there Deirdre grew in solitude, daily increasing in beauty and winsomeness. She so won the love of those set in guard over her that they relaxed something of the strictness of their watch, letting her wander a little in the meadows and the verges of the woods, gathering flowers, and watching the life of birds and wild things there.

Among the chieftains of the court of Emain was one Usnac, of whom were three sons, with Naisi strongest and handsomest of the three. Naisi was dark, with black locks hanging upon his shoulders and dark, gleaming eyes; and so strongly is unlike drawn to unlike that golden-haired Deirdre, seeing him in one of her wanderings, felt her heart go forth to him utterly. Falling into talk with him, they exchanged promises of enduring love. Thus the heart of Naisi went to Deirdre, as hers had gone to him, so that all things were changed for them, growing radiant with tremulous hope and wistful with longing. Yet the fate that lay upon Deirdre was heavy, and all men dreaded it but Naisi; so that even his brothers, the sons of Usnac, feared greatly and would have dissuaded him from giving his life to the ill-fated one. But Naisi would not be dissuaded; so they met secretly many times, in the twilight at the verge of the wood, Deirdre's golden hair catching the last gleam of sunlight and holding it long into the darkness, while the black locks of Naisi, even ere sunset, foreshadowed the coming night. In their hearts it was not otherwise; for Deirdre, full of wonder at the change that had come over her, at the song of the birds that echoed ever around her even in her dreams, at the radiance of the flowers and trees, the sunshine on the waters of the river, the vivid gladness over all,—Deirdre knew nothing of the dread doom that was upon her, and was all joy and wonderment at the meetings with her lover, full of fancies and tender words and shy caresses; but Naisi, who knew well the fate that overshadowed them like a black cloud above a cliff of the sea, strove to be glad and show a bold face to his mistress, though his heart many a time grew cold within him, thinking on what had befallen and what might befall.

For the old foretelling of the star-watchers was not the only doom laid upon Deirdre. Concobar the king, stern and masterful, crafty and secret in counsel though swift as an eagle to slay,—Concobar the king had watched Deirdre in her captivity, ever unseen of her, and his heart had been moved by the fair softness of her skin, the glow of her cheek, the brightness of her eyes and hair; so that the king had steadfastly determined in his mind that Deirdre should be his, in scorn of all prophecies and warnings; that her beauty should be for him alone. This the king had determined; and it was known to Naisi the son of Usnac. It was known to him also that what Concobar the king determined, he steadfastly carried out; for the will of Concobar was strong and masterful over all around him.



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Therefore at their meetings two clouds lay upon the heart of Naisi: the presentment of the king's power and anger, and his relentless hand pursuing through the night, and the darker dread of the sightless doom pronounced of old at the birth of Deirdre, of which the will of Concoibar was but the tool. There was gloom in his eyes and silence on his lips and a secret dread in his heart. Deirdre wondered at it, her own heart being so full of gladness, her eyes sparkling, and endearing words ever ready on her lips. Deirdre wondered, yet found a new delight and wonderment in the silence of Naisi, and the gloomy lightning in his eyes, as being the more contrasted with herself, and therefore the more to be beloved.

Yet the time came when Naisi determined to tell her all and risk the worst that fate could do against them, finding death with her greatly better than life without her. Yet death with her was not to be granted to him. Deirdre heard, wondering and trembling, and Naisi must tell her the tale many times before she understood,—so utter had been her solitude and so perfect was yet her ignorance of all things beyond the fort where she was captive, and of all the doings of men. Concoibar was not even a name to her, and she knew nothing of his power or the stronghold of Emain, the armies of the Ulaid, or the tributes of gold and cattle and horses. Spears and swords and those who wielded them were not even dreams to her until the coming of Naisi, when his gloom blended with her sunshine.

Talking long through the twilight, until the red gold of the west was dulled to bronze over the hills, and the bronze tarnished and darkened with the coming of the eastern stars, they planned together what they should do; and, the heart of Deirdre at last growing resolute, they made their way through the night to where the brothers of Naisi were, and all fled together towards the northern sea. Amongst the fishermen of the north they found those who were willing to carry them beyond the reach of Concoibar's anger, and with a southerly breeze set sail for the distant headlands of Scotland, that they had seen from the cliff-top lying like blue clouds along the horizon. They set forth early in the morning, as the sun came up out of the east over blue Alban capes, and when the sun went down it reddened the dark rocks of Islay; so that, making for the shore, they camped that night under the Islay Hills. On their setting forth again, the sea was like a wild grey lake between Jura on the left and the long headland of Cantyre on their right; and thus they sped forward between long ranks of gloomy hills, growing ever nearer them on both sides, till they passed through the Sound of Jura and rounded into Loch Etive.



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There they made the land, drawing up under the shadow of dark hills, and there they dwelt for many a day. Very familiar to Deirdre, though at first strange and wild and terrible beyond words, grew that vast amphitheatre of hills in their eternal grayness, with the long Loch stretching down like a horn through their midst. Very familiar to inland-bred Deirdre, though at first strange and fearful, grew the gray surges of the incoming tides, the white foam of the waves seething along boulders of granite, and the long arms of seaweed waving as she peered downward into the clear green water. Very familiar to Deirdre, though at first strange and confusing, grew the arms of Naisi around her in the darkness and his warm lips on her cheek. Happy were those wild days in the great glen of Etive, and dear did the sons of Usnac grow to her heart, loved as brothers by her who never knew a brother, or the gentleness of a mother's watching, or the solace of dear kindred.

The sons of Usnac sped forth before dawn among the hills from their green dwelling roofed with pine branches and reeds and moss; early they went forth to track the deer, pursuing them with their arrows, till the red flank of the buck was laced with brighter red. One of the three ever stayed behind with Deirdre, whether it was Naisi himself, or Alyn, or Ardan, and the two thus remaining were like children playing together, whether gathering sticks and dry rushes and long spears of withered grass for their fire, or wandering by the white curling waves, or sending flat pebbles skipping over the wavelets; and the sound of their laughter many a time echoed along the Loch's green waters and up the hills, till the does peered and wondered from among the heather, and the heron, startled at his fishing, flew upwards croaking, with flapping wings. Happy were those days for Deirdre, and with utter sadness she looked back to them afterwards, when the doom foretold had fallen upon her. Happy sped the days, till once in the gray of the dawn, while Deirdre was resting in their green refuge with Naisi, she cried out in her sleep and waked, telling him, weeping, that she had heard the voice of the bird of doom in her dreams.

The voice she heard was indeed the voice of their doom; yet it was a cheerful voice, full of friendly gladness; the voice of Fergus, son of Roeg, former King of Emain, and now come to Loch Etive as messenger of Concobar, Fergus came up from the sea-beach towards the answering shout of the sons of Usnac, and glad greetings passed among them at the door of their refuge. Fergus looked long in admiration at the blue eyes and golden locks, the clear skin and gentle breast of Deirdre, nor wondered, as he looked, that Naisi had dared fate to possess her. Then Fergus told the story of his coming; how they had discovered the flight of the sons of Usnac from Emain, and how terrible was the black anger of Concobar; what passionate fire had gleamed in his eyes as he tossed the golden locks back from his shoulders and grasped the haft of his spear, and pledged himself to be avenged on Naisi and all his kin, swearing that he would have Deirdre back again.



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Thus Fergus told the tale, laughingly, as at a danger that was past, a storm-cloud that had lost its arrows of white hail and was no longer fearful. For, he said, Concobar had forgotten his anger, had promised a truce to the sons of Usnac, and most of all to Naisi, and had bidden them return as his guests to Emain of Maca, where Deirdre should dwell happy with her beloved. The comrades of Fergus by this time had tied their boat and come up from the shore, and the sons of Usnac were ready to depart. Yet Deirdre's heart misgave her as she thought of the days among those purple hills and granite rocks, by the long green water of the Loch, and her clear-seeing soul spoke words of doom for them all: words soon to be fulfilled. Amongst the comrades of Fergus were certain of the adherents of Concobar, treacherous as he; for he had no thought of pardoning the sons of Usnac, nor any intent but to draw Deirdre back within his reach; the image of her bright eyes and the redness of her lips, and her soft breast and shining hair was ever before him, and his heart gnawed within him for longing and the bitterness of desire.

Therefore he had designed this embassy; and Fergus, believing all things and trusting all things, had gladly undertaken to be the messenger of forgiveness; fated, instead, to be the instrument of betrayal. So they turned their faces homewards towards Emain, Deirdre full of desponding, as one whose day of grace is past. They set sail again through the long Sound of Jura, with the islands now on their right hand and the gray hills of Cantyre on their left. So they passed Jura, and later Islay, and came at last under the cliffs of Rathlin and the white Antrim headlands. Deirdre's heart never lightened, nor did laughter play about her lips or in her eyes through all the time of her journey, but sadness lay ever upon her, like the heavy darkness of a winter's night, when a storm is gathering out of the West. But Fergus made merry, rejoicing at the reconciling; bidden to a treacherous banquet by the partisans of Concobar, his heart never misgave him, but giving the charge of Deirdre and the sons of Usnac to his sons, he went to the banquet, delaying long in carousing and singing, while Deirdre and the three brothers were carried southwards to Emain. There the treachery plotted against them was carried out, as they sat in the banquet-hall; for Concobar's men brought against them the power of cowardly flames, setting fire to the hall, and slaying the sons of Usnac as they hurried forth from under the burning roof.

One of the sons of Fergus shamefully betrayed them, bought by the gold and promises of Concobar, but the other bravely fell, fighting back to back with one of the sons of Usnac, when they fell overpowered by the warriors of Concobar. Thus was the doom of Deirdre consummated, her lover treacherously done to death, and she herself condemned to bear the hated caress of Concobar, thinking ever of those other lips, in the days of her joy among the northern hills. This is the lament of Deirdre for Usnac's sons:



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The lions of the hill are gone,
And I am left alone, alone;
Dig the grave both wide and deep,
For I am sick and fain would sleep!

The falcons of the wood are flown,
And I am left alone, alone;
Dig the grave both deep and wide,
And let us slumber side by side.

Lay their spears and bucklers bright
By the warriors' sides aright;
Many a day the three before me
On their linked bucklers bore me.

Dig the grave both wide and deep,
Sick I am and fain would sleep.
Dig the grave both deep and wide,
And let us slumber side by side.

VI.

Cuculain the hero.

B.C. 50—A.D. 50.

The treacherous death of Naisi and his brothers Ardan and Alny, and her own bereavement and misery, were not the end of the doom pronounced at her birth for Deirdre, but rather the beginning. Yet the burden of the evils that followed fell on Concobar and his lands and his warriors.

For Fergus, son of Roeg, former king over Emain, who had stayed behind his charges feasting and banqueting, came presently to Emain, fearing nothing and thinking no evil, but still warm with the reconciliation that he had accomplished; and, coming to Emain of Maca, found the sons of Usnac dead, with the sods still soft on their graves, and his own son also dead, Deirdre in the hands of Concobar, and the plighted word of Fergus and his generous pledge of safety most traitorously and basely broken; broken by Concobar, whom he himself had guarded and set upon the throne.

Fergus changed from gladness to fierce wrath, and his countenance was altered with anger, as he uttered his bitter indignation against Concobar to the warriors and heroes of Emain and the men of Ulad. The warriors were parted in two by his words, swaying to the right and to the left, as tall wheat sways before one who passes through it. For some of them sided with Fergus, saying that he had done great wrong to put Concobar



on the throne, and that even now he should cast him down again, for the baseness and treachery of his deed; but others took Concobar's part, saying that the first betraying was Naisi's, who stole away Deirdre,—the hostage, as it were, of evil doom, so that he drew the doom upon himself. They further said that Concobar was chief and ruler among them, the strong and masterful leader, able to uphold their cause amongst men. So indeed it befell, for the sedition of Fergus and his fight to avenge his wrong upon Concobar failed, so that he fled defeated to Meave, Queen of Connacht, at her stronghold amid the lakes whence issues forth the Shannon.

[Illustration: Honeycomb, Giant's Causeway.]



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Meave, whose power and genius overtopped her lord Ailill, received the exiled king gladly, and put many honors upon him, holding him as the pillar of her army, with the two thousand men of the Ulaid who came with him;—those who had fought for him against the party of Concobar. At Cruacan, on the hillside, with the lakes of the Great River all around them, with the sun setting red behind the Curlew hills, with green meadows and beech-woods to gladden them, Meave and Ailill kept their court, and thence they sent many forays against Emain of Maca and Concobar, with Fergus the fallen king ever raging in the van, and, for the wrong that was done him, working measureless wrong on his own kingdom and the kingdom of his fathers.

After many a foray had gone forth against Ulad, crossing the level plains, it befell that Meave and Ailill her lord disputed between them as to which had the greatest wealth; nor would either yield until their most precious possessions had been brought and matched the one against the other. Their jewels of gold, wonderfully wrought, and set with emeralds and beryls and red carbuncles, were brought forth, their crescents for the brow, with hammered tracery upon them, their necklets and torques, like twisted ribbons of gold, their bracelets and arm-rings set with gold, their gems of silver and all their adornments, cloaks of scarlet and blue and purple, were all brought, and no advantage in the one was found over the other. Their battle-steeds also were brought, their horses for chariots; and likewise their herds of lowing wealth, their sheep with soft fleeces. When the cattle were driven up before them, it was found that among the herds of Ailill was one bull, matchless, with white horns shining and polished; and equal to this bull was none among the herds of the queen. She would not admit her lord's advantage, but sent forthwith to seek where another bull like the bull of Ailill might be found, and tidings were brought to her of the brown bull of Cuailgne,—of Cuailgne named after a chief of the Sons of Milid, fallen ages ago in the pursuit of the De Danaans, when the De Danaans retreated before the Sons of Milid from the southern headland of Slieve Mish to the ford at green Tailten by the Boyne, and thence further northwards to where Cuailgne of the Sons of Milid was killed. At that same place had grown up a dwelling with a fortress, and there was the brown bull that Meave heard the report of. She sent, therefore, and her embassy bore orders to Daire, the owner of the bull, asking that the bull might be sent to her for a year, and offering fifty heifers in payment. Daire received her messengers well, and willingly consented to her request; but the messengers of Meave from feasting fell to drinking, from drinking to boasting; one of them declaring that it was a small thing that Daire had granted the request, since they themselves would have compelled him, even unwillingly, and would have driven off the brown bull by force. The taunt stung Daire, after his hospitality, and in wrath he sent them forth empty-handed, and so they came slighted to Meave.



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The queen, conceiving her honor impeached, would by no means suffer the matter so to rest, but stirred up wrath and dissension, till the armies of Connacht with their allies set forth to sack and burn in Ulad, and at all hazards to bring the brown bull. Fergus and the men who fought by his side went with them, and marching thus eastwards they came, after three days march through fair lands and fertile, to the river Dee—the frontier of Ulad, and the scene of many well-fought fights.

The army of Ulad was not yet ready to meet them, but one champion with his band confronted them at the ford. That champion was Cuculain, whose true name was Setanta, son of Sualtam, chief at Dundelga, and of Dectira the sister of Conobar. Cuculain was accounted the greatest and most skillful warrior of his time, and bards for ages after told how he kept the ford. For by the laws of honor, amongst them, the host from Connacht could not pass the ford so long as Cuculain held the ford and offered single combat to the champions. They must take up his challenge one by one; and while he stood there challenging, the host could not pass.

Many of their champions fell there by the ford, so that queen Meave's heart chafed within her, and her army was hot to do battle, but still Cuculain kept the ford. Last of the western champions came forth Ferdiad, taught in the famous northern school of arms, a dear friend and companion of Cuculain, who now must meet him to slay or be slain. This is the story of their combat, as the traditions tell it:

When they ceased fighting on the first day, they cast their weapons away from them into the hands of their charioteers. Each of them approached the other forthwith, and each put his hand round the other's neck, and gave him three kisses. Their horses were in the same paddock that night, and their charioteers at the same fire; and their charioteers spread beds of green rushes for them, with wounded men's pillows to them. The men of healing came to heal and solace them, applying herbs that should assuage to every cut or gash upon their bodies, and to all their wounds. Of every healing herb that was laid on the hurts of Cuculain, he sent an equal share to Ferdiad, sending it westward over the ford, so that men might not say that through the healing virtue of the herbs he was able to overcome him. And of all food and invigorating drink that was set before Ferdiad, he sent an equal portion northwards over the ford to Cuculain, for those that prepared food for him were more than those who made ready food for Cuculain. Thus that night they rested.

They fought with spears on the next day, and so great was the strength of each, so dire their skill in combat, that both were grievously wounded, for all the protection of their shields. The men of healing art could do little for them beyond the staunching of their blood, that it might not flow from their wounds, laying herbs upon their red wounds.



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On the third day they arose early in the morning and came forward to the place of combat. Cuculain saw that the face of Ferdiad was dark as a black cloud, and thus addressed him: "Thy face is darkened, Ferdiad, and thine eye has lost its fire, nor are the form and features thine!" And Ferdiad answered, "O, Cuculain, it is not from fear or dread that my face is changed, for I am ready to meet all champions in the fight." Cuculain reproached him, wondering that, for the persuasions of Meave, Ferdiad was willing thus to fight against his friend, coming to spoil his land. But Ferdiad replied that fate compelled him, since every man is constrained to come unto the sod where shall be his last resting-place. That day the heroes fought with swords, but such was the skill of both that neither could break down the other's guard.

In the dusk they cast away their weapons, ceasing from the fight; and though the meeting of the two had been full of vigor and friendship in the morning, yet was their parting at night mournful and full of sorrow. That night their horses were not in the same enclosure, nor did their charioteers rest at the same fire.

Then Ferdiad arose early in the morning and went forth to the place of contest, knowing well that that day would decide whether he should fall or Cuculain; knowing that the sun would set on one of them dead that night. Cuculain, seeing him come forth, spoke thus to his charioteer: "I see the might and skill of Ferdiad, coming forth to the combat. If it be I that shall begin to yield to-day, do thou stir my valor, uttering reproaches and words of condemnation against me, so that my wrath shall grow upon me, enkindling me again for the battle." And the charioteer assented and promised.

Great was the deed that was performed that day at the ford by the two heroes, the two warriors, the two champions of western lands, the two gift-bestowing hands of the northwest of the world, the two beloved pillars of the valor of the Gael, the two keys of the bravery of the Gael, brought to fight from afar through the schemes of Meave the queen.

They began to shoot with their missiles from the dawn of the day, from early morning till noon. And when midday came the ire of the men waxed more furious, and they drew nearer together. Then Cuculain sprang from the river-bank against the boss of the shield of Ferdiad, son of Daman, to strike at his head over the rim of the shield from above. But Ferdiad gave the shield so strong a turn with his left arm that he cast Cuculain from him like a bird. Cuculain sprang again upon him, to strike him from above. But the son of Daman so struck the shield with his left knee that he cast Cuculain from him like a child.

Then the charioteer of Cuculain spoke to chide him: "Woe for thee, whom the warrior thus casts aside as an evil mother casts away her offspring. He throws thee as foam is thrown by the river. He grinds thee as a mill would grind fresh grain. He pierces thee as the ax of the woodman cleaves the oak. He binds thee as the woodbine binds the



tree. He darts on thee as the hawk darts on finches, so that henceforth thou hast no claim or name or fame for valor, until thy life's end, thou phantom sprite!"



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Then Cuculain sprang up fleet as the wind and swift as the swallow, fierce as a dragon, strong as a lion, advancing against Ferdiad through clouds of dust, and forcing himself upon his shield, to strike at him from above. Yet even then Ferdiad shook him off, driving him backwards into the ford.

Then Cuculain's countenance was changed, and his heart swelled and grew great within him till he towered demoniac and gigantic, rising like one of the Fomor upon Ferdiad. So fierce was the fight they now fought that their heads met above and their feet below and their arms in the midst, past the rims of the shields. So fierce was the fight they fought that they cleft the shields to their centers. So fierce was the fight they fought that their spears were shivered from socket to haft. So fierce was the fight they fought that the demons of the air screamed along the rims of the shields, and from the hilts of their swords and from the hafts of their spears. So fierce was the fight they fought that they cast the river out of its bed, so that not a drop of water lay there unless from the fierceness of the champion heroes hewing each other in the midst of the ford. So fierce was the fight they fought that the horses of the Gael fled away in fright, breaking their chains and their yokes, and the women and youths and camp-followers broke from the camp, flying forth southwards and westwards.

They were fighting with the edges of their swords, and Ferdiad, finding a break in the guard of Cuculain, gave him a stroke of the straight-edged sword, burying it in his body until the blood fell into his girdle, until the ford was red with the blood of the hero's body. Then Cuculain thrust an unerring spear over the rim of the shield, and through the breast of Ferdiad's armor, so that the point of the spear pierced his heart and showed through his body.

"That is enough, now," said Ferdiad: "I fall for that!" Then Cuculain ran towards him, and clasped his two arms about him, and bore him with his arms and armor across the ford northwards. Cuculain laid Ferdiad down there, bowing over his body in faintness and weakness. But the charioteer cried to him, "Rise up, Cuculain, for the host is coming upon us, and it is not single combat they will give thee, since Ferdiad, son of Daman, son of Daire, has fallen before thee!"

"Friend," Cuculain made answer, "what avails it for me to rise after him that has fallen by me?"

Thus did Cuculain keep the ford, still known as the ford of Ferdiad, Ath-Fhirdia on the Dee, in the midst of the green plain of Louth. And while he fought at the ford of Ferdiad the army of Ulad assembled, and coming southwards over the hills before Emain, turned back the host of Meave the queen and pursued them. The army of Meave fled westwards and southwards towards Connacht, passing the Yellow Ford of Athboy and the Hill of Ward, the place of sacrifice, where the fires on the Day of Spirits summoned the priests



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and Druids to the offering. Fleeing still westwards from the Yellow Ford, they passed between the lakes of Owel and Ennel, with the men of Ulad still hot in their rear. Thus came pursued and pursuers to Gairec, close by Athlone—the Ford of Luan—and the wooded shore of the great Lough Ree. There was fought a battle hardly less fatal to victors than to vanquished, for though the hosts of Meave were routed, yet Concoabar's men could not continue the pursuit. Thus Meave escaped and Fergus with her, and came to their great fort on the green hillside of Cruacan amid the headwaters of the Shannon.

The victory of Concoabar's men was like a defeat. There was not food that pleased him, nor did sleep come to him by flight, so that the Ulad wondered, and Catbad the right-wonderful Druid, himself a warrior who had taught Concoabar and reared him, went to Concoabar to learn the secret of his trouble. Therefore Catbad asked of Concoabar what wound had wounded him, what obstinate sickness had come upon him, making him faint and pale, day after day.

“Great reason have I for it,” answered Concoabar, “for the four great provinces of Erin have come against me, bringing with them their bards and singers, that their ravages and devastations might be recorded, and they have burned our fortresses and dwellings, and Ailill and Meave have gained a battle against me. Therefore I would be avenged upon Meave the queen.”

“Thou hast already avenged it sternly, O Red-handed Concoabar,” Catbad made answer, “by winning the battle over the four provinces of Erin.”

“That is no battle,” Concoabar answered, “where a strong king falls not by hard fighting and by fury. That an army should escape from a goodly battle! Unless Ailill should fall, and Meave, by me in this encounter with valorous hosts, I tell you that my heart will break, O Catbad!”

“This is my counsel for thee,” replied Catbad, “to stay for the present. For the winds are rough, and the roads are foul, and the streams and the rivers are in flood, and the hands of the warriors are busy making forts and strongholds among strangers. So wait till the summer days come upon us, till every grassy sod is a pillow, till our horses are full of spirit and our colts are strong, till our men are whole of their wounds and hurts, till the nights are short to watch and to ward and to guard in the land of enemies and in the territories of strangers. Spring is not the time for an invasion. But meanwhile let tidings be sent to thy friends in absence, in the islands and throughout the northern seas.”

Therefore messengers were sent with the tidings, and the friends in absence of Concoabar were summoned. They set forth with ships from the islands of the northern seas, and came forward with the tide to the Cantyre headland. The green surges of the

tremendous sea rose about them, and a mighty storm rose against them. Such was the strength of the storm that the fleet was parted in three. A third of them,



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with the son of Amargin, came under the cliffs of Fair Head, to the Bay of Murbolg, where huge columns tower upward on the face of the cliff, high as the nests of the eagles; cliffs ruddy and mighty, frowning tremendous across the channel to Cantyre and Islay and far-away Jura. A third of the ships came to the safer harbor of Larne, where bands of white seam the cliff's redness, where the great headland is thrust forth northwards, sheltering the bay from the eastern waves. A third of the fleet came to the strand beside Dundelga, hard by the great hill of earth where was reared the stronghold of Cuculain.

At that same time came Concobar with a thousand men to the fort of Cuculain, and feasting was prepared for him at the House of Delga. Nor was Concobar long there till he saw the bent spars of sails and the full-crewed ships, and the scarlet pavilions, and the many-colored banners, and the blue bright lances, and the weapons of war. Then Concobar called on the chiefs that were about him, for the territory and land he had bestowed upon them, and for the jewels he had given them, to stand firm and faithful. For he knew not whether the ships were ships of his foes, of the Galian of Lagen, now called Leinster, or the Munstermen of great Muma, or the men of Olnemact, called afterwards Connacht; for the estuary of the river and the strand were full of men.

Then Senca son of Ailill answered for the chieftains: "I give my word, indeed, that Erin holds not a soldier who lays his hand in the hand of a chieftain that is not known to me. If they be the men of Erin thy foes that are there, I shall ask a truce of battle from them; but if they be thy friends and allies, thou shalt the more rejoice."

Then Senca son of Ailill went forward to the place where the ships were, and learned that they were the friends in absence of Concobar, come to be his allies against the four provinces of Erin. Then Concobar spoke to Cuculain:

"Well, O Cuculain, let the horses of the plain of Murtemni be caught by thee; let four-wheeled chariots be harnessed for them; bring with them hither my friends from the ships in chariots and four-wheeled cars, that feasting and enjoyment may be prepared for them."

[Illustration: Gray Man's Path, Fair Head.]

They were brought in chariots to the feast, and carvers carved for them, and serving-men carried the cups of mead. Songs were sung to them, and they tarried there till sunrise on the morrow. Then Concobar spoke again to Cuculain:

"It is well, Cuculain. Let messengers now be sent through the lands of the Ulaid to the warriors of the Ulaid, that the foreign friends may be ministered to by them also, while I



make my camp here by the river. And bid the thrice fifty veteran champions come hither to me, that I may have their aid and counsel in battle.”

But Cuculain would not. Therefore Concobar went himself to summon the veterans. When they asked the cause of his coming, Concobar answered, “Have you not heard how the four provinces of Erin came against us, bringing with them their bards and singers, that their ravages and devastations might the better be recorded, and burning and plundering our fortresses and dwellings? Therefore I would make an expedition of hostility against them, and with your guidance and counsel would I make the expedition.”



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“Let our old steeds be caught by thee,” they answered, “and let our old chariots be yoked by thee, so that we may go on this journey and expedition with thee.” Then their old chargers were caught, and their old chariots yoked, so that they too came to the camp at the Water of Luachan.

This was told to the four provinces. The Three Waves of Erin thundered in the night; the Wave of Clidna at Glandore in the South; the Wave of Rudraige along the bent-carpeted sandhills of Dundrum, under the Mountains of Mourne; and the Wave of Tuag Inbir, at the bar of northern Bann. For these are the Three Waves of Fate in Erin. Then the four provinces hosted their men. The son of Lucta, the north Munster king, assembled his tribes at the Hill of Luchra, between the Shannon mouth and the Summit of Prospects. Ailill and Meave hosted the men of the west at Cruacan. Find, son of Ros, king over the Galian of Leinster, gathered his army at Dinn-Rig by the Barrow. Cairpre Nia Fer assembled his host about him at Tara, in the valley of the Boyne.

This was the proposal of Eocu, son of Lucta, king of north Munster by the Shannon: That everything should have its payment, and that reparation should be made to Concobar for the invasion; that a fort should be paid for every fort, for every house a house, for every cow a cow, for every bull a bull; that the great brown bull should be sent back, that the breadth of the face of the bull in red gold should be given to Concobar, and that there should be no more hostility among the men of Erin.

This was reported to Meave, but the queen answered, “A false hand was his who gave this counsel. For so long as there shall be among us one who can hold a sword, who can wear the shield-strap about his neck, that proposal shall not go to him.”

“Thy counsel is not mine,” replied Ailill, “for not greater shall be our part of that payment than the part of all the four provinces who went on that raid for the bull.” Therefore Meave consented, and messengers were sent, and came to Tara by the Boyne, where were Find, son of Ros, king of Leinster, and his brother Cairpre Nia Fer, king of Tara. Thence they sent messengers to treat with Concobar, but Concobar rejected the terms. “I give my word, indeed,” answered Concobar, “that I will not take terms from you till my tent has been pitched in every province of Erin.”

“Good, O Concobar,” they replied; “where wilt thou now make thy encampment to-night?”

“In the Headland of the Kings, by the clear bright Boyne,” answered Concobar, for Concobar concealed not ever from his enemy the place in which he would take station or camp, that they might not say that it was fear or dread that caused him not to say it. Concobar, therefore, marched toward the Headland of the Kings, across the Boyne to the southward, and facing the northern bank where are the pyramids of the Dagda Mor and the De Danaans. But the southern armies were there already, so Concobar halted before the river. Then were their positions fixed and their pavilions pitched, their huts



and their tents were made. Their fires were kindled, cooking and food and drink were prepared; baths of clean bathing were made by them, and their hair was smooth-combed; their bodies were minutely cleansed, supper and food were eaten by them; and tunes and merry songs and eulogies were sung by them.



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Then Concoibar sent men to reconnoitre the southern and western armies. Two went and returned not, falling indeed into the hands of the foe. It seemed long to Concoibar that the two were gone. He spoke, therefore, to his kinsman: "Good indeed, Irgalac, son of Macclac, son of Congal, son of Rudraige, sayest thou who is proper to go to estimate and to reconnoitre the army?"

"Who should go there," answered Irgalac, "but Iriel good at arms, great-kneed son of Conall Cernac. He is a Conall for havoc, a Cuculain for dexterity of feats. He is a Catbad, a right-wonderful Druid, for intelligence and counsel, he is a Senca son of Ailill for peace and for good speech, he is a Celtcair son of Utecar for valor, he is a Concoibar son of Factna Fatac for kingliness and wide-eyed-ness, for giving of treasures and of wealth and of riches. Who but Iriel should go?"

Therefore Iriel went forward: standing on the pyramid of the Dagda, he began measuring and reconnoitering the army. His spirit, or his mind, or his thoughts did not fret over them at all. He brought their description with him to the place in which Concoibar was.

"How, my life, Iriel?" said Concoibar. "I give my word truly," said Iriel; "it seems to me that there is not ford on river, or stone on hill, nor highway nor road in the territory of Breg or Mide, that is not full of their horse-teams and of their servants. It seems to me that their apparel and their gear and their garments are the blaze of a royal house from the plain."

"Good, O Ulaid," said Concoibar, "what is your advice to us for the battle?" "Our advice is," said the Ulaid, "to wait till our strong men and our leaders and our commanders and our supporters of battle come." Not long was their waiting, and not great was their stay, till they saw three chariot-warriors approaching them, and a band of twelve hundred along with each rider of them. It is these that were there—three of the goodly men of science of the Ulaid, to wit, Catbad the right-wonderful Druid, and Aiterni the Importunate, and Amargin the man of science and art. After them came other valiant leaders with troops. Then Concoibar arose and took his gear of battle and of conflict and of combat about him, saying, "Why should we not give battle?"

A third of the army of the Ulaid rose with him, too. And they went over the river Boyne. And the other armies arose against them as they were crossing the river. And each of them took to hacking and to cutting down the other, destroying and wounding till there was no similitude of the Ulaid at that point of time, unless it were a huge sturdy oakwood in the middle of the plain, and a great army were to go close to it, and the slender and the small of the wood were cut off, but its huge sturdy oaks were left behind. Thus their young were cut off, and none but their champions and their battle-warriors and their good heroes of valor were left.



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The shield of Concobar was struck so that it moaned, and the three Waves of Erin, the Wave of Clidna, the Wave of Rudraige, and the Wave of Tuag Inbir echoed that moan, and all the shields of the Ulaid resounded, every one of them that was on their shoulders and in their chariots. As the Ulaid were retreating, fresh troops came up for them under Conall Cernac. A tree of shelter and a wreath of laurel and a hand above them was Conall to them. So their flight was stayed. Then Conall drew the sharp long sword out of its sheath of war and played the music of his sword on the armies. The ring of Conall's sword was heard through the battalions on both sides. And when they heard the music of Conall's sword their hearts quaked and their eyes fluttered and their faces whitened, and each of them withdrew back into his place of battle and of combat. But so fierce was the onset of the southern armies that the fight of the Ulaid against them was as a breast against a great flood, or an arrow against the rock, or the striking of a head against cliffs. Yet through the great might of Cuculain the Ulaid prevailed, and Cairpre the King of Tara was slain. After the battle, Concobar spoke thus: "There were three sons of Ros Ruad the king—Find in Alend, Ailill in Cruac, Cairpre in Tara; together they performed their deeds of valor, the three brothers in every strife; together they used to give their battle. They were three pillars of gold about their hills, abiding in strength; great is their loss since the third son has fallen."

VII.

Find and Ossin.

A.D. 200—290.

Seventeen centuries ago, two hundred summers after the death of Cuculain the hero, came the great and wonderful time of Find the son of Cumal, Ossin the son of Find, and Find's grandson Oscur. It was a period of growth and efflorescence; the spirit and imaginative powers of the people burst forth with the freshness of the prime. The life of the land was more united, coming to a national consciousness.

The five kingdoms were now clearly defined, with Meath, in the central plain, predominant over the others, and in a certain sense ruling all Ireland from the Hill of Tara. The code of honor was fixed; justice had taken well-defined forms; social life had ripened to genial urbanity. The warriors were gathered together into something like a regular army, a power rivaling the kings. Of this army, Find, son of Cumal, was the most renowned leader—a warrior and a poet, who embodied in himself the very genius of the time, its fresh naturalness, its ripeness, its imagination. No better symbol of the spirit of his age could be found than Find's own "Ode to Spring":

"May-day! delightful time! How beautiful the color! The blackbirds sing their full lay. Would that Laigay were here! The cuckoos call in constant strains. How welcome is ever the noble brightness of the season. On the margin of the leafy pools the summer



swallows skim the stream. Swift horses seek the pools. The heath spreads out its long hair. The white, gentle cotton-grass grows. The sea is lulled to rest. Flowers cover the earth.”



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Find's large and imaginative personality is well drawn in one of the poems of his golden-tongued son Ossin, though much of the beauty of Ossin's form is lost in the change of tongue:

“Six thousand gallant men of war
We sought the rath o'er Badamar;
To the king's palace home we bent
Our way. His bidden guests we went.
'Twas Clochar Fair,
And Find was there,
The Fians from the hills around
Had gathered to the race-course ground.
From valley deep and wooded glen
Fair Munster sent its mighty men;
And Fiaca, Owen's son, the king,
Was there the contest witnessing.
'Twas gallant sport! With what delight
Leaped thousand pulses at the sight.
How all hearts bound
As to the ground
First are brought forth the Fian steeds,
Then those from Luimnea's sunny meads.
Three heats on Mac Mareda's green
They run; and foremost still is seen
Dill Mac Decreca's coal-black steed.
At Crag-Lochgur he takes the lead.

“His is the day—and, lo! the king
The coal-black steed soliciting
From Dill the Druid!—'Take for it
A hundred beeves; for it is fit
The black horse should be mine to pay
Find for his deeds of many a day.'

“Then spoke the Druid, answering
His grandson, Fiaca the king:
'Take my blessing; take the steed,
For the hero's fitting meed:
Give it for thy honor's sake.'
And to Find the King thus spake

“'Hero, take the swift black steed,
Of thy valor fitting meed;
And my car, in battle-raid



Gazed on by the foe with fear;
And a seemly steed for thy charioteer.
Chieftain, be this good sword thine,
Purchased with a hundred kine,
In thine hand be it our aid.

Take this spear, whose point the breath
Of venomous words has armed with death,
And the silver-orbed shield,
Sunbeam of the battlefield!
And take with thee
My grayhounds three,
Slender and tall,
Bright-spotted all,
Take them with thee, chieftain bold,
With their chainlets light
Of the silver white,
And their neck-rings of the tawny gold.
Slight not thou our offering,
Son of Cumal, mighty king!"

"Uprose Find our chieftain bold,
Stood before the Fian ranks,
To the king spoke gracious thanks,
Took the gifts the monarch gave;
Then each to each these champions brave
Glorious sight to see and tell,
Spoke their soldier-like farewell!

"The way before us Find led then;
We followed him, six thousand men,
From out the Fair, six thousand brave,
To Caicer's house of Cloon-na-Dave.



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“Three nights, three days, did all of us
Keep joyous feast in Caicer’s house;
Fifty rings of the yellow gold
To Caicer Mac Caroll our chieftain told;
As many cows and horses gave
To Caicer Mac Caroll our chieftain brave.
Well did Find of Innisfail
Pay the price of his food and ale.

“Find rode o’er the Luacra, joyous man,
Till he reached the strand at Barriman;
At the lake where the foam on the billow’s top
Leaps white, did Find and the Fians stop.

“’Twas then that our chieftain rode and ran
Along the strand of Barriman;
Trying the speed
Of his swift black steed,—
Who now but Find was a happy man?

“Myself and Cailte at each side,
In wantonness of youthful pride,
Would ride with him where he might ride.
Fast and furious rode he,
Urging his steed to far Tralee.
On from Tralee by Lerg duv-glass,
And o’er Fraegmoy, o’er Finnass,
O’er Moydeo, o’er Monaken,
On to Shan-iber, o’er Shan-glen,
Till the clear stream of Flesk we win,
And reach the pillar of Crofinn;
O’er Sru-Muny, o’er Moneket,
And where the fisher spreads his net
To snare the salmon of Lemain,
And thence to where our coursers’ feet
Wake the glad echoes of Loch Leane;
And thus fled he,
Nor slow were we;
Through rough and smooth our course we strain.

“Long and swift our stride,—more fleet
Than the deer of the mountain our coursers’ feet!
Away to Flesk by Carnwood dun;
And past Mac Scalve’s Mangerton,



Till Find reached Barnec Hill at last;
There rested he, and then we passed
Up the high hill before him, and:
'Is there no hunting hut at hand?'
He thus addressed us; 'The daylight
Is gone, and shelter for the night
We lack.' He scarce had ended, when
Gazing adown the rocky glen,
On the left hand, just opposite,
He saw a house with its fire lit;
'That house till now I've never seen,
Though many a time and oft I've been
In this wild glen. Come, look at it!'

"Yes, there are things that our poor wit
Knows little of,' said Cailte; 'thus
This may be some miraculous
Hostel we see, whose generous blaze
Thy hospitality repays,
Large-handed son of Cumal!'—So
On to the house all three we go...."

Of their entry to the mysterious house, of the ogre and the witch they found there, of the horrors that gathered on all sides, when

"From iron benches on the right
Nine headless bodies rose to sight,
And on the left, from grim repose,
Nine heads that had no bodies rose,..."

Ossin likewise tells, and how, overcome, they fell at last into a deathlike trance and stupor, till the sunlight woke them lying on the heathery hillside, the house utterly vanished away.



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The scenes of all the happenings in the story are well known: the rath of Badamar is near Caher on the Suir, in the midst of the Golden Vale, a plain of wonderful richness and beauty, walled in by the red precipices of the Galtee Mountains, and the Knock-Mealdown Hills. From the rath of Badamar Find could watch the western mountains reddening and glowing in front of the dawn, as the sun-rays shot level over the burnished plain. Clocar is thirty miles westward over the Golden Vale, near where Croom now stands; and here were run the races; here Find gained the gift of the coal-black steed. It is some forty miles still westwards to the Strand of Tralee; the last half of the way among hills carpeted with heather; and the Strand itself, with the tide out, leaves a splendid level of white sand as far as the eye can reach, tempting Find to try his famous courser. The race carried them southwards some fifteen miles to the beautiful waters of Lough Leane, with its overhanging wooded hills, the Lake of Killarney, southward of which rises the huge red mass of Mangerton, in the midst of a country everywhere rich in beauty. The Hill of Barnec is close by, but the site of the magic dwelling, who can tell? Perhaps Find; or Cailte, or golden-tongued Ossin himself.

There was abundant fighting in those days, for well within memory was the time of Conn of the Five-score Fights, against whom Cumal had warred because Conn lord of Connacht had raised Crimtan of the Yellow Hair to the kingship of Leinster. Cumal fought at the Rath that bears his name, now softened to Rathcool, twelve miles inward from the sea at Dublin, with the hills rising up from the plain to the south of the Rath. Cumal fought and fell, slain by Goll Mac Morna, and enmity long endured between Find and Goll who slew his sire. But like valiant men they were reconciled, and when Goll in his turn died, Find made a stirring poem on Goll's mighty deeds.

Another fateful fight for Find was the battle of Kinvarra, among the southern rocks of Galway Bay; for though he broke through the host of his foeman Uince, that chieftain himself escaped, and, riding swiftly with a score of men, came to Find's own dwelling at Druim Dean on the Red Hills of Leinster, and burned the dwelling, leaving it a smoldering ruin. Find pursuing, overtook them, slaying them at the ford called to this day Ath-uince, the ford of Uince. Returning homewards, Find found his house desolate, and the song he sang still holds the memory of his sorrow.

Two poems he made, on the Plain of Swans and on Roirend in Offaly, full of vivid pictures and legends; and one of romantic tragedy, telling how the two daughters of King Tuatal Tectmar were treacherously slain, through the malice of the Leinster king. But of romances and songs of fair women in the days of Find, the best is the Poem of Gael, who composed it to win a princess for his bride.



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Of fair Crede of the Yellow Hair it was said that there was scarce a gem in all Erin that she had not got as a love-token, but that she would give her heart to none. Crede had vowed that she would marry the man who made the best verses on her home, a richly-adorned dwelling in the south, under the twin cones of the Paps, and within sight of Lough Leane and Killarney. Cael took up the challenge, and invoking the Genius that dwelt in the sacred pyramid of Brugh on the Boyne he made these verses, and came to recite them to yellow-haired Crede:

“It would be happy for me to be in her home,
Among her soft and downy couches,
Should Crede deign to hear me;
Happy for me would be my journey.
A bowl she has, whence berry-juice flows,
With which she colors her eyebrows black;
She has clear vessels of fermenting ale;
Cups she has, and beautiful goblets.
The color of her house is white like lime;
Within it are couches and green rushes;
Within it are silks and blue mantles;
Within it are red gold and crystal cups.
Of its sunny chamber the corner stones
Are all of silver and yellow gold,
Its roof in stripes of faultless order
Of wings of brown and crimson red.
Two doorposts of green I see,
Nor is the door devoid of beauty;
Of carved silver,—long has it been renowned,—
Is the lintel that is over the door.
Crede’s chair is on your right hand,
The pleasantest of the pleasant it is;
All over a blaze of Alpine gold,
At the foot of her beautiful couch...
The household which is in her house
To the happiest fate has been destined;
Grey and glossy are their garments;
Twisted and fair is their flowing hair.
Wounded men would sink in sleep,
Though ever so heavily teeming with blood,
With the warbling of the fairy birds
From the eaves of her sunny summer-room.
If I am blessed with the lady’s grace,
Fair Crede for whom the cuckoo sings,
In songs of praise shall ever live,



If she but repay me for my gift....
There is a vat of royal bronze,
Whence flows the pleasant; nice of malt;
An apple-tree stands over the vat,
With abundance of weighty fruit.
When Crede's goblet is filled
With the ale of the noble vat,
There drop down into the cup forthwith
Four apples at the same time.
The four attendants that have been named,
Arise and go to the distributing,
They present to four of the guests around
A drink to each man and an apple.
She who possesses all these things,
With the strand and the stream that flow by them,
Crede of the three-pointed hill,
Is a spear-cast beyond the women of Erin.
Here is a poem for her,—no mean gift.
It is not a hasty, rash composition;
To Crede now it is here presented:
May my journey be brightness to her!"

[Illustration: Colleen Bawn Caves, Kllarney.]

Tradition says that the heart of the yellow-haired beauty was utterly softened and won, so that she delayed not to make Cael master of the dwelling he so well celebrated; master, perhaps, of all the jewels of Erin that her suitors had given her. Yet their young love was not destined to meet the storms and frosts of the years; for Cael the gallant fell in battle, his melodious lips for ever stilled. Thus have these two become immortal in song.



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We have seen Cailte with Ossin following Find in his wild ride through the mountains of Killarney, and to Cailte is attributed the saying that echoes down the ages: "There are things that our poor wit knows nothing off!" Cailte was a great lover of the supernatural, yet there was in him also a vein of sentiment, shown in his poem on the death of Clidna—"Clidna the fair-haired, long to be remembered," who was tragically drowned at Glandore harbor in the south, and whose sad wraith still moans upon the bar, in hours of fate for the people of Erin.

In a gayer vein is the poem of Fergus the Eloquent, who sang the legend of Tipra Seangarmna, the Fountain of the Feale River, which flows westward to the sea from the mountains north of Killarney. The river rises among precipices, gloomy caverns and ravines, and passes through vales full of mysterious echoes amid mist-shrouded hills. There, as Fergus sings, were Ossin and his following hunting, when certain ominous fair women lured them to a cave,—women who were but insubstantial wraiths,—to hold them captive till the seasons ran full circle, summer giving place again to winter and spring. But Ossin, being himself of more than human wisdom, found a way to trick the spirits; for daily he cut chips from his spear and sent them floating down the spring, till Find at last saw them, and knew the tokens as Ossin's, and, coming, delivered his son from durance among ghosts.

The great romantic theme of the time binds the name of Find, son of Cumal, with that of Cormac, son of Art, and grandson of Conn of the Five-score Battles. This Cormac was himself a notable man of wisdom, and here are some of the Precepts he taught to Cairbre, his son:

"O grandson of Conn, O Cormac," Cairbre asked him, "what is good for a king?"

"This is plain," answered Cormac. "It is good for him to have patience and not to dispute, self-government without anger, affability without haughtiness, diligent attention to history, strict observance of covenants and agreements, justice tempered by mercy in the execution of the laws. It is good for him to make fertile land, to invite ships, to import jewels of price from across the sea, to purchase and distribute raiment, to keep vigorous swordsmen who may protect his territory, to make war beyond his territory, to attend to the sick, to discipline his soldiers. Let him enforce fear, let him perfect peace, let him give mead and wine, let him pronounce just judgments of light, let him speak all truth, for it is through the truth of a king that God gives favorable seasons."

"O grandson of Conn, O Cormac," Cairbre again asked him, "what is good for the welfare of a country?"

"This is plain," answered Cormac. "Frequent assemblies of wise and good men to investigate its affairs, to abolish every evil and retain every wholesome institution, to attend to the precepts of the seniors; let every assembly be convened according to the

law, let the law be in the hands of the noblest, let the chieftains be upright and unwilling to oppress the poor.”



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“O grandson of Conn, O Cormac,” again asked Cairbre, “what are duties of a prince in the banqueting-house?”

“A prince on the Day of Spirits should light his lamps and welcome his guests with clapping of hands, offering comfortable seats; the cup-bearers should be active in distributing meat and drink. Let there be moderation of music, short stories, a welcoming countenance, a greeting for the learned, pleasant conversation. These are the duties of a prince and the arrangement of a banqueting-house.”

“O grandson of Conn, O Cormac, for what qualifications is a king elected over countries and tribes of people?”

“From the goodness of his shape and family, from his experience and wisdom, from his prudence and magnanimity, from his eloquence and bravery in battle, and from the number of his friends.”

“O grandson of Conn, O Cormac, what was thy deportment when a youth?”

“I was cheerful at the banquet of the House of Mead, I was fierce in battle, but vigilant and careful. I was kind to friends, a physician to the sick, merciful to the weak, stern toward the headstrong. Though possessed of knowledge, I loved silence. Though strong, I was not overbearing. Though young, I mocked not the old. Though valiant, I was not vain. When I spoke of one absent I praised and blamed him not, for by conduct like this are we known to be courteous and refined.”

“O grandson of Conn, O Cormac, what is good for me?”

“If thou attend to my command, thou wilt not scorn the old though thou art young, nor the poor though thou art well clad, nor the lame though thou art swift, nor the blind though thou seest, nor the weak though thou art strong, nor the ignorant though thou art wise. Be not slothful, be not passionate, be not greedy, be not idle, be not jealous; for he who is so is hateful to God and man.”

“O grandson of Conn, O Cormac, I would know how to hold myself with the wise and the foolish, with friends and strangers, with old and young.”

“Be not too knowing or simple, too proud or inactive, too humble or haughty, talkative or too silent, timid or too severe. For if thou art too knowing, thou wilt be mocked at and abused; if too simple, thou wilt be deceived; if proud, thou wilt be shunned; if too humble, thou wilt suffer; if talkative, thou wilt be thought foolish; if too severe, men will speak ill of thee; if timid, thy rights will suffer.”

“O grandson of Conn, O Cormac, how shall I discern the characters of women?”



“I know them, but I cannot describe them. Their counsel is foolish, they are forgetful of love, most headstrong in their desires, fond of folly, prone to enter rashly into engagements, given to swearing, proud to be asked in marriage, tenacious of enmity, cheerless at the banquet, rejectors of reconciliation, prone to strife, of much garrulity. Until evil be good, until hell be heaven, until the sun hide his light, until the stars of heaven fall, women will remain as we have declared. Woe to him, my son, who desires or serves a bad woman, woe to him who has a bad wife.”



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Was there some thought of his daughter Grania in Cormac's mind, behind these keen-edged; words?—of Grania, beloved of Diarmuid? When the winters of the years were already white on Find, son of Cumal, when Ossin his son had a son of his own, Oscur the valiant, the two old men, Cormac the king and Find leader of the warriors, bethought them to make a match between Find and Grania, one of the famous beauties of the olden time. A banquet was set in the great House of Mead, and Find and his men were there, Diarmuid son of Duibne being also there, best beloved among Find's warriors. There was a custom, much in honor among the chieftains, that a princess should send her goblet to the guests, offering it to each with gentle courtesy. This grace fell to the lady Grania, whose whole heart rose up against her grey-bearded lover, and was indeed set on Diarmuid the son of Duibne. Grania compounded a dreamy draught to mix with the mead, so that all the chieftains and warriors, with Cormac and Find himself, even while praising the drink, fell straightway a-nodding, and were soon in silent sleep, all except Ossin and Diarmuid, whom Grania had bidden not to drink.

Then Grania, her voice all tremulous with tears, told to Ossin the fate that awaited her, looking at him, but speaking for Diarmuid; bewailing bitterly the misery of fair youth in the arms of withered eld, and at last turning and openly begging Diarmuid to save her from her fate. To carry away a king's daughter, betrothed to the leader of the warriors, was a perilous thing, and Diarmuid's heart stood still at the thought of it; yet Grania's tears prevailed, and they two fled forth that night to the hills and forests. Dire and ruinous was the wrath of Cormac and of Find when they awoke and found that these two were fled; and whatever might was in the king's hand, whatever power in the hosts of Find, was straightway turned against them in pursuit. Yet the two fled as the deer might fly, visiting with their loves every wood and valley in Erin, till the memory of them lingers throughout all the hills. Finally, after a year's joyful and fearsome fleeing, the Fian warriors everywhere aiding them for love of Diarmuid, swift death came upon Diarmuid, and Grania was left desolate.

But Angus the Ever-Young, guardian Genius of the pyramid-shrine of Brugh by the Boyne, De Danaan dweller in the secret house, Angus of the Immortals received the spirit of Diarmuid, opening for him the ways of the hidden world.

But enmity grew between Find with his warriors and Cormac the king, till at last a battle was fought where Find's men fell, and Cairbre, the well-instructed son of Cormac also fell. Thus passed away the ruling spirits of that age, the flowering time of the genius of Erin.

VIII.

The messenger of the new way.

A.D. 410-493.



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The valor of Fergus and Cuculain, the rich imaginative life of Find and Ossin, were the flower of heroic centuries. Strong men had fought for generations before Conobar reigned at Emain of Maca. Poets had sung their deeds of valor, and the loves of fair women, and the magical beauty of the world, through hardly changing ages. The heroes of fame were but the best fruit in the garden of the nation's life. So ripe was that life, more than two thousand years ago, that it is hard to say what they did not know, of the things which make for amenity and comity. The colors of the picture are everywhere rich, yet perfectly harmonized.

The earliest forms of Irish writing seem to have come from the Baltic runes, and these, in their turn, from an old Greek script of twenty-five hundred years ago. The runes spread as far as the Orkneys, and there they were well within the horizon of Ireland's knowledge. Nothing would be more natural than the keeping of written records in Erin for three or four hundred years before Cuculain's birth, nineteen hundred years ago.

The arts of life were very perfect; the gold-work of that time is unsurpassed—has never been surpassed. At a far earlier time there were beautifully moulded and decorated gold-bronze spears, that show what richness of feeling and imagination, what just taste and fine skill were there. All our knowledge goes to show that the suitor of Crede has drawn a true picture of her house and the generous social life belonging to it. We know, too, that the great dining-hall of Tara has been faithfully celebrated by the bards; the picture of the king in his scarlet cloak is representative of the whole epoch.

The story of Crede also shows the freedom and honor accorded to women, as does the queenship of Meave, with the record of her separate riches. The tragedies of Deirdre and Grania would never have been remembered, had not the freedom and high regard of women been universal. Such decorative skill as is shown in the metal-work and pottery that have come down to us must have borne fruit in every realm of social life, in embroideries, tapestries, well-designed and beautifully adorned homes. Music is everywhere spoken of in the old traditions, and the skill of the poets we can judge for ourselves.

In all that concerns the natural man, therefore, a very high perfection had been reached. A frame of life had grown habitual, which brought out the finest vigor and strength and beauty. Romantic love added its riches to valor, and dignity was given by the ever-present memory of the heroic past, merging on the horizon with the divine dawn of the world. Manhood and womanhood had come to perfect flower. The crown rested on the brow of the nation's life.

When the life of the natural man is perfected, the time comes to strike the note of the immortal, to open the door of our real and enduring destiny. Sensual success, the ideal of unregenerate man, was perfectly realized in Conobar and ten thousand like him. The destiny of triumphant individual life, the strong man victorious over nature and other men, was fulfilled. Individual prowess, individual accomplishment, could go no further.



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Nor should we overlook the dark shadows of the picture. Glory is to the victor, but woe to the vanquished. The continual warfare between tribe and tribe, between chief and chief, which made every valley a home of warriors dominated by a rath-fortress, bore abundant fruits of evil. Death in battle need not be reckoned, or may be counted as pure gain; but the fate of the wounded, maimed and miserable, the destitution of women and children left behind, the worse fate of the captives, sold as they were into exile and slavery,—all these must be included in the total.

Nor are these material losses the worst. The great evil of the epoch of tribal war is its reaction on the human spirit. The continual struggle of ambition draws forth egotism, the desire to dominate for mere domination, the sense of separation and antagonism between man and man, tribe and tribe, province and province.

But our real human life begins only when these evil tendencies are abated; when we learn to watch the life of others as if it were our own,—as being indeed a part of our own life,—and in every act and motion of our minds do only that which shall be to the best advantage of both ourselves and our neighbor. For only thus, only by the incessant practice of this in imagination and act, can the door of our wider and more humane consciousness be opened.

[Illustration: Ruins on Scattery Island.]

Nor is this all. There are in us vast unexplored tracts of power and wisdom; tracts not properly belonging to our personal and material selves, but rather to the impersonal and universal consciousness which touches us from within, and which we call divine. Our personal fate is closed by death; but we have a larger destiny which death does not touch; a destiny enduring and immortal. The door to this larger destiny can only be opened after we have laid down the weapons of egotism; after we have become veritably humane. There must be a death to militant self-assertion, a new birth to wide and universal purposes, before this larger life can be understood and known.

With all the valor and rich life of the days of Cuculain and Ossin, the destructive instinct of antagonism was very deeply rooted in all hearts; it did endless harm to the larger interests of the land, and laid Ireland open to attack from without. Because the genius of the race was strong and highly developed, the harm went all the deeper; even now, after centuries, it is not wholly gone.

The message of the humane and the divine, taught among the Galilean hills and on the shores of Gennesaret, was after four centuries brought to Ireland—a word of new life to the warriors and chieftains, enkindling and transforming their heroic world. Britain had received the message before, for Britain was a part of the dominion of Rome, which already had its imperial converts. Roman life and culture and knowledge of the Latin tongue had spread throughout the island up to the northern barrier between the Forth and Clyde. Beyond this was a wilderness of warring tribes.



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Where the Clyde comes forth from the plain to the long estuary of the sea, the Messenger of the Tidings was born. His father, Calpurn, was a Roman patrician; from this his son, whose personal name was Succat, was surnamed Patricius, a title raised by his greatness into a personal name. His letters give us a vivid picture of his captivity, and the stress of life which gradually aroused in him the inspiration of the humane and divine ripened later into a full knowledge of his apostolate.

“I Patricius, a sinner,” he writes, “and most unlearned of believers, looked down upon by many, had for my father the deacon Calpurn, son of the elder Potitus, of a place called Bannova in Tabernia, near to which was his country home. There I was taken captive, when not quite sixteen. I knew not the Eternal. Being led into captivity with thousands of others, I was brought to Ireland,—a fate well deserved. For we had turned from the Eternal, nor kept the laws of the Eternal. Nor had we heeded the teachers who urged us to seek safety. Therefore the Eternal, justly wroth, scattered us among unbelievers, to the uttermost parts of the earth; here, where my poor worth is now seen among strangers, where the Eternal liberated the power hid in my unenkindled heart, that even though late I should recognize my error, and turn with all my heart to the Eternal....

“I have long had it in mind to write, but until now have hesitated; for I feared blame, because I had not studied law and the sacred writings,—as have others who have never changed their language, but gone on to perfection in it; but my speech is translated into another language, and the roughness of my writing shows how little I have been taught. As the Sage says, ‘Show by thy speech thy wisdom and knowledge and learning.’ But what profits this excuse? since all can see how in my old age I struggle after what I should have learned as a boy. For then my sinfulness hindered me. I was but a beardless boy when I was taken captive, not knowing what to do and what to avoid; therefore I am ashamed to show my ignorance now? because I never learned to express great matters succinctly and well;—great matters like the moving of the soul and mind by the Divine Breath.... Nor, indeed, was I worthy that the Master should so greatly favor me, after all my hard labor and heavy toil, and the years of captivity amongst this people,—that the Master should show me such graciousness as I never knew nor hoped for till I came to Ireland.

“But daily herding cattle here, and aspiring many times a day, the fear of the Eternal grew daily in me. A divine dread and aspiration grew in me, so that I often prayed a hundred times a day, and as many times in the night. I often remained in the woods and on the hills, rising to pray while it was yet dark, in snow or frost or rain; yet I took no harm. The Breath of the Divine burned within me, so that nothing remained in me unenkindled.



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“One night, while I was sleeping, I heard a voice saying to me, ‘You have fasted well, and soon you shall see your home and your native land.’ Soon after, I heard the voice again, saying, ‘The ship is ready for you.’ But the ship was not near, but two hundred miles off, in a district I had never visited, and where I knew no one. Therefore I fled, leaving the master I had served for six years, and found the ship by divine guidance, going without fear....

“We reached the land after three days’ sail; then for twenty-eight days we wandered through a wilderness.... Once more, after years of exile, I was at home again with my kindred, among the Britons. All welcomed me like a son, earnestly begging me that, after the great dangers I had passed through, I would never again leave my home.

“While I was at home, in a vision of the night I saw one who seemed to come from Ireland, bringing innumerable letters. He gave me one of the letters, in which I read, ‘The voices of the Irish ...;’ and while I read, it seemed to me that I heard the cry of the dwellers by the forest of Foclut, by the Western Ocean, calling with one voice to me, ‘Come and dwell with us!’ My heart was so moved that I awoke, and I give thanks to my God who after many years has given to them according to their petition.

“On another night, whether within me or without me I know not, God knows, One prayed with very wonderful words that I could not comprehend, till at last He said, ‘It is He who gave His soul for you, that speaks!’ I awoke for joy. And once in a vision I saw Him praying within me, as it were; I saw myself, as it were, within myself; and I heard Him praying urgently and strongly over the inner man; I being meanwhile astonished, and wondering who thus prayed within me, till at the end He declared that I should be an overseer for Him....

“I had not believed in the living Divine from childhood, but had remained in the realm of death until hunger and nakedness and daily slavery in Ireland—for I came there as a captive—had so afflicted me that I almost broke down. Yet these things brought good, for through that daily suffering I was so changed that I work and toil now for the well-being of others, I who formerly took no care even for myself....

“Therefore I thank Him who kept me faithful in the day of trial, that I live to offer myself daily as a living offering to Him who saves and guards me. Well may I say, ‘Master, what am I, what is my calling, that such grace and divine help are given to me—that I am every day raised to greater power among these unbelievers, while I everywhere praise thy name? Whatever comes to me, whether happiness or misery, whether good or evil fortune, I hold it all the same; giving Thee equal thanks for it, because Thou hast unveiled for me the One, sure and unchanging, in whom I may for ever believe. So that in these latter days, even though I am ignorant, I may dare to undertake so righteous a work, and so wonderful, that makes me like those who, according to His promise, should carry His message to all people before the end of the world.



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“It were long in whole or even in part to tell of my labours, or how the all-powerful One many times set me free from bondage, and from twelve perils wherein my life was in danger, and from nameless pitfalls. It were ill to try the reader too far, when I have within me the Author himself, who knows all things even before they happen, as He knows me, His poor disciple. The voice that so often guides me is divine; and thence it is that wisdom has come to me, who had no wisdom, knowing not Him, nor the number of my days: thence comes my knowledge and heart’s joy in His great and healing gift, for the sake of which I willingly left my home and kindred, though they offered me many gifts with tears and sorrow.

“Many of the older people also disapproved, but through divine help I would not give way. It was no grace of mine, but the divine power in me that stood out against all, so that I came to bear the Message here among the people of Ireland, suffering the scorn of those who believed not, and bearing derision and many persecutions, and even chains. Nay, I even lost my patrician rank for the good of others. But if I be worthy to do something for the Divine, I am ready with all my heart to yield service, even to the death, since it has been permitted that through me many might be reborn to the divine, and that others might be appointed to teach them....

“The people of Ireland, who formerly had only their idols and pagan ritual, not knowing the Master, have now become His children. The sons of the Scoti and their kings’ daughters are now become sons of the Master and handmaidens of the Anointed. And one nobly born lady among them, a beautiful woman whom I baptized myself, came soon after to tell me that she was divinely admonished to live in maidenhood, drawing nearer to Him. Six days later she entered the grade that all the handmaidens of the Anointed desire, though their fathers and mothers would hinder them, reproaching and afflicting them; nevertheless, they grow in number, so that I know not how many they are, besides widows and continent women, who suffer most from those who hold them in bondage. Yet they stand firm, and God grants grace to many of them worthily to follow Him.

“Therefore I might even leave them, to go among the Britons,—for willingly would I see my own kindred and my native land again, or even go as far as Gaul to visit my brothers, and see the faces of my Master’s holy men. But I am bound in the Spirit, and would be unfaithful if I went. Nor would I willingly risk the fruit of all my work. Yet it is not I who decide, but the Master, who bid me come hither, to spend my whole life in serving, as indeed I think I shall....

“Therefore I should ever thank Him who was so tolerant of my ignorance and sluggishness, so many times; treating me not in anger but as a fellow-worker, though I was slow to learn the work set for me by the Spirit. He pitied me amongst many thousands, for he saw that I was very willing, but did not know how to offer my testimony. For they all opposed my mission, and talked behind my back, saying, ‘He wishes to risk his life among enemies who know nothing of the Master’; not speaking

maliciously, but opposing me because I was so ignorant. Nor did I myself at once perceive the power that was in me....



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“Thus simply, brothers and fellow-workers for the Master, who with me have believed, I have told you how it happened that I preached and still preach, to strengthen and confirm you in aspiration, hoping that we may all rise yet higher. Let that be my reward, as ‘the wise son is the glory of his father.’ You know, and the Master knows, how from my youth I have lived among you, in aspiration and truth and with single heart; that I have declared the faith to those among whom I dwell, and still declare it. The Master knows that I have deceived no man in anything, nor ever shall, for His sake and His people’s. Nor shall I ever arouse uncharity in them or in any, lest His name should be spoken evil of....

“I have striven in my poor way to help my brothers and the handmaidens of the Anointed, and the holy women who often volunteered to give me presents and to lay their jewels on my altar; but these I always gave back to them, even though they were hurt by it; and I have so lived my life, for the hope of the life eternal, that none may find the least cause of offence in my ministry; that my least act might not tarnish my good name, so that unbelievers might speak evil of me....

“If I have asked of any as much as the value of a shoe, tell me. I will repay it and more. I rather spent my own wealth on you and among you, wherever I went, for your sakes, through many dangers, to regions where no believer had ever come to baptize, to ordain teachers or to confirm the flock. With the divine help I very willingly and lovingly paid all. Sometimes I gave presents to the kings,—in giving presents to their sons who convoyed us, to guard us against being taken captive. Once they sought to kill me, but my time was not yet come. But they took away all we possessed, and kept me bound, till the Master liberated me on the fourteenth day, and all our goods were given back, because of the Master and of those who convoyed us. You yourselves know what gifts I gave to those who administer the law through the districts I visited oftenest. I think I spent not less than the fine of fifteen men among them, in order that I might come among you. Nor do I regret it, nor count it enough, for I still spend, and shall ever spend, happy if the Master allows me to spend my soul for you....For I know certainly that poverty and plain living are better for me than riches and luxury. The Anointed our Master was poor for us. I am poorer still, for I could not have wealth if I wished it. Nor do I now judge myself, for I look forward daily to a violent death, or to be taken captive and sold into slavery, or some like end. But I fear none of these ...but let me not lose the flock I feed for Him, here in the uttermost parts of the earth....



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“I am willing for His sake to shed my blood, to go without burial, even though my body be torn by dogs and wild beasts and the fowls of the air; for I know that thus I should through my body enrich my soul. And I know that in that day we shall arise in the brightness of the sun, in the glory of the Anointed Master, as sons of the divine and co-heirs with Him, made in His likeness. For the sun we see rises daily by divine ordinance; but it is not ordained to rise for ever, nor shall its light last for ever. The sun of this world shall fade, with those that worship it; but we bow to the spiritual Sun, the Anointed, that shall never perish, nor they who do His will, but shall endure for ever like the Anointed himself, who reigns with the Father and the Divine Spirit now and ever....

“This I beg, that no believer or servant of the Master, who reads or receives this writing, which I, Patricius, a sinner and very unlearned, wrote in Ireland,—I beg that none may say that whatever is good in it was dictated by my ignorance, but rather that it came from Him. This is my Confession, before I die.”

That is the story of the most vital event in the life of Ireland, in the words of the man who was chiefly instrumental in bringing it about. Though an unskilled writer, as he says himself he has nevertheless succeeded in breathing into every part of his epistle the power and greatness of his soul, the sense and vivid reality of the divine breath which stirred in him and transformed him, the spiritual power, humane and universal, which enkindled him from within; these are the words of a man who had first-hand knowledge of the things of our deeper life; not a mere servant of tradition, living on the words and convictions of other men. He has drawn in large and universal outline the death to egotism—reached in his case through hunger, nakedness and slavery—and the new birth from above, the divine Soul enkindling the inner man, and wakening him to new powers and a knowledge of his genius and immortal destiny.

Not less vivid is the sense he conveyed, of the world in which he moved; the feeling of his dignity as a Roman Patrician, having a share of the greatness of empire; the sense of a dividing-line between the Christian realms of Rome and the outer barbarians yet in darkness. Yet the picture he gives of these outer realms is as certainly true. There are the rival chieftains, each with his own tribe and his own fort, and bearing the title of king. They are perpetually striving among themselves, so that from the province of one he must move to the province of another with an escort, led by the king's son, who receives gifts in return for this protection. This is the world of Concoibar and Cuculain; of Find and Ossin, as they themselves have painted it.

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The world of Find and Ossin, of Cael and Crede, was marked by a certain urbanity and freedom, a large-mindedness and imaginative power. We are therefore prepared to expect that the Messenger of the new life would be received with openness of mind, and allowed to deliver his message without any very violent opposition. It was the meeting of unarmed moral power and armed valor; and the victory of the apostle was a victory of spiritual force, of character, of large-heartedness; the man himself was the embodiment of his message, and through his forceful genius his message was effective. He visibly represented the New Way; the way of the humane and the divine, transforming the destructive instinct of self-assertion. He visibly represented the divine and the immortal in us, the new birth from above.

Yet there were tragedies in his apostolate. In another letter a very vivid and pathetic account is given of one of these. Coroticus, a chieftain of Britain, and therefore nominally a Christian and a citizen of Rome, had sent marauding bands to Ireland to capture slaves. Some of the new converts were taken captive by these slave-hunters, an outrage which drew forth an indignant protest from the great Messenger:

“My neophytes in their white robes, the baptismal chrim still wet and glistening on their foreheads, were taken captive with the sword by these murderers. The next day I sent letters begging them to liberate the baptized captives, but they answered my prayer with mocking laughter. I know not which I should mourn for more,—those who were slain, those who were taken prisoner, or those who in this were Satan’s instruments, since these must suffer everlasting punishment in perdition.”

He appeals indignantly to the fellow-Christians of Coroticus in Britain: “I pray you, all that are righteous and humble, to hold no converse with those who do these things. Eat not, drink not with them, accept no gifts from them, until they have repented and made atonement, setting free these newly-baptized handmaidens of Christ, for whom He died.... They seem to think we are not children of one Father!”

The work and mission of this great man grow daily better known. The scenes of each marked event are certainly identified. His early slavery, his time of probation, was spent in Antrim, on the hillside of Slieve Mish, and in the woods that then covered its flanks and valleys. Wandering there with his flocks to the hill-top, he looked down over the green darkness of the woods, with the fertile open country stretching park-like beyond, to the coast eight miles away. From his lonely summit he could gaze over the silvery grayness of the sea, and trace on the distant horizon the headlands of his dear native land. The exile’s heart must have ached to look at them, as he thought of his hunger and nakedness and toil. There in deep pity came home to him the fate of the weak ones of the earth, the vanquished, the afflicted, the losers in the race. Compassion showed him the better way, the way of sympathy and union, instead of contest and dominion. A firm and fixed purpose grew up within him to make the appeal of gentleness to the chiefs and rulers, in the name of Him who was all sympathy for the weak. Thus the inspiration of the Message awakened his soul to its immortal powers.



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Later, returning with the clear purpose of his message formed, he began his great work not far from his first place of captivity. His strong personality led him always to the presence of the chiefs and warriors, and he talked to them freely as an equal, gradually giving them an insight into his own vision of life, of the kinship between soul and soul, of our immortal power and inheritance. He appealed always to his own inner knowledge of things divine, to the light and power unveiled within himself; and the commanding genius in his words lit a like fire in the hearts of those who heard, awakening an enthusiasm for the New Way. He had a constant sense of his divine mission:

“Was it without divine promise, or in the body only, that I came to Ireland? Who led me? Who took captive my soul, that I should no more see friends and kindred? Whence came my inspiration of pity for the race that had enslaved me?”

The memory of his first victories is perpetuated in the name, Downpatrick,—that is: the Dwelling of Patrick.—where Dicu son of Tricem, chief of the district, gave him a tract of land to build a place of meeting and prayer for his disciples; while the church was being built, the chief offered his barn as a meeting-place, an incident commemorated in the name of Saul, on a hill above the town,—a name softened from Sabal, “a barn.” This first victory was won among the rounded hills south of the Quoyle River, where it widens toward Strangford Lough; from the hill-top of Saul there is a wide prospect over the reed-covered flats with the river winding among them, the hills with their oak-woods in the bends of the river, and the widening lough with its innumerable islands, its sand-flats lit up with red under the dawn. The sun sets among the mountains of Mourne, flushing from behind the purple profile of the hills, and sending golden arrows over the rich fertility of the plain. The year 432 is the probable date of this first conversion.

The strong genius of the Messenger carried him after a few months to the center of power in the land, to Tara with its fortresses, its earthworks, its great banquet-halls and granaries and well-adorned dwellings of chief and king. A huge oval earthwork defended the king's house; northward of this was the splendid House of Mead,—the banquet-hall, with lesser fortresses beyond it. Southward of the central dwelling and its defence was the new ringed fort of Laogaire the king, son of the more famous king Nial of the Hostages. At this circular fort, Rath-Laogaire, on Easter day, Saint Patrick met the king face to face, and delivered to him the message of the New Way, telling him of the unveiling of the Divine within himself, of the voice that had bidden him come, of the large soul of immortal pity that breathed in the teachings among the hills of Galilee, of the new life there begun for the world. Tradition says that the coming of the Messenger had been foretold by the Druids, and the great work he should accomplish; the wise men of the West catching the inner brightness of the Light, as the Eastern Magians had caught it more than four centuries before. The fruits of that day's teaching in the plain of Tara, in the assembly of Laogaire the king, were to be gathered through long centuries to come.



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In the year 444, the work of the teacher had so thriven that he was able to build a larger church on a hill above the Callan River, in the undulating country south of Lough Neagh. This hill, called in the old days the Hill of the Willows, was only two miles from the famous fortress of Emain of Maca. It was a gift from the ruler Daire, who, like so many other chiefs, had felt and acknowledged the Messenger's power. Later, the hill came to be called Ard-Maca, the Height of Maca; a name now softened into Armagh, ever since esteemed the central stronghold of the first Messenger's followers.

The Messenger passed on from chief to chief, from province to province, meeting with success everywhere, yet facing grave perils. Later histories take him to the kings of Leinster and Munster, and he himself tells us that the prayer of the children of Foclut was answered by his coming, so that he must have reached the western ocean. It was a tremendous victory of moral force, of the divine and immortal working through him, that the Messenger was able to move unarmed among the warriors of many tribes that were often at war with each other; everywhere meeting the chiefs and kings, and meeting them as an equal: the unarmed bringer of good tidings confronting the king in the midst of his warriors, and winning him to his better vision.

For sixty years the Messenger worked, sowing seed and gathering the fruit of his labor; and at last his body was laid at rest close to his first church at Saul. Thus one of the great men of the world accomplished his task.

IX.

The saints and scholars.

A.D. 493-750.

It would be hard to find in the whole history of early Christianity a record of greater and more enduring success than the work of St. Patrick. None of the Messengers of the New Way, as they were called first by St. Luke, unless the phrase is St. Paul's, accomplished single-handed so wonderful a work, conquering so large a territory, and leaving such enduring monuments of his victory. Amongst the world's masters, the son of Calpurn the Decurion deserves a place with the greatest.

Not less noteworthy than the wide range of his work was the way in which he gained success. He addressed himself always to the chiefs, the kings, the men of personal weight and power. And his address was almost invariably successful,—a thing that would have been impossible had he not been himself a personality of singular force and fire, able to meet the great ones of the land as an equal. His manner was that of an ambassador, full of tact, knowledge of men and of the world. Nor can we find in him—or, indeed, in the whole history of the churches founded by him—anything of that bitter zeal and fanaticism which, nearly two centuries nearer to apostolic times, marred the



work of the Councils under Constantius; the fierce animosity between Christian and Christian which marked the Arian controversy. The Apostle of Ireland showed far more urbanity, far more humane and liberal wisdom, far more gentleness, humor and good feeling, in his treatment of the pre-Christian institutions and ideals of Ireland than warring Christian sects have generally been willing to show to each other.

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It was doubtless due to this urbane wisdom that the history of the conversion of Ireland is without one story of martyrdom. The change was carried out in open-hearted frankness and good-will, the old order giving place to the new as gently as spring changes to summer. The most marvelous example of St. Patrick's wisdom, and at the same time the most wonderful testimony to his personal force, is his action towards the existing civil and religious law of the country, commonly known as the Brehon Law. Principles had by long usage been wrought into the fabric of the Brehon Laws which were in flat contradiction to St. Patrick's teaching of the New Way. Instead of fiercely denouncing the whole system, he talked with the chief jurists and heralds,—custodians of the old system,—and convinced them that changes in their laws would give effect to more humane and liberal principles. They admitted the justice of his view, and agreed to a meeting between three great chieftains or kings, three Brehons or jurists, and three of St. Patrick's converts, to revise the whole system of law, substituting the more humane principles, which they had already accepted as just and right. These changes were made and universally applied; so that, without any violent revolution, without strife or bloodshed, the better way became the accepted law. It would be hard to find in all history a finer example of wisdom and moderation, of the great and worthy way of accomplishing right ends.

We have seen the great Messenger himself founding monasteries, houses of religious study, and churches for his converts, on land given to him by chieftains who were moved by his character and ideals. We can judge of the immediate spread of his teaching if we remember that these churches were generally sixty feet long, thus giving room for many worshippers. They seem to have been built of stone—almost the first use of that material in Ireland since the archaic days. Among the first churches of this type were those at Saul, at Donaghpatrick on the Blackwater, and at Armagh, with others further from the central region of St. Patrick's work. The schools of learning which grew up beside them were universally esteemed and protected, and from them came successive generations of men and women who worthily carried on the work so wisely begun. The tongues first studied were Latin and Irish. We have works of very early periods in both, as, for instance, the Latin epistles of St. Patrick himself, and the Irish poems of the hardly less eminent Colum Kill. But other languages were presently added.

[Illustration: Valley of Glendalough and Ruins of the Seven Churches.]



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These schools and churches gradually made their way throughout the whole country; some of the oldest of them are still to be seen, as at Donaghpatrick, Clonmacnoise and Glendalough. Roofed with stone, they are well fitted to resist the waste of time. An intense spiritual and moral life inspired the students, a life rich also in purely intellectual and artistic force. The ancient churches speak for themselves; the artistic spirit of the time is splendidly embodied in the famous Latin manuscript of the Gospels, called the Book of Kells, the most beautiful specimen of illumination in the world. The wonderful colored initial letters reproduce and develop the designs of the old gold work, the motives of which came, it would seem, from the Baltic, with the De Danaan tribes. We can judge of the quiet and security of the early disciples at Kells, the comfort and amenity of their daily life, the spirit of comity and good-will, the purity of inspiration of that early time, by the artistic truth and beauty of these illuminated pages and the perfection with which the work was done. Refined and difficult arts are the evidence of refined feeling, abundant moral and spiritual force, and a certain material security and ease surrounding the artist. When these arts are freely offered in the service of religion, they are further evidence of widespread fervor and aspiration, a high and worthy ideal of life.

Yet we shall be quite wrong if we imagine an era of peace and security following the epoch of the first great Messenger. Nothing is further from the truth. The old tribal strife continued for long centuries; the instincts which inspired it are, even now, not quite outworn. Chief continued to war against chief, province against province, tribe against tribe, even among the fervent converts of the first teachers.

Saint Brigid is one of the great figures in the epoch immediately succeeding the first coming of the Word. She was the foundress of a school of religious teaching for women at Kildare, or Killdara, "The Church of the Oak-woods," whose name still records her work. Her work, her genius, her power, the immense spiritual influence for good which flowed from her, entitle her to be remembered with the women of apostolic times, who devoted their whole lives to the service of the divine. We have seen the esteem in which women were always held in Ireland. St. Brigid and those who followed in her steps gave effect to that high estimation, and turned it to a more spiritual quality, so that now, as in all past centuries, the ideal of womanly purity is higher in Ireland than in any country in the world.

This great soul departed from earthly life in the year 525, a generation after the death of the first Messenger. To show how the old order continued with the new, we may record the words of the Chronicler for the following year: "526: The battle of Eiblinne, by Muirceartac son of Erc; the battle of Mag-Ailbe; the battle of Almain; the battle of Ceann-eic; the plundering of the Cliacs; and the battle of Eidne against the men of Connacht." Three of these battles were fought at no great distance from St. Brigid's Convent.

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The mediaeval Chronicler quotes the old Annalist for the following year: “The king, the son of Erc, returned to the side of the descendants of Nial. Blood reached the girdle in each plain. The exterior territories were enriched. Seventeen times nine chariots he brought, and long shall it be remembered. He bore away the hostages of the Ui-Neill with the hostages of the plain of Munster.”

Ten years later we find the two sons of this same king, Muirceartac son of Erc, by name Fergus and Domnall, fighting under the shadow of Knocknarea mountain against Eogan Bel the king of Connacht; the ancient Annalist, doubtless contemporary with the events recorded, thus commemorated the battle in verse:

“The battle of the Ui-Fiacrac was fought with the fury of edged weapons against Bel;

“The kine of the enemy roared with the javelins, the battle was spread out at Crinder;

“The River of Shells bore to the great sea the blood of men with their flesh;

“They carried many trophies across Eaba, together with the head of Eogan Bel.”

During this stormy time, which only carried forward the long progress of fighting since the days of the prime, a famous school of learning and religion had been founded at Moville by Finian, “the tutor of the saints of Ireland.” The home of his church and school is a very beautiful one, with sombre mountains behind rising from oak-woods into shaggy masses of heather, the blue waters of Lough Foyle in front, and across the mouth of the lough the silver sands and furrowed chalk hills of Antrim, blending into green plains. Here the Psalms and the Gospels were taught in Latin to pupils who had in no wise given up their love for the old poetry and traditions of their motherland. Here Colum studied, afterwards called Colum Kill, “Saint Colum of the Churches,” and here arose a memorable dispute concerning a Latin manuscript of the Psalms. The manuscript belonged to Finian, founder of the school, and was esteemed one of the treasures of his college. Colum, then a young student, ardently longed for a copy, and, remaining in the church after service, he daily copied a part of the sacred text. When his work was completed, Finian discovered it, and at once claimed the copy of his book as also his. The matter was submitted to an umpire, who gave the famous decision: “Unto every cow her calf; unto every book its copy”—the copy belonged to the owner of the book. This early decision of copyright was by no means acceptable to the student Colum. He disputed its justice, and the quarrel spread till it resulted in a battle. The discredit attaching to the whole episode resulted in the banishment of Colum, who sailed away northward and eastward towards the isles and fiords of that land which, from the Irish Scoti who civilized it, now bears the name of Scotland. Let us recall a few verses written by Colum on his departure, in a version which echoes something of the original melody and form:



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“We are rounding Moy-n-Olurg, we sweep by its head and
We plunge through the Foyle,
Whose swans could enchant with their music the dead and
Make pleasure of toil....
Oh, Erin, were wealth my desire, what a wealth were
To gain far from thee,
In the land of the stranger, but there even health were
A sickness to me!
Alas for the voyage, oh high King of Heaven,
Enjoined upon me,
For that I on the red plain of bloody Cooldrevin
Was present to see.
How happy the son is of Dima; no sorrow
For him is designed,
He is having this hour, round his own Kill in Durrow,
The wish of his mind.
The sound of the wind in the elms, like the strings of
A harp being played,
The note of the blackbird that claps with the wings of
Delight in the glade.
With him in Ros-grenca the cattle are lowing
At earliest dawn,
On the brink of the summer the pigeons are cooing
And doves on the lawn....”

In another measure, he again mourns his exile: “Happy to be on Ben Edar, before
going over the sea; white, white the dashing of the wave against its face; the bareness
of its shore and its border....”

“How swiftly we travel; there is a grey eye
Looks back upon Erin, but it no more
Shall see while the stars shall endure in the sky,
Her women, her men, or her stainless shore....”

This great-hearted and impetuous exile did not waste his life in useless regrets. Calling forth the fire of his genius, and facing the reality of life, he set himself to work, spreading the teaching of the New Way among the Picts of the north—the same Picts who, in years gone by, had raged against the barrier of Hadrian between Forth and Clyde. The year of his setting out was 563; the great center of his work was in the sacred isle of Iona, off the Ross of Mull. Iona stands in the rush of Atlantic surges and fierce western storms, yet it is an island of rare beauty amid the tinted mists of summer dawns. Under the year 592, a century after Saint Patrick’s death, we find this entry in the Chronicle: “Colum Kill, son of Feidlimid, Apostle of Scotland, head of the piety of the most part of Ireland and Scotland after Patrick, died in his own church in Iona in Scotland, after the



thirty-fifth year of his pilgrimage, on Sunday night, the ninth of June. Seventy-seven years was his whole age when he resigned his spirit to heaven." The corrected date is 596.

We can see in Colum of the Churches the very spirit of turbulence and adventure, the fierce impetuosity and readiness for dispute, which led to the contests between the chieftains of Ireland, the wars between province and province, often between valley and valley. It is the same spiritual energy, working itself out in another way, transmuted by the sacred fire into a divine mission. In the same way the strong will of Meave, the romantic power of Deirdre and Grania, transmuted to ideal purposes, was the inspiration of Saint Brigid and so many like her, who devoted their powers to the religious teaching of women.

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We should doubtless fail utterly to understand the riddle of history, were we to regret the wild warring of these early times as a mere lamentable loss of life, a useless and cruel bloodshed. We are too much given to measuring other times and other moods of the soul by our own, and many false judgments issue from this error. Peaceful material production is our main purpose, and we learn many lessons of the Will embodied in the material world when we follow this purpose honestly. But before our age could begin, it was necessary for the races to come to personal consciousness. This end seems everywhere to have been reached by a long epoch of strife, the contending of man against man, of tribe against tribe. Thus were brought to full consciousness the instinct of personal valor, personal honor and personal readiness to face death.

Only after this high personal consciousness is kindled can a race enter the wider path of national life, where vivid and intense individuals unite their forces to a common end, reaching a common consciousness, and holding their power in common for the purposes of all. After the lessons of fighting come the lessons of work. For these lessons of work, for the direct touch with the everlasting Will gained in all honest work, our own age is to be valued, far more than for the visible and material fruits which that work produces.

In like manner the old epoch of war is to be esteemed for the lessons it taught of high valor, sacrifice, heroic daring. And to what admirable ends these same qualities may tend we can see in a life like that of Colum Kill, "head of the piety of the most part of Ireland and Scotland after Patrick."

Yet the days of old were grim enough to live in. Let this record of some half-century later testify. It is but one year culled from a long red rank of years. We give the Chronicler's own words: "645: The sixth year of Conall and Ceallac. Mac Laisre, abbot of Bangor, died on May 16. Ragallac son of Uatac, King of Connacht, was killed by Maelbrigde son of Motlacan, of which was said:

"Ragallac son of Uatac was pierced on the back of a white steed;

Muiream has well lamented him; Catal has well avenged him.

Catal is this day in battle, though bound to peace in the presence of kings;

Though Catal is without a father, his father is not without vengeance.

Estimate his terrible revenge from the account of it related:

He slew six men and fifty; he made sixteen devastations;

I had my share like another in the revenge of Ragallac,—

I have the gray beard in my hand, of Maelbrigde son of Motlacan.”

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These are evidently the very words of one who fought in the battle. Nor need this in any way surprise us, for we have far older Chronicles set down year by year in unbroken record. The matter is easy to prove. The Chronicles of Ulster record eclipses of the sun and moon as early as 495,—two years after Saint Patrick's death. It was, of course, the habit of astronomers to reckon eclipses backwards, and of annalists to avail themselves of these reckonings. The Venerable Bede, for example, has thus inserted eclipses in his history. The result is that the Venerable Bede has the dates several days wrong, while the Chronicles of Ulster, where direct observation took the place of faulty reckoning, has them right, to the day and hour. It is only in quite modern times that we have reached sufficiently accurate knowledge of the moon's movements to vindicate the old Ulster Annalists, who began their work not less than a hundred and fifty years before the battle we have just recorded.

Nor should we exaggerate the condition of the time, thinking of it as altogether given over to ravaging and devastation. Even though there were two or three expeditions and battles every year, these would only affect a small part of the whole country. Over all the rest, the tending of cattle in the glades of the forest, the sowing and reaping of wheat and oats, the gathering of fruit and nuts, continued in quiet contentment and peace. The young men practiced the arts of war and exercised themselves in warlike games. The poets sang to them, the heralds recounted the great doings of old, how Cuculain kept the ford, how Concobar thirsted in his heart for Deirdre, how the son of Cumal went to war, how golden-tongued Ossin was ensnared by the spirits. The gentle life of tillage and the keeping of cattle could never engage the whole mental force of so vigorous a race. What wonder, then, that, when a chieftain had some real or imagined wrong to avenge, or some adventure to propose,—what wonder that bold spirits were ever ready to accompany him, leaving the women to their distaffs and the tending of children and the grinding of corn? Mounting their horses, they rode forth through the woods, under the huge arms of the oak-trees; along the banks of swift-gliding rivers, through passes of the lowering hills. While still in familiar territory, the time of the march was passed in song and story. Then came increased precaution, and gradually heightened pulses marked the stages of the way. The rival chieftain, warned by his scouts and outlying tribesmen, got word of their approach, and hastily replenishing his granaries and driving the cattle into the great circle of his embankments, prepared to meet the coming foe. Swords, spears, bows, arrows were the arms of both sides. Though leather tunics were common, coats of mail came only at a later date. The attackers under cover of the night sped across the open ground before the fort, and tried to storm the fortress,

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the defenders meanwhile showering down keen-pointed arrows on them from above. Both parties, under the chieftains' guidance, fought fiercely, in a fever of excitement, giving no heed to wounds, seeing nothing but the foe and the battlements to be scaled. Then either a successful sortie broke the ranks of the assailants and sent them back to their forest camp in wild disorder, or, the stockade giving way, the stormers swept in like a wave of the sea, and all was chaos and wild struggle hand to hand. Whatever the outcome, both sides thought of the wild surge of will and valor in that hour as the crowning event of their lives.

Meanwhile, within the quiet enclosures of the monasteries and religious schools, the spirit of the time was working with not less fervor, to invisible and ideal ends. At Bangor, on the neck of the northern Ards; at Moville, where Lough Foyle spreads its inland sea; at Saul, where the first Messenger won his first convert; at Devenish Island amid the waters of Lough Erne; at Monasterboice in the plain of Louth; at Glendalough, among the solemn hills of Wicklow; at Kildare, beneath the oak-woods; at Durrow, amid the central marshes, and many another ancient seat of learning, the way of wisdom and holiness was trod with gladness. Latin had been taught since the early days of the Message; the native tongue of Ireland, consecrated in the hymns of St. Patrick and the poems of St. Colum of the Churches, was the language in which all pupils were taught, the modern ministrant to the classical speech of Rome. Nor were the Scriptures alone studied. Terence, Virgil, Ovid, the Augustans and the men of the silver age, were familiar in the Irish schools; and to these Latin writers were soon added the Greeks, more especially—as was natural—the Greek Fathers, the religious philosophers, and those who embodied the thought and controversies of the early Christian centuries. To Greek, Hebrew was added, so that both Old and New Testaments were known in their proper tongues. About the time when “Ragallac son of Uatac was pierced on the back of a white steed,” Saint Camin in his island school at Inis Caltra, where red mountains hem in Lough Derg of the Shannon, was writing his Commentary on the Psalms, recording the Hebrew readings on the margin of the page. A few years before that battle, in 634, Saint Cumman of Durrow, some thirty miles to the east of Camin's Holy Island, wrote to his brother, the Abbot of Iona in the northern seas, quoting Latin writers sacred and secular, as well as Origen, Cyril and Pachomius among the Greeks. The learned man discusses the astronomical systems of the Mediterranean world, giving the names of months and cycles in Hebrew, Greek and Egyptian, and telling of his researches into the true time of Easter, while on a journey to Italy and Rome. This letter, which has come down to our days, is first-hand testimony to the learning of the early Irish schools.

[Illustration: Ancient Cross, Glendalough.]

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Fifty years later, in 683, we hear of the Saxons for the first and almost the last time in the history of Ireland. It is recorded that the North Saxons raided Mag Breag in the East of Meath, attacking both churches and chieftains. They carried away many hostages and much spoil, but the captives were soon after set at liberty and sent home again, on the intercession of a remarkable man, Adamnan, the biographer of Colum of the Churches, whose success in his mission was held to be miraculous.

For more than a century after this single Saxon raid Ireland was wholly undisturbed by foreign invasion, and the work of building churches, founding schools, studying Hebrew and Greek and Latin, went on with increasing vigor and success. An army of missionaries went forth to other lands, following in the footsteps of Colum of the Churches, and of these we shall presently speak. The life of the church was so rich and fruitful that we are led to think of this as a period of childlike and idyllic peace.

Nothing, however, could be further from the truth. The raids, devastations and wars between province and province, tribe and tribe, went on without a year's interruption. This was the normal course of the nation's life, the natural outlet of the nation's energy: not less a visible sign of invisible inward power than the faith and fervor of the schools. We shall get the truest flavor of the times by quoting again from the old Annals. That they were recorded year by year, we have already seen; the records of frosts, great snow-storms, years of rich harvests and the like, interspersed among the fates of kings, show how faithfully the annals were kept,—as, for example, the winter of great cold, “when all the rivers and lakes of Ireland were frozen over,” in the year after the Saxon raid.

Here again, under the year 701, is the word of a man then living: “After Loing Seac son of Angus son of Domnall had been eight years in the sovereignty of Ireland, he was slain in the battle of Ceann by Cealleac of Lough Cime, the son of Ragallac, as Cealleac himself testifies:

“For his deeds of ambition he was slain in the morning at
Glas Cuilg;

I wounded Loing Seac with a sword, the monarch of Ireland
round.”

Two years later Saint Adamnan died, after governing the Abbey of Iona for six and twenty years. It was said of him that “He made a slave of himself to his virtues,” and his great life-work, the Latin history of Saint Colum of the Churches, founder of the Iona Abbey, to this day testifies to his high learning and wisdom.

Fourteen years later “Leinster was five times devastated by the Ui-Neill,” the descendants of Nial, and a battle was fought between the men of Connacht and Munster. Thus the lives of saints and warriors were interwoven. On very rare

occasions the two lives of the race came into collision. Thus, a quarrel arose between Congus the Abbot and Aed Roin king of Ulad. Congus summoned to his aid the chief of the Ui-Neill, Aed Allan by name, in these verses:



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“Say to the cold Aed Allan that I have been oppressed by
a feeble enemy:

Aed Roin insulted me last night at Cill Cunna of the sweet
music.”

Aed Allan made these verses on his way to battle to avenge the insult:

“For Cill Cunna the church of my spiritual father,
I take this day a journey on the road.
Aed Roin shall leave his head with me,
Or I shall leave my head with him.”

The further history of that same year, 733, is best told in the words of the Annals: “Aed Allan, king of Ireland, assembled his forces to proceed into Leinster, and he arrived at the Ford of Seannait (in Kildare). The Leinstermen collected the greatest number they were able, to defend their rights against him. The king Aed Allan himself went into the battle, and the chieftains of the north along with him. The chieftains of Leinster came with their kings into the battle, and bloodily and heroically was the battle fought between them. Heroes were slaughtered and bodies were hacked. Aed Allan and Aed, son of Colgan, king of Leinster, met each other, and Aed son of Colgan was slain by Aed Allan. The Leinstermen were killed, slaughtered, cut off, and dreadfully exterminated in this battle, so that there escaped of them but a small remnant and a few fugitives.”

To round out the picture, to contrast the two streams of the nation’s life, let us give this, from the following year: “734: Fifth year of Aed Allan. Saint Samtain, virgin, of Cluain Bronaig (Longford), died on December 19. It was of her that Aed Allan gave this testimony:

“Samtain for enlightening various sinners,
A servant who observed stern chastity,
In the wide plain of fertile Meath
Great suffering did Samtain endure;
She undertook a thing not easy,—
Fasting for the kingdom above.
She lived on scanty food;
Hard were her girdles;
She struggled in venomous conflicts;
Pure was her heart amid the wicked.
To the bosom of the Lord, with a pure death,
Samtain passed from her trials.”

X.

The raids of the Northmen.

A.D. 750-1050.

Aed Allan, the king who so feelingly wrote the epitaph of the saintly virgin Samtain, needed an epitaph himself four years later, for he fell in battle with Domnall son of Murcad son of Diarmaid, who succeeded him on the throne. It is recorded that, in the following year, the sea cast ashore a whale under the mountains of Mourne, to the great wonder of those who dwelt by the hill of Rudraige. Thus do the Chronicles establish their good faith, by putting on record things trifling or grave, with equal impartiality.



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They were presently to have something more memorable to record than the loss of a battle or the stranding of a whale. But before we come to this new chapter in the life of Ireland, let us show the continuity of the forces we have already depicted. The old tribal turmoil went on unabated. In 771, the first year of Doncad son of Domnall in the sovereignty over Ireland, that ruler made a full muster of the Ui-Neill and marched into Leinster. The Leinstermen moved before the monarch and his forces, until they arrived at the fort called Nectain's Shield in Kildare. Domcad with his forces was entrenched at Aillin, whence his people continued to fire, burn, plunder and devastate the province for the space of a week, when the Leinstermen at last submitted to his will. Seventeen years later it is recorded that the church and abbey of Ardmaca, or, as we may now begin to call it, Armagh, were struck by lightning, and the night was terrible with thunder, lightning and wind.

We see, therefore, that the double life of the people, the life of valor and the life of wisdom, were following their steady course in camp and school. We may call up a very interesting witness to the whole condition of Ireland during this epoch: Alfred king of the Northumbrian Saxons, who spent several years traveling through the land and studying in the schools. On his departure, he wrote an ode of acknowledgment to the country he was leaving, in the verse of the native Irish tongue. From this ode we may quote a few picturesque lines, taking them from a version which preserves something of the original rhythm:

"I traveled 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.
Gold and silver I found, and money,
Plenty of wheat and plenty of honey;
I found God's people rich in pity;
Found many a feast and many a city....
I found in each great church moreo'er,
Whether on island or on shore,
Piety, learning, fond affection,
Holy welcome and kind protection....
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.
I found in Connacht the just, redundance
Of riches, milk in lavish abundance;
Hospitality, vigor, fame,
In Crimean's land of heroic name....
I found in Ulster, from hill to glen,
Hardy warriors, resolute men.



Beauty that bloomed when youth was gone,
And strength transmitted from sire to son....
I found in Leinster the smooth and sleek,
From Dublin to Slewmary's peak,
Flourishing pastures, valor, health,
Song-loving worthies, commerce, wealth....
I found in Meath's fair principality
Virtue, vigor, and hospitality;

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Candor, joyfulness, bravery, purity—
Ireland's bulwark and security.
I found strict morals in age and youth,
I found historians recording truth.
The things I sing of in verse unsmooth
I found them all; I have written sooth."

The modern form of the names used by the translator gives this version a slightly misleading tone. Ulster, Munster, Leinster were still known by their old names: Ulad, Mumain and Lagin. The Danish termination by which we know them had not been added. In like manner, Dublin in those days and far later was still called At-Cliat, the Ford of the Hurdles. Yet the tribute which the Saxon king paid to Ireland has a true ring. It thoroughly supports what we have said: that incessant tribal warfare rather expressed than detracted from the vigor of the nation's life. It had this grave defect, however: it so kindled and cherished the instinct of separateness that union in face of a common foe was almost impossible. Long years of adverse fate were needed to merge the keen individual instinct of old into the common consciousness of to-day.

Modern historians generally write as if the onslaught of the Northmen had had this unifying effect; as if it had been a great calamity, overwhelming the country for several centuries, and submerging its original life under a tide of conquest. Here again the history of the time, as recorded year by year in the Annals, leads us to a wholly different conclusion. We find inroads of the Northmen, it is true; but they are only interludes in the old national life of storm and struggle. That enduring tribal conflict, of which we have already seen so much, did not cease even for a year. Nor can it have greatly mattered to the dwellers in some remote valley whether they were sacked, their cattle driven off, and their children taken captive by strangers or by men of their own land.

There was one chief difference: the foreigners, being still heathens, did not spare the churches and the schools. The golden or silver reliquaries, the jeweled manuscript-cases, the offerings of precious stones and rich ornaments laid on the altars: these things proved an irresistible temptation to the roving sea-kings. They often burned or cast away the manuscripts, eager only to take the jeweled coverings, and in this way many monuments of the olden time have been lost, and many gaps in the history of the nation made irreparable. Yet it would seem that even the loss of manuscripts has been exaggerated, since such lavish abundance remains to us from the times before the first northern raiders came. Many a remote shrine was never even approached by the northern wanderers; and, in the long times of peace between raid and raid, one school had time to gain from another copies of the books which were lost. We may hope that the somewhat rigid views of copyright expressed in the matter of St. Finian's Psalter



were not invariably adhered to. We have Chronicles kept with unbroken regularity year by year through the whole of the epoch of Northern raids, and they by no means indicate a period of national depression, nor justify us in thinking of these raids as much more than episodes in the general fighting of the nation,—the martial state through which every modern country has passed before emerging to homogeneous life.

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To come to the events themselves, as they appeared to the men who witnessed them. We find the first record of the Northern raiders under the year 795: "The burning of Lambay by the Gentiles. The shrines were broken and plundered." This Lambay is an island of considerable extent, off the Dublin coast, some six or seven miles north of Howth. It rises gradually from the south extremity into a purple cliff of porphyry facing the northern sea, and on the sheltered slope under the sun a little church colony with schools and dwelling-houses had been built. Against this peaceful solitude the raiders came, burning and plundering, and when they rowed away again in their long ships towards the north, a smoldering black ruin bore testimony that they were indeed Gentiles, unblessed by Christian baptism.

Three years later the little island of St. Patrick, six miles north of Lambay, met with a like fate. It was "burned by the Gentiles," as the Chronicles say. And from that time forth we hear of their long ships again and again, hovering hawk-like around the coasts of Ireland and Scotland. In 802, and again in 806, the Scottish Iona of Colum of the Churches was raided, and the next year we find the pirates making a descent upon Inismurray, off the Sligo coast, between the summit of Knocknarea and the cliffs of Slieve League. This last settlement of saints and scholars was founded by Molaise,—he who had pronounced sentence of exile on Colum of the Churches, the banishment that was the beginning of grace for the northern Picts. His oratory still remains on the island, beside the Church of the Men, the Church of the Women and the circular stone fort, which was very likely built to guard against new attacks, after this first raid. There are holy wells and altars there also, and Inismurray, better than any other place, gives us a picture of the old scholastic life of that remote and wonderful time.

Five years later, the Northern raiders made their way further round the coast, under the shadow of the western mountains and the great cliffs of Achill; we read of "a slaughter of the people of Connemara by the Gentiles" in that year, and the year following, other battles with Gentiles are recorded in the same part of Ireland.

In 818, if we are to believe the Annalist, a singular thing happened: "An army was led by Murcad, having the Ui-Neill of the North with him. Conobar king of Ireland with the Ui-Neill of the South and the Leinstermen came from the South on the other hand. When they came to one place, it happened, through a miracle of God, that they separated from each other for that time without slaughter or one of them spilling a drop of the other's blood." That entry better than any other shows the restless spirit of the times. It shows, too, that the first shock of Norse invasion had not in any sense warned the people and chieftains of Ireland of coming danger, nor had it in any degree checked the steady course of the nation's growth through storm and strife to personal consciousness, as the stepping-stone to the wider common consciousness of the modern world.



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The year following we read of “a plundering of Howth by the Gentiles, who carried off a great prey of women.” These captives were doubtless the first to bring the Message of the New Way to the wild granite lands of the north, where the mountains in their grandeur frown upon the long inlets of the fiords. They taught to their children in those wild lands of exile the lessons of grace and holiness, so rudely interrupted when the long ships of the Norsemen were sighted from the Hill of Howth.

A year later, in 820, the raiders had found their way to the southernmost extremity of the island; to Cape Clear, off the coast of Cork. This once again brings to our notice the position of so many of the early religious settlements,—on rocky islands off the coasts, well out of the turmoil of tribal strife which raged uninterrupted on the mainland. St. Patrick’s Island and Lambay on the east, Clear Island on the south, and Inismurray on the northwest, so well protected by the sea from disturbance at home, were, by that very isolation, terribly exposed to these foreign raiders from the sea. Howth, Moville and Bangor, all on peninsulas, all by the seashore, enjoyed a like immunity and were open to a like danger. Therefore we are not surprised to find that, two years later, Bangor was “plundered by the Gentiles.”

It will be remembered that St. Patrick’s first church was built on land given him by Dicu, chieftain of the district round Downpatrick, a name which commemorates the presence of the Messenger. Two sons of this same Dicu had been held as hostages by Laogaire the king, and their marvelous escape from duress was recorded in the name, Dun-dalath-glas, the Dwelling of the Two Broken Fetters, given to Downpatrick. The place was of old renown. Known to Ptolemy as Dunum, it was, during Concobar’s sway at Emain of Maca, the fortress of the strong chief, Celtcar, whose huge embattled hill of earth still rises formidable over the Quoyle River. In the year 823, we read, Dundalathglas was plundered by the Gentiles; but the story does not stop here, for we are further told that these same Gentiles were beaten by the Ulad armies not far from the great fort of Celtcar. This is the first entry of this tenor. Hitherto, the Northmen seem to have fallen only on outlying religious communities, in remote islands or on the seashore; but this last raid brought them to one of the very few church-schools which had been built close to a strong fortress, with the result that the Northmen were beaten and driven back into their ships.

Three years later the Gentiles plundered Lusk on the mainland opposite Lambay, but in that same year they were twice defeated in battle, once by Cairbre son of Catal, and once by the king of Ulad. The raids of the Norse warriors grow more frequent and determined from this time; in itself a testimony to the wealth and prosperity of the country, the abundance of gold and of accumulated riches, whether cattle or corn, ornaments or richly dyed stuffs, red and purple and blue. Word seems to have been carried to the wild hills and fiords of frozen Scandinavia that here was booty in abundance, and the pirate hordes came down in swarms.



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Thus we read that Armagh, the center of St. Patrick's work, and the chief home of learning, was thrice plundered in 830, the raiders sailing up Carlingford Lough and then making a dash of some fifteen miles across the undulating country separating them from the city of churches. This is the first time they ventured out of sight of their boats. Two years later they plundered Clondalkin, nine miles inland from the Dublin coast, where the Round Tower still marks the site of the old church and school. To the growing frequency of these raids, it would seem, the building of Round Towers is to be attributed; they were at once belfries and places of refuge. We find, therefore, that the door is almost always many feet above the ground, being reached by a ladder afterwards drawn up by those inside. The number of these Round Towers all over the country, and the perfect preservation of many of them, show how universal this precaution was, and how effective were the refuges thus provided. It is instructive to read under this same year, 832, that "a great number of the family of Clonmacnoise were slain by Feidlimid king of Cashel, all their land being burned by him up to the door of the church." Thus the progress of tribal struggle was uninterrupted by the Gentile raids.

Four years later, a fleet of sixty Norse fighting galleys sailed up the Boyne. Sixty long ships entered the Liffey in the same year, and a year later they captured the fortress of the Ford of the Hurdles, At-Cliat,—the old name of Dublin. Three years later we find the king of Munster plundering Meath and West Meath, showing that no sense of common danger disturbed the native kings. This strengthens the view we have already taken: that the attacks of the Norse sea-kings were only an interlude in the incessant contests between the tribes of province and province; contests perfectly natural and normal to the development of the land, and through which every country has at some period passed.

[Illustration: Round Tower, Antrim.]

It would seem that the Northmen who captured the Ford of the Hurdles departed from their former usage. Fortifying themselves, or strengthening the existent fortress, they determined to pass the winter in Ireland, instead of returning, as they had always done up to this time, before the autumn storms made dangerous the navigation of the wild northern seas. Their presence in this fort gave the native powers a center upon which to concentrate their attack, and as a result the year 846 was marked by a signal victory over the Northmen, twelve hundred of those at At-Cliat being slain. Four other successful contests with the raiders are recorded for the same year, and we can thoroughly trust the Annalists who, up to this time, have so faithfully recorded the disasters of their own race.



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About the same time the Northmen gained a second point of vantage by seizing and fortifying a strong position where the town of Cork now stands. Indeed their instinct of seamanship, their knowledge of good harbors and the conditions which make them, led them to fix their first entrenchments at Dublin, Cork and Limerick,—which remained for centuries after the great ports of the country on the east, south and west; and the Norse flavor still lingers in the names of Carlingford, Wexford and Waterford, the Fiords of Cairlinn, Weis and Vadre. A wonderful side-light on the whole epoch is shed by this entry for 847: “In this year sevenscore ships of the Gentiles from abroad fought against the Gentiles in Ireland.” It would seem that the earlier comers, who had drawn up their long ships on the beach, and thrown up earthworks round their camp, instantly resented the attempt of later arrivals to poach on their preserves, and that a fierce fight was the result. During the whole of the following century we find signs of like rivalry between different bands of raiders, and it becomes evident that they were as much divided amongst themselves as were the native tribes they fought against.

Two years later a further light is shed on this mutual strife when we are told that “Dark Gentiles came to At-Cliat and slaughtered the Fair Gentiles, plundering their fort and carrying away both people and property.” The next year saw a new struggle between the Dark Gentiles and the Fair Gentiles, with much mutual slaughter. This leads us to realize that these raiders, vaguely grouped by modern writers under the single name of Danes, really belonged to several different races, and doubtless came from many parts of the Baltic coasts, as well as from the fiords of the great Scandinavian peninsula. The Dark Foreigners are without doubt some of that same race of southern origin which we saw, ages earlier, migrating northwards along the Atlantic seaboard,—a race full of the spirit of the sea, and never happier than when the waves were curling and breaking under their prows. They found their way, we saw, as far northwards as the coast of Scotland, the Western Isles, and distant Norway over the foam, where the long fiords and rugged precipices gave them a congenial home. We find them hovering over the shores of Ireland at the very dawn of her history; and, in later but still remote ages, their power waned before the De Danaan tribes. This same dark race returning now from Norway, swooped hawk-like upon the rich shrines of the Irish island sanctuaries, only to come into hostile contact once more with sons of that golden-haired race which scattered the dark Fomorians at Mag Tuiread of the North. For the Fair Gentiles of our mediaeval Chronicle are no other than the golden-haired Scandinavians; the yellow-locked Baltic race that gave conquerors and a new ideal of beauty to the whole modern world. And this Baltic race, as we saw in an earlier epoch, was the source and mother of the old De Danaans, whose hair was like new-smelted gold or the yellow flag-lilies of our lakes and rivers. Thus after long ages the struggle of Fomor and De Danaan was renewed at the Ford of the Hurdles between the Dark and Fair Strangers, rivals for the plunder of the Irish religious schools.



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Though the personalities of this age do not stand forth with the high relief of Cuculain and Concobar, though we can hardly quote poems to equal the songs of Find son of Cumal and Ossin of the golden tongue, yet genuine inspiration never failed in the hearts of the warriors and on the lips of the bards. Thus in 860 did a poet lament the death of a king:

“Mournfully is spread her veil of grief over Erin
Since Maelseaclain, chieftain of our race has perished,—
Maelseaclain of the flowing Shannon.
Many a moan resounds in every place;
It is mournful news among the Gael.

Red wine has been spilled into the valley:
Erin’s monarch has died.
Though he was wont to ride a white charger.
Though he had many steeds,
His car this day is drawn by a yoke of oxen.
The king of Erin is dead.”

Four years afterwards the contest between the raiders and the chieftains grew keener, more centered, more like organized war. “A complete muster of the North was made by Aed Finliat, so that he plundered the fortresses of the foreigners, wherever they were in the north; and he carried off their cattle and accoutrements, their goods and chattels. The foreigners of the province came together at Lough Foyle. After Aed king of Ireland had heard that this gathering of strangers was on the borders of his country, he was not negligent in attending to them. For he marched towards them with all his forces, and a battle was fought fiercely and spiritedly between them. The victory was gained over the foreigners, and a slaughter was made of them. Their heads were collected to one place, in the presence of the king, and twelve-score heads were reckoned before him, which was the number slain in that battle, besides the numbers of those who were wounded and carried off by him in the agonies of death, and who died of their wounds some time afterwards.”

A renewal of tribal warfare in the second year after this, when this same Aed the king was attacked by Flann the lord of Breag in Meath, called forth certain battle-verses full of the fire and fervor of the time.

A poet sang:

“At Kiladerry this day the ravens shall taste sips of blood:
A victory shall be gained over the magic host of the Gentiles
and over Flann.”

The mother of Flann sang:



“Happiness! Woe! Good news! Bad news! The gaining of a great triumphant battle.

Happy the king whom it makes victorious; unhappy the king who was defeated.

Unhappy the host of Leat Cuin, to have fallen by the sprites of Slain;

Happy the reign of great Aed, and unhappy the loss of Flann.”

Aed the victorious king sang:

“The troops of Leinster are with him, with the added men of swift Boyne;

This shows the treachery of Flann: the concord of Gentiles at his side.”

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After ten years, a bard thus sings the dirge of Aed:

“Long is the wintry night, with rough gusts of wind;
Under pressing grief we meet it, since the red-speared king
of the noble house lives not.
It is fearful to watch how the waves heave from the bottom;
To them may be compared all those who with us lament him.
A generous, wise, staid man, of whose renown the populous
Tara was full.
A shielded oak that sheltered the palace of Milid’s sons.
Master of the games of the fair hilled Taillten,
King of Tara of a hundred conflicts;
Chief of Fodla the noble, Aed of Oileac who died too soon.
Popular, not forgotten, he departed from this world,
A yew without any blemish upon him was he of the long-flowing
hair.”

Nor must it be thought that these repeated raids which we have recorded in any way checked the full spiritual life of the nation. It is true that there was not that quiet serenity from which came the perfect beauty and art of the old Book of Kells, but a keenness and fire kindled the breasts of those who learned the New Way and the Ancient Learning. The schools sent forth a host of eminent men who over all western Europe laid the intellectual basis of the modern world. This view of Ireland’s history might well be expanded almost without limit or possibility of exaggeration. Receiving, as we saw, the learning and traditions of Rome while Rome was yet mighty and a name of old imperial renown, Ireland kept and cherished the classical wisdom and learning, not less than the lore of Palestine. Then the northern garrisons of Rome were beaten back, and Britain and Gaul alike were devastated by hordes from beyond the Rhine. The first wild deluge of these fierce invaders was now over, and during the lull of the storm teachers went forth from Ireland to Scotland, as we have seen; they went also to Britain; to Belgium; to northern, central and southern Gaul; and to countries beyond the Rhine and in the south; to Switzerland and Austria, where one Irishman gave his name to the Canton of St. Gall, while another founded the famous see of Salzburg, a rallying-point through all the Middle Ages. It was not only for pure spiritual zeal and high inspiration that these teachers were famed. They had not less renown for all refined learning and culture. The famous universities of Oxford, Paris and Pavia count among the great spirits at their inception men who were worthy pupils of the schools of Devenish and Durrow, of Bangor and Moville.

We have recorded the tribute paid by Alfred the Saxon king to the Ireland of his day. Let us add to it the testimony of a great divine of France. Elias, Bishop of Angouleme, who died in 875, wrote thus: “What need to speak of Ireland; setting at nought, as it does, the difficulties of the sea, and coming almost in a body to our shores, with its crowd of

philosophers, the most intelligent of whom are subjecting themselves to a voluntary exile.”



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We have traced the raids of the Northmen for nearly a century. They continued for a century and a quarter longer. Through all this time the course of the nation's life was as we have described it: a raid from the sea, or from one of their seaboard fortresses by the Dark Gentiles or the Fair; an assembling of the hosts of the native chieftains against them; a fierce and spirited battle against the pirates in their mail-coats and armed with great battle-axes. Sometimes the chosen people prevailed, and sometimes the Gentiles; but in either case the heads of the slain were heaped up at the feet of the victor, many cattle were driven away as spoil, and young men and maidens were taken into captivity. It would seem that at no time was there any union between the foreigners of one and another seaboard fortress, any more than there was unity among the tribes whom they raided and who defeated them in their turn. It was a strife of warring units, without fusion; small groups round chosen leaders, and these merging for awhile in greater groups. Thus the life of the times, in its warlike aspect. Its spiritual vigor we have sufficiently shown, not less in the inspirations of the saints than in the fiery songs of the bards, called forth by battles and the death of kings. Everywhere there was fierce force and seething energy, bringing forth fruit of piety or prowess.

The raiders slowly lost their grasp of the fortresses they had seized. Newcomers ceased to fill their thinning ranks. Their force was finally shattered at the battle of Clontarf, which the Annalist thus records: "1013: The Foreigners of the west of Europe assembled against Brian and Maelseaclain, and they took with them a thousand men with coats of mail. A spirited, fierce, violent, vengeful and furious battle was fought between them, the likeness of which was not to be found in that time, at Cluain-tarb, the Lawn of the Bulls. In this battle was slain Brian son of Ceinneidig, monarch of Ireland, who was the Augustus of all the west of Europe, in the eighty-eighth year of his age."

The scene of this famous conflict is on the coast, between Dublin and the Hill of Howth. A wide strand of boulders is laid bare by the receding tide, with green sea-grass carpeting the stones. At the very verge of the farthest tide are two huge sand-banks, where the waves roar and rumble with a sound like the bellowing of bulls, and this tumultuous roaring is preserved in the name of the place unto this day.

XI.

The passing of the Norsemen.

A.D. 1013-1250.

There was, as we have seen, no "Danish Conquest" of Ireland, nor anything approaching a conquest. What really happened during the ninth and tenth centuries was this: Raiders from the shores of the Northern seas, from the Scandinavian peninsula and the Western Isles of Scotland, sailed in their long ships among the islands of the Irish coast, looking for opportunities to plunder the treasures of the

religious schools, and carrying off the gold and silver reliquaries and manuscript cases, far more valuable to these heathen seamen than the Latin or Gaelic manuscripts they contained.

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These raids had little connection with each other; they were the outcome of individual daring, mere boat's-crews from one or another of the Northern fiords. A few of the more persistent gradually grew reluctant to retreat with their booty to the frozen north, and tried to gain a footing on the shores of the fertile and wealthy island they had discovered. They made temporary camps on the beach, always beside the best harbors, and threw up earthworks round them, or perhaps more lasting forts of stone. Thus they established a secondary base for raids inland, and a place of refuge whither they might carry the cattle, corn and captives which these raids brought them from the territories of the native clans. These camps on the shore were the germ of a chain of sea-ports at Dublin, Wexford, Waterford, Cork and Limerick.

From these points raiding went on, and battles were fought in which the raiders were as often vanquished as victorious. There was little union between the various Norse forts, and indeed we sometimes find them fighting valiantly among themselves. Meanwhile, the old tribal contest went on everywhere throughout the island. The south invaded the north and was presently invaded in return. The east and the west sent expeditions against each other. Clan went forth against clan, chief against chief, and cattle and captives many times changed hands. These captives, it would seem, became the agricultural class in each clan, being made to work as the penalty for unsuccessful fighting. The old tribal life went on unbroken during the whole of this period; nor did it subsequently yield to pressure from without, but rather passed away, during succeeding centuries, as the result of inward growth. Meanwhile the religious schools continued their work, studying Latin and Greek as well as the old Gaelic, and copying manuscripts as before; and one fruit of their work we see in the gradual conversion of the heathen Norsemen, who were baptized and admitted to the native church. The old bardic schools likewise continued, so that we have a wealth of native manuscripts belonging to this time, embodying the finest tradition and literature of the earlier pagan ages.

[Illustration: Giant Head and Dunluce Castle, Co. Antrim.]

If the Danes and Northern raiders never conquered Ireland, on the other hand they never were expelled. Through the cessation of the original impulse of unrest which brought them, they gradually ceased to receive accessions from the North, and at the same time the forces of amalgamation were slowly merging them into the national and tribal life of their new home. Their separate influence grew less and less, but their race continued, and continues to this day in the sea-ports we have named.

We shall presently have to record another series of Norse inroads, this time not directly from the North, but mediately, through France and Britain, and we shall find that much of our subsequent history was influenced by the new elements and principles then added. We shall do well, therefore, to linger for a moment before this new transition, to gain a clear view of the tendencies of the epoch then closed, the wider significance of that chapter of our nation's life.

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The culture of Ireland, during the period before the Northern raids, bridged over the abyss between the classical and the mediaeval world. During the whole of that period the rest of Europe was hidden under the clouds of the Dark Ages. Ireland stood alone as the one cultured nation. Receiving the classical learning from Roman Gaul and Britain and Italy, while the old world was still alive, Ireland carried that culture onward when Rome and the Roman Empire fell, crushed under the hordes of Northern barbarians: the Franks in Gaul; the Lombards, Goths and Vandals in Spain and Italy; the Angles, Saxons and Danes in Britain; and the Picts and Northmen in the Scottish lowlands. Austria was meanwhile overrun by Asian nomads, the Huns and Magyars; Russia and Germany, with the Scandinavian lands, were still pagan.

Thus all Europe was submerged under a deluge of heathenism, and the old Latin culture was swept away. The tradition of ancient Greece still lingered at Constantinople behind the wall of the Balkans, but it had no influence at all on the northern nations beyond the wall. Ireland was thus the one exception, the ark of safety for the old wisdom and beauty of classical days. And from Ireland, when the tide of heathen invasion slackened, the light of classical times and the spirit of the New Way went forth to all the nascent nations, the great pagan tribes that were to form the modern world. Thus Ireland was the bridge over the Dark Ages, the first of modern nations, keeping the old and blending it with the new.

Yet another view of Ireland's significance must not be forgotten. Of the original life of the great pagan world which swept over the Roman Empire we know almost nothing. How much do we realize of the thought and genius of Aleman, Frank and Vandal, of Angle and Lombard and Burgundian?

Nothing at all. The darkness that shrouds them is complete. But what a contrast when we come to Ireland! If we leave out the basin of the Mediterranean, with its Asian and African traditions, Ireland is the one European nation which has clear records of its pagan history. And how excellent that history was, how full of humanity and the rich wine of life, the stories of Fergus and Concobar and Cuculain, of Find and Ossin and Gael, of Meave and Deirdre and Crede bear sufficient witness. The tide of Irish life to which they belong, and which brought them forth, flowed on without break to a time so recent that their whole tradition has come down to us, practically at first hand, from the heralds and bards themselves. Ireland is, therefore, our one doorway to the history of northern Europe through the long era of pagan times.

That history was everywhere a fierce tale of tribal warfare. Its heroes are valiant fighters, keen leaders of forays, champion swordsmen and defenders of forts. The air throbs to the battle-drum, rings to the call of the war-trumpet. Every tribe, every clan, is in turn victor and vanquished, raider and victim of raids. Everywhere are struggle and unrest, tales of captivity and slaughter.

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We fall into vain lamenting over this red rapine and wrath, until we divine the genius and secret purpose of that wonderful epoch, so wholly different in inspiration from our own. The life of races, like the life of men, has its ordered stages, and none can ripen out of season. That was the epoch of dawning individual consciousness, when men were coming to a keen and vivid realization of themselves and their powers. Keen consciousness and strong personal will could be developed only through struggle—through long ages of individual and independent fighting, where the best man led, and often fought for his right to lead with the best of his followers. Innumerable centers of initiative and force were needed, and these the old tribal life abundantly gave. The territory of a chief hardly stretched farther than he could ride in a day, so that every part of it had a real place in his heart. Nor was he the owner of that territory. He was simply the chosen leader of the men who lived there, perhaps the strongest among many brothers who shared it equally between them. If another thought himself the better man, the matter was forthwith decided by fighting.

The purpose of all this was not the “survival of the fittest” in the material sense, but a harvest purely spiritual: the ripening of keen personal consciousness and will in all the combatants, to the full measure of their powers. The chiefs were the strongest men who set the standard and served as models for the rest, but that standard held the minds of all, the model of perfect valor was in the hearts of all. Thus was personal consciousness gained and perfected.

If we keep this in mind as the keynote of the whole pagan epoch, we shall be better able to comprehend the new forces which were added to that epoch, and which gradually transformed it. The greatest was the Message of the New Way. Deeds are stronger than words, and in the deeds of the first Messengers we can see the new spirit bearing fruit. The slave of Slemish mountain returned breathing not vengeance for his captivity but pity and generous kindness towards his captors. Colum the exile did not seek to enlist the Picts against his native land, but sought rather to give the message of that land to the wild Pictish warriors, and to spread humane and generous feeling among them. Thus was laid the foundation of a wide and universal consciousness; a bridge was built between soul and soul.

From the waning of the Norsemen to the first coming of the Normans is a period of about a hundred and fifty years. We shall best gain an insight into the national and religious life of that time by gleaning from the Annals the vivid and living pictures they never fail to give,—pictures which are the records of eye-witnesses. The strictly contemporary character of the records is vouched for by the correct entry of eclipses: for instance, “on the day before the calends of September, in the year 1030, there was a darkening of the sun.”

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We see the genius of the Norsemen suffering a like eclipse the year before: “1029: Olaf son of Sitric, lord of the Foreigners, was taken prisoner by Matgamain Ua Riagain lord of Breag, who exacted twelve hundred cows as his ransom, together with seven score British horses, three score ounces of gold, the sword of Carlus, the Irish hostages, sixty ounces of white silver as the ransom of his fetters, eighty cows for word and supplication, and four hostages to Ua Riagain as a security of peace.”

Two generations later we read: “1088: Tigearnac Ua Briain, chief successor of Ciaran and Coman, died. He was a paragon of learning and history.” The work of the paragon Tigearnac, a history of Ireland, is extant and writ in choice Latin, a monument at once of the classical learning of our schools and of the historical spirit carried down from the days of the pagan heralds and bards. Tigearnac quotes abundantly from Greek and Latin authors, fortifying his conclusions with passages from Eusebius, Orosius, Julius Africanus, Josephus, Jerome and Bede.

A half-century later we get a quaint and vivid glimpse into the religious life of the time: “1145: A lime-kiln which was sixty feet every way was erected opposite Emain Maca by Gilla Mac Liag, the successor of Patrick, and Patrick’s clergy in general.” Here is the glow of that devotion through work which gave us the great mediaeval cathedrals, the fervor and artistic power, which in former times adorned the Gospels of the Book of Kells, now working out its way in lasting stone. The date of this lime-kiln lies indeed just half-way between the consecration of Cormac’s Chapel at Cashel in 1134 and the foundation of the beautiful cathedral beside it by the lord of Tuaid-Muma or Thomond in 1152. Cormac’s Chapel is a very pure example of native style, untouched by foreign or continental influence.

[Illustration: Rock of Cashel, Ruins of Old Cathedral, King Cormac’s Chapel and Round Tower,]

We can divine the figure of one of the great men of the religious world in the records for the year 1148: “A synod was convened at Saint Patrick’s Isle by Maelmaedog, called also Malachias, successor of Patrick, at which were present fifteen bishops and two hundred priests, to establish rules and morals for all. Maelmaedog by the advice of the synod went a second time to Rome, to confer with the successor of Peter.” A few months later we read this record of his death: “Malachias, that is, Maelmaedog Ua Morgair, Archbishop of the chair of Patrick, chief head of the piety of the West of Europe, legate of the successor of Peter, the only head whom the Irish and the Foreigners obeyed, chief paragon of wisdom and piety, a brilliant lamp which illumined territories and churches by preaching and good works, faithful shepherd of the church in general,—after having ordained bishops and priests and persons of every degree; after having consecrated many churches and cemeteries; after having performed every ecclesiastical



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work throughout Ireland; after having bestowed jewels and food upon the mighty and the needy; after having founded churches and monasteries, for by him was repaired in Ireland every church which had been consigned to decay and neglect, and they had been neglected from times remote;—after leaving every rule and every good moral in the churches of Ireland in general; after having been the second time in the legateship; after having been fourteen years in the primacy; and after the fifty-fourth year of his age, resigned his spirit to heaven on the second day of November, and was buried in the monastery of Saint Bernard at Claravallis in France.”

This is the same worthy under whose influence was built the great lime-kiln over against the fort of Emain, where Concoibar once ruled. Even from the scant notices which we have quoted he stands forth clear and strong, full of spiritual and moral vigor, a great man in every sense, and one in whom we divine a lovable and admirable spirit. At that time there were four archbishoprics in Ireland, at Armagh, Cashel, Dublin and Tuam; the primacy belonging to the first, as the seat of the Damliag Mor or Great Stone Church, built by Saint Patrick himself. A sentence in the Annals shows how the revenues were raised: “A horse from every chieftain, a sheep from every hearth.” A few passages like these are enough to light up whole epochs of that mediaeval time, and to show us how sympathetic, strong and pure that life was, in so many ways.

We find, meanwhile, that the tribal struggle continued as of old: “1154: Toirdealbac Ua Concoibar brought a fleet round Ireland northwards, and plundered Tir-Conaill and Inis Eogain. The Cinel Eogain sent to hire the fleets of the Hebrides, Arran, Cantyre and Man, and the borders of Alba in general, and they fell in with the other fleet and a naval battle was fiercely and spiritedly fought between them. They continued the conflict from the beginning of the day till evening, but the foreign fleet was defeated.” This records perhaps the only lesson learned from the Norsemen, the art of naval warfare. We may regret that the new knowledge was not turned to a more national end.

Four years later, “a wicker bridge was made by Ruaidri Ua Concoibar at Athlone, for the purpose of making incursions into Meath. There was a pacific meeting between Ruaidri Ua Concoibar and Tigearnan, and they made peace, and took mutual oaths before sureties and relics.” This is our first meeting with a king as remarkable in his way as the great archbishop his contemporary. Ruaidri descendant of Concoibar was king of Connacht, holding the land from the western ocean up to the great frontier of the river Shannon. Eager to plunder his neighbors and bring back “a countless number of cows,” he undertook this wonderful work, a pile bridge across the river, seemingly the first of its kind to be built there, and in structure very like the famous bridge which Caesar built across the Rhine,—or like many of the wooden bridges across the upper streams of the Danube at the present day. We shall record a few more of this enterprising and large-minded prince’s undertakings, following the course of the years.



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In parenthesis, we find a clue to the standard of value of the time in this record: "1161: The visitation of Osraige was made by Flaitbeartac, successor of Colum Kill; the tribute due to him was seven score oxen, but he selected, as a substitute for these, four hundred and twenty ounces of pure silver." The price of an ox was, therefore, three ounces of silver. The old-time barter, an echo of which still lingers in the word "pecuniary" from the Latin name for "cattle," was evidently yielding to the more convenient form of exchange through the medium of the metals, which are easily carried and divided, and suffer no detriment from the passage of time. With the wicker bridge and the lime-kiln, this change from a tribute in cattle to a payment in silver may remind us that we are on the threshold of the modern world.

In 1162 we find the king of Connacht in a new adventure: "An army was led by Muirceartac Ua Lochlain, accompanied by the people of the north of Ireland, the men of Meath, and a battalion of the Connacht men, to At-Cliat, to lay siege to the Foreigners and the Irish; but Ua Lochlain retired without battle or hostages after having plundered the Fair Strangers. A peace was afterwards concluded between the Foreigners and the Gaels; and six score ounces of gold were given by the Foreigners to Ua Lochlain, and five score ounces of gold were paid by Diarmaid Ua Maelseaclain to Ruaidri Ua Concobar for West Meath." Here again we see the "countless cows" giving place to counted gold in the levying of tribute. We note also, in the following year, that "a lime-kiln measuring seventy feet every way was made by the successor of Colum Kill and the clergy of Colum Kill in twenty days," in evident emulation of the work of the Armagh see.

The synod already recorded as having been held in the little island of Saint Patrick off the Dublin coast, gives us a general view of the church at that time, the number of sees and parishes, and the spirit animating them. We gain a like view of the civil state in the record of a great assembly convened in 1167 by the energetic and enterprising Connacht king: "A great meeting was called together by Ruaidri Ua Concobar and the chiefs of Leat Cuin, both lay and ecclesiastic, and the chiefs of At-boy,—the Yellow Ford across one of the streams of the Boyne in Meath. To it came the successor of Patrick, the archbishop of Connacht, the archbishop of Leinster, the lord of Breifne, the lord of Oirgialla, the king of Ulster, the king of Tara, and Ragnall son of Ragnall, lord of the Foreigners. The whole of their gathering and assemblage was 19,000 horsemen, of which 6000 were Connachtmen, 4000 with the lord of Breifne, 2000 with the king of Tara, 4000 with the lord of Oirgialla and the king of Ulster, 2000 with the chief of Ui-Failge, and 1000 with the Foreigners of At-Cliat. They passed many good resolutions at this meeting, respecting veneration for churches and clerics, and control of



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tribes and territories, so that women used to traverse Ireland alone; and a restoration of his prey was made by the chief of the Ui-Failge at the hands of the kings aforesaid. They afterwards separated in peace and amity, without battle or controversy, or without anyone complaining of another at that meeting, in consequence of the prosperousness of the king, who had assembled these chiefs with their forces at one place.”

Here is a foreshadowing of the representative assemblies of our modern times, and the same wise spirit is shown in another event of the same year, thus recorded: “A hosting and a mustering of the men of Ireland, with their chieftains, by Ruaidri Ua Concobar; thither came the lord of Deas-muma, the lord of Tuaid-muma, the king of Meath, the lord of Oirgialla and all the chieftains of Leinster. They arrived in Tir-Eogain, and allotted the part of it north of Slieve Gullion,—now the eastern part of Derry,—to Nial Ua Lochlain for two hostages, and allotted the part of the country of the clan to the south of the mountain to Aed Ua Neill for two other hostages. Then the men of Ireland returned back southwards over Slieve Fuaid, through Tir-Eogain and Tir-Connail, and over Assaroe—the Cataract of the Erne—and Ruaidri Ua Concobar escorted the lord of Deas-muma with his forces southwards through Tuaid-muma as far as Cnoc-Aine—in Limerick—and the lord of Deas-muma departed with gifts of many jewels and riches.”

While the Norse foreigners were a power at Dublin, Waterford, Cork and Limerick, there were not wanting occasions when one of the native tribes called on them for aid against another tribe, sharing with them the joys of victory or the sorrow of defeat, and, where fortune favored, dividing with them the “countless cows” taken in a raid. In like manner the Cinel Eogain, as we saw, hired the fleet of the Norsemen of the Western Isles of Scotland to help them to resist a raid of the Connachtmen. The example thus set was followed repeatedly in the coming years, and we find mention of Flemings, Welshmen and Saxons brought over to take one side or other in the tribal wars.

In the same year that saw the two assemblings of the chieftains under Ruaidri Ua Concobar, another chieftain, Diarmaid son of Murcad brought in from “the land of the Saxons,” as it was called, one of these bands of foreign mercenaries, for the most part Welsh descendants of the old Gaelic Britons, to aid him in his contest for “the kingdom of the sons of Ceinnsealaig.” Two years later, Ruaidri Ua Concobar “granted ten cows every year from himself and from every king that should follow him for ever, to the Lector of Ard Maca, in honor of Patrick, to instruct the youths of Ireland and Alba in Literature.”



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For the next year, 1170, we find this record: “Robert Mac Stepni and Ricard Mac Gillebert—Iarl Strangbow—came from Saxonland into Erin with a numerous force, and many knights and archers, in the army of the son of Murcad, to contest Leinster for him, and to disturb the Gaels of Erin in general; and the son of Murcad gave his daughter to Iarl Strangbow for coming into his army. They took Loch Garman—Wexford—and Port Lairge—Waterford—by force; and they took Gillemaire the officer of the fortress and Ua Faelain lord of the Deisi and his son, and they killed seven hundred persons there. Domnall Breagac with numbers of the men of Breag fell by the Leinstermen on that occasion. An army was led by Ruaidri Ua Concobar with the lord of Breifne and the lord of Oirgialla against Leinster and the Foreigners aforesaid, and there was a challenge of battle between them for the space of three days.” This contest was indecisive. The most noteworthy event of the battle was the plundering and slaughter of the Danes of At-Cliat by the newcomers under Iarl Strangbow. The Danes had long before this given up their old pagan faith, converted by their captives and their Gaelic neighbors. Christ Church Cathedral in At-Cliat or Dublin was founded early in the preceding century by Sitric son of Olaf, king of the Danes of Dublin, and Donatus the first Danish bishop; but the oldest part of the present structure belongs to the time we are now speaking of: the close of the twelfth century. The transepts with their chevron mouldings and the principal doorway are of that period, and we may regard them as an offering in expiation of the early heathen raids on Lambay, Saint Patrick’s Isle, and the early schools of the church.

The ambitious Diarmaid Mac Murcad died shortly after the last battle we have recorded, “perishing without sacrament, of a loathsome disease;” a manifest judgment, in the eyes of the Chronicler, for the crime of bringing the Normans to Ireland. In the year that saw his death, “Henry the Second, king of the Saxons and duke of the Normans, came to Ireland with two hundred and forty ships.” He established a footing in the land, as one of many contesting powers, but the immediate results of his coming were slight. This we can judge from the record of three years later: “A brave battle was fought by the Foreigners under Iarl Strangbow and the Gaels under Ruaidri Ua Concobar at Thurles, in which the Foreigners were finally defeated by dint of fighting. Seventeen hundred of the Foreigners were slain in the battle, and only a few of them survived with the Iarl, who proceeded in sorrow to his home at Port Lairge—Waterford.” Iarl Strangbow died two years later at Dublin.

Norman warriors continue to appear during the succeeding years, fighting against the native chieftains and against each other, while the native chieftains continue their own quarrels, just as in the days of the first Norse raids. Thus in the year of Iarl Strangbow’s death, Kells was laid waste by the Foreigners in alliance with the native Ui-Briain, while later in the same year the Foreigners were driven from Limerick by Domnall Ua-Briain, who laid siege to them and forced them to surrender.



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Two years later, four hundred and fifty of the followers of De Courcy, another great Norman warrior, were defeated at Maghera Conall in Louth, some being drowned in the river, while others were slain on the battlefield. In the same year De Courcy was again defeated with great slaughter in Down, and escaped severely wounded to Dublin. For At-Cliat, from being a fortress of the Danes and Norsemen, was gradually becoming a Norman town. The doorway of Christ Church Cathedral, which dates from about this time, is of pure Norman style.

In 1186 we find a son of the great Ruaidri Ua Concobar paying a band of these same Foreigners three thousand cows as "wages," for joining him in some plundering expedition against his neighbors. The genius of strife reigned supreme, and the newcomers were as completely under its sway as the old clansmen. Just as we saw the Dark Norsemen of the ninth century coming in their long ships to plunder the Fair Norsemen of At-Cliat, and the Fair Norsemen not less vigorously retaliating, so now we find wars breaking out among the Normans who followed in the steps of the Norsemen. In 1205 the Norman chieftain who held a part of Meath under his armed sway, and who had already built a strong castle at Kells, was at war with the De Bermingham family, who at that time held the old Danish stronghold of Limerick. Two years later another contest broke out between the De Berminghams and William Marescal, and yet another struggle between Hugo de Lacy and De Bermingham, very disastrous to the retainers of the latter, for the Chronicler tells us that "nearly all his people were ruined."

Thus the old life of tribal struggle went on. The country was wealthy, full of cattle and herds, silver and gold, stored corn and fruit, rich dyed stuffs and ornaments. The chieftains and provincial kings lived in state within their forts, with their loyal warriors around them, feasting and making merry, and the bards and heralds recited for their delight the great deeds of the men of old, their forefathers; the harpers charmed or saddened them with the world-old melodies that Deirdre had played for Naisi, that Meave had listened to, that Crede sang for her poet lover.

The life of the church was not less vigorous and vital. There are many churches and cathedrals of that period of transition, as of the epoch before the first Norman came, which show the same fervor and devotion, the same faith made manifest by works of beauty. In truth no country in the world has so full and rich a record in lasting stone, beginning with the dwellings of the early saints who had seen the first Messenger face to face, and passing down through age after age, showing the life and growth of the faith from generation to generation.

The schools, as we saw, carried on the old classical tradition, bringing forth monuments like the Annals of Tigearnac; and there was the same vigor and vital force in every part of the nation's life. The coming of the Normans changed this in no essential regard. There was something added in architecture, the Norman modifying the old native style; the castle and keep gradually taking the place of the earthwork and stone fort. And in

the tenure of land certain new principles were introduced. But the sum of national life went on unbroken, less modified, probably, than it had been by the old Norse raids.



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XII.

The Normans.

A.D. 1250-1603.

When summing up each epoch of Irish history, we may find both interest and profit in considering what the future of the land and the people might have been had certain new elements not been added. Thus we may try to picture to ourselves what would have been our history had our life moved forward from the times of Cuculain and Concohar, of Find and Cormac son of Art, without that transforming power which the fifth century brought. We may imagine the tribal strife and stress growing keener and fiercer, till the whole life and strength of the people was fruitlessly consumed in plundering and destroying.

Or we may imagine an unbroken continuance of the epoch of saintly aspiration, the building of churches, the illumination of holy books, so dividing the religious from the secular community as almost to make two nations in one, a nation altogether absorbed in the present life, with another nation living in its midst, but dwelling wholly in the thought of the other world. Religion would have grown to superstition, ecstasy would have ruled in the hearts of the religious devotees, weakening their hold on the real, and wafting them away into misty regions of paradise. We should have had every exaggeration of ascetic practice, hermitages multiplying among the rocks and islands of the sea, men and women torturing their bodies for the saving of their souls.

The raids of the Norsemen turned the strong aspirations of the religious schools into better channels, bringing them to a sense of their identity with the rest of the people, compelling them to bear their part of the burden of calamity and strife. The two nations which might have wandered farther and farther apart were thus welded into one, so that the spirit of religion became what it has ever since remained, something essential and inherent in the life of the whole people.

After the waning of the Norsemen, a period opened full of great national promise in many ways. We see the church strengthened and confirmed, putting forth its power in admirable works of art, churches and cathedrals full of the fire and fervor of devotion, and conceived in a style truly national, with a sense of beauty altogether its own. Good morals and generous feeling mark the whole life of the church through this period, and the great archbishop whose figure we have drawn in outline is only one of many fine and vigorous souls among his contemporaries.

[Illustration: Dunluce Castle.]



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The civil life of the nation, too, shows signs of singular promise at the same time, a promise embodied in the person of the king of Connacht, Ruaidri Ua Concobar, some of whose deeds we have recorded. There was a clearer sense of national feeling and national unity than ever before, a recognition of the method of conciliation and mutual understanding, rather than the old appeal to armed force, as under the genius of tribal strife. We see Ruaidri convoking the kings, chieftains and warriors to a solemn assembly, presided over by the king and the archbishops of the realm, and “passing good resolutions” for the settlement of religious and civil matters, and the better ordering of territories and tribes. That assembly was convened a half-century before the famous meeting between King John and his barons, at Runnymede among the Windsor meadows; and the seed then sown might have brought forth fruit as full of promise and potency for the future as the Great Charter itself. The contrast between these two historic assemblies is instructive. In the one case, we have a provincial king from the rich and beautiful country beyond the Shannon, gradually gaining such influence over the kings of the provinces and the chieftains of the tribes that he had come to be regarded as in a sense the overlord of the whole land, not through inherent sovereignty or divine right, but first as the chosen chief of his own tribe, and then as the elect of the whole body of chieftains, first among his peers. In this character we see Ruaidri settling disputes between two sections of the great Northern clan, and fixing a boundary between them; giving presents to the chieftains of the south for their support in this difficult decision, and exercising a beneficent influence over the whole people, a moral sway rather than a sovereign and despotic authority. It is pleasant to find the same king establishing a college foundation for the instruction of the youth of Ireland and Scotland in literature.

This is what we have on the one hand. On the other, we have the Norman king surrounded by his barons, over whom he claimed, but could not exercise, despotic authority; and the Norman barons taking advantage of his necessity to extort promises and privileges for their own order rather than for the whole people. For we must remember that the Angles and Saxons had been reduced by conquest to a servile condition, from which they never wholly recovered. The ruling classes of Britain at the present day are at least nominal descendants of those same Norman barons; and between them and the mass of the people—the sons of the Saxons and Angles—there is still a great gulf fixed. It is quite impossible for one of the tillers of the soil to stand on a footing of equality with the old baronial class, and the gulf has widened, rather than closed, since the battle of Hastings and the final overthrow of the Saxon power.



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We see here the full contrast between the ideal of kingship in Ireland and that which grew up among the Norman conquerors of the Saxons. The Irish king was always in theory and often in fact a real representative, duly elected by the free suffrage of his tribesmen; he was not owner of the tribal land, as the duke of the Normans was; he was rather the leader of the tribe, chosen to guard their common possessions. The communal system of Ireland stands here face to face with the feudal system of the Normans.

It would be a study of great interest to consider what form of national life might have resulted in Ireland from the free growth of this principle of communal chieftainship. There are many analogies in other lands, all of which point to the likelihood of a slow emergence of the hereditary principle; a single family finally overtopping the whole nation. Had this free development taken place, we might have had a strong and vigorous national evolution, an abundant flowering of all our energies and powers through the Middle Ages, a rich and vigorous production of art and literature, equal to the wonderful blossoming of genius in the Val d'Arno and Venice and Rome; but we should have missed something much greater than all these; something towards which events and destiny have been leading us, through the whole of the Middle Ages and modern times.

From this point forward we shall have to trace the working of that destiny, not manifested in a free blossoming and harvesting of our national life, but rather in the suppression and involution of our powers; in a development arrested by pressure from without and kept thus suspended until the field was ready for its real work. Had our fate been otherwise, we might now be looking back to a great mediaeval past, as Spain and Austria look back; it is fated that we shall look not back but forwards, brought as we are by destiny into the midst of the modern world, a people with energy unimpaired, full of vigorous vital force, uncorrupted by the weakening influence of wealth, taught by our own history the measureless evil of oppression, and therefore cured once for all of the desire to dominate others. Finally, the intense inner life towards which we have been led by the checking of our outward energies has opened to us secrets of the invisible world which are of untold value, of measureless promise for all future time.

We have, therefore, to trace the gradual involution of our national life; the checking and restraining of that free development which would assuredly have been ours, had our national life grown forward unimpeded and uninfluenced from without, from the days when the Norse power waned. The first great check to that free development came from the feudal system, the principle of which was brought over by Robert FitzStephen, Richard FitzGilbert, the De Courcys, the De Lacys, the De Berminghams and their peers, whose coming we have recorded. They added new elements to the



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old struggle of district against district, tribe against tribe, but they added something more enduring—an idea and principle destined almost wholly to supplant the old communal tenure which was the genius of the native polity. The outward and visible sign of that new principle was manifested in the rapid growth of feudal castles, with their strong keeps, at every point of vantage gained by the Norman lords. They were lords of the land, not leaders of the tribe, and their lordship was fitly symbolized in the great gloomy towers of stone that everywhere bear witness to their strength, almost untouched as they are by the hand of time.

When the duke of the Normans overthrew the Saxon king at Hastings, he became real owner of the soil of England. His barons and lords held their estates from him, in return for services to be rendered to him direct. To reward them for supporting him, first in that decisive battle, and then in whatever contests he might engage in, they were granted the right to tax certain tracts of country, baronies, earldoms, or counties, according to the title they bore. This tax was exacted first in service, then in produce, and finally in coin. It was the penalty of conquest, the tribute of the subject Saxons and Angles. There was no pretence of a free contract; no pretence that the baron returned to the farmer or laborer an equal value for the tax thus exacted. It was tribute pure and simple, with no claim to be anything else. That system of tribute has been consecrated in the land tenure of England, and the class enriched by that tribute, and still bearing the territorial titles which are its hall-mark, has always been, as it is to-day, the dominant class alike in political and social life. In other words, the Norman subjugation of Saxon and Angle is thoroughly effective at this moment.

This principle of private taxation, as a right granted by the sovereign, came over to Ireland with the De Courcys and De Lacys and their like. But it by no means overspread Ireland in a single tide, as in England, after Hastings was lost and won. Its progress was slow; so slow, indeed, that the old communal system lingers here and there at the present day. The communal chiefs lived their lives side by side with the Norman barons, fighting now with the barons, now with each other; and the same generous rivalry, as we have seen, led to abundant fighting among the barons also. The principle of feudal ownership was working its way, however. We shall see later how great was its ultimate influence,—not so much by direct action, as in the quite modern reaction which its abuse provoked—a reaction from which have been evolved certain principles of value to the whole world.



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Leaving this force to work its way through the centuries, we may turn now to the life of the times as it appeared to the men and women who lived in them, and as they themselves have recorded it. We shall find fewer great personalities; nor should we expect this to be otherwise, if we are right in thinking that the age of struggle, with its efflorescence of great persons, had done its work, and was already giving way before the modern spirit, with its genius for the universal rather than the personal. We shall have contests to chronicle during the following centuries, whether engendered within or forced upon us from without; but they are no longer the substance of our history. They are only the last clouds of a departing storm; the mists before the dawn of the modern world.

The most noteworthy of these contests in the early Norman age was the invasion under Edward Bruce, brother of the Scottish king, who brought a great fleet and army to Larne, then as now the Irish port nearest to the northern kingdom. The first sufferers by this invasion were the Normans of Heath, and we presently find these same Normans allied with Feidlimid son of Aed Ua Concobar and the Connachtmen, fighting side by side against the common foe. This was in 1315; two years later Robert Bruce joined his brother, and it was not till 1319 that Edward Bruce finally fell at Dundalk, “and no achievement had been performed in Ireland for a long time before,” the Chronicler tells us, “from which greater benefit had accrued to the country than from this; for during the three and a half years that Edward had spent in it, a universal famine prevailed to such a degree that men were wont to devour one another.”

A ray of light is thus shed on the intellectual and moral life of the time: “1398: Garrett Earl of Desmond—or Deas-muma—a cheerful and courteous man, who excelled all the Normans and many of the Irish in the knowledge of the Irish language, poetry, history and other learning, died after the victory of peace.” We see that the Normans are already fallen under the same influence of assimilation which had transformed the Danes two hundred years before.

A half-century later, we get a vigorous and lurid picture of the survival of the old tribal strife: “1454: Donell O’Donell was installed in the lordship of Tyrconnell, in opposition to Rury O’Donell. Not long after this, Donell was treacherously taken captive and imprisoned in the castle of Inis—an island in Lough Swilly. As soon as Rury received tidings of this, he mustered an army thither, and proceeded to demolish the castle in which Donell was imprisoned with a few men to guard him. Rury and his army burned the great door of the castle, and set the stairs on fire; whereupon Donell, thinking that his life would be taken as soon as the army should reach the castle,—it being his dying request, as he thought—that he might be loosed from his fetters, as he deemed it a disgrace to be killed while imprisoned and fettered.



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His request was granted, and he was loosed from his fetters; after which he ascended to the battlements of the castle, to view the motions of the invading army. And he saw Rury beneath, with eyes flashing enmity, and waiting until the fire should subside, that he might enter and kill him. Donell then, finding a large stone by his side, hurled it directly down upon Rury, so that it fell on the crest of his helmet, on the top of his head, and crushed it, so that he instantly died. The invading forces were afterwards defeated, and by this throw Donell saved his own life and acquired the lordship of Tyrconnell.”

There is a whole historical romance in that single picture; the passage could not easily be surpassed for direct and forcible narrative. A few years later, we come on one of the most amusing things in the whole series of annals, a perfect contrast to the grim ferocity of the feud of the O’Donells. In 1472 “a wonderful animal was sent to Ireland by the king of England. She resembled a mare, and was of a yellow color, with the hoofs of a cow, a long neck, a very large head, a large tail, which was ugly and scant of hair. She had a saddle of her own. Wheat and salt were her usual food. She used to draw the largest sled-burden behind her. She used to kneel when passing under any doorway, however high, and also to let her rider mount.” It is evident that the Gaelic language in the fifteenth century lacked a name for the camel. The same year, we are told, “the young earl of Desmond was set at liberty by the MacCarthy; he disabled Garrett, son of the earl of Kildare.”

Here is another passage which vies in vividness and force with the story of the death of Rury O’Donell: “1557: Two spies, Donough and Maurice by name, entered the camp of John O’Neill by Lough Swilly, and mingled with the troop without being noticed; for in consequence of the number and variety of the troops who were there, it was not easy for them to discriminate between one another, even if it were day, except by recognizing their chieftains alone. The two persons aforesaid proceeded from one fire to another, until they came to the great central fire, which was at the entrance of the son of O’Neill’s tent; and a huge torch, thicker than a man’s body, was continually flaming at a short distance from the fire, and sixty grim and redoubtable warriors with sharp, keen axes, terrible and ready for action, and sixty stern and terrific Scots, with massive, broad and heavy striking swords in their hands, ready to strike and parry, were guarding the son of O’Neill. When the time came for the troops to dine, and food was divided and distributed among them, the two spies whom we have mentioned stretched out their hands to the distributor like the rest, and that which fell to their share was a measure of meal, and a suitable complement of butter. With this testimony of their adventure they returned to their own people.”

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Here again, what a picture of the camp-life of the age; the darkness of night, the great central fire with the sixty grim and redoubtable warriors armed with keen axes, terrible and ready for action, and the sixty stern and terrific Scots with their massive swords. The admirable manner of the narrative is as striking as the fierce vigor of the life portrayed. So we might go on, adding red pages of martial records, but in reality adding nothing to our understanding of the times. The life of the land was as full and abundant as of old, and one outcome of that life we may touch on rather more at length.

We have said much of the old religious schools of Ireland, with their fine and vigorous intellectual life, which did so much to carry forward the torch of culture to our modern world. For nearly seven hundred years these great schools seem to have developed wholly along indigenous lines, once they had accepted the body of classical culture from the Roman Empire, then tottering to its fall. The full history of that remarkable chapter in the world's spiritual life has yet to be written; but this we can foretell, that when written, it will abound with rich material and ample evidence of a sound and generous culture, inspired throughout with the fervor of true faith.

About the time when the Norman warriors began to mingle with the fighting chieftains of the old native tribes, a change came over the religious history of the country. After sending forth men of power and light to the awakening lands of modern Europe, Ireland began to receive a returning tide, to reap a harvest from these same lands, in the friars and abbots of the great Continental orders founded by men like Saint Bernard, Saint Dominick and Saint Francis of Assisi. A change in the church architecture of the period visibly records this spiritual change; continental forms appear, beginning with the rounded arches of the Normans, and passing gradually into the various forms of pointed arches which we know as Gothic. Very beautiful Abbeys belonging to this epoch remain everywhere throughout the island, making once more evident—what strikes us at every point of our study—that no country in the world is so rich in these lasting records of every step of our national life, whether in pagan or Christian times.

We have said much of the archaic cromlechs. We have recorded the great Pyramids by the Boyne telling us of the genius of the De Danaans. The Milesian epoch is even now revealed to us in the great earthworks of Tara and Emain and Cruacan. We can, if we wish, climb the mound of heaped-up earth where was the fortress of Cuculain, or look over the green plains from the hill of Find.

[Illustration: Mellifont Abbey, Co. Louth.]



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In like manner, there is an unbroken series of monuments through the early Christian epoch, beginning with the oratories of the sixth century, continuing through the early churches of Killiney, Moville, Dalkey, Glendalough and Monasterboice, from before the Norse inroads; followed by the epoch of Round Towers, or protected belfries, with their churches, nearly three score of these Round Towers remaining in fair preservation, while many are perfect from base to apex; and culminating in Cormac's chapel and the beautiful group of buildings on Cashel Rock. For the next period, the age of transition after the waning of the Norsemen and the coming of the first Normans, we have many monuments in the Norman style, like the door of Christ Church Cathedral in Dublin, with its romance of Danish conversion and Norse religious fervor.

Finally, we come to the age whose progress we have just recorded, which covers the whole of the Middle Ages. For this period, which was for Ireland an epoch of foreign influence much more than of foreign rule, we have many beautiful Abbeys, built for those foreign orders whose coming was in a sense a return tide, a backward flow of the old missionary spirit which went forth from Ireland over nascent modern Europe. The life of these abbeys was full of rich imaginative and religious power; it abounded in urbanity and ripe culture of a somewhat selfish and exclusive type. Yet we cannot but feel a limitless affection and sympathy for the abbots and friars of the days of old who have left us such a rich heritage of beauty and grace.

All these abbeys seem to have been formed on a single plan: a cruciform church symbolized the source of all their inspiration, its choir extending towards the east, whence the Light had come; the nave, or main body of the church, was entered by the great western door, and the arms of the cross, the transepts, extended to the north and south. Here is a very beautiful symbol, a true embodiment of the whole spirit and inspiration of the monastic orders. From one of the transepts a side door generally led to the domestic buildings, the dormitory, the refectory, the chapter house, where the friars assembled in conclave under the presidency of the abbot. There were lesser buildings, store-rooms, granaries, work-rooms, but these were the kernel of the establishment. The church was the center of all things, and under its floor the friars were at last laid to rest, while brother friars carved tombs for them and epitaphs, adding a new richness of decoration to the already beautiful church.

We may record a few of these old foundations, showing at the same time the present state of the old abbey buildings. At Newtown on the northern bank of the Boyne, about a mile below Trim, Simon Rochfort founded an abbey for the Augustinian Canons in 1206, dedicating it to Saint Peter and Saint Paul. The capitals of the pillars in the church, the vaulting of the roof and the shafts of the arches which supported



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the tower are full of singular grace and beauty, even now when the abbey is roofless and in part destroyed, while the corbels and mouldings round the lancet-shaped windows are full of luxuriant fancy and charm. We can divine from them the full and rich spiritual life which brought forth such exquisite flowers of beauty; we can imagine the fine aroma of fervor and saintly peace which brooded over these consecrated aisles.

A few miles below Trim, and an equal distance from the old royal palace of Tara, Bective Abbey stands on the northern bank of the Boyne, with a square, battlemented tower overshadowing its cloistered quadrangle. The cinque-foil cloister arches, the fillets that bind the clustered shafts of the pillars, the leaf ornaments of the plinths at their base all speak of a luxuriant sense of beauty and grace, of a spirit of pure and admirable artistic work. This rich creative power thus breaking forth in lovely handiwork is only the outward sign of a full inner life, kindled by the fire of aspiration, and glowing with the warm ardor of devotion. Bective Abbey dates from about 1150. We are told that the king of Meath who founded it for the Cistercian order "endowed it with two hundred and forty-five acres of land, a fishing-weir and a mill." From this meager outline we can almost restore the picture of the life, altogether idyllic and full of quiet delight, that the old Friars lived among the meadows of the Boyne.

Grey Abbey was founded a little later, in 1193, for the same Cistercian order, where the promontory of the Ards divides Strangford Lough from the eastern sea. Over the waters of the lough, the red sandstone hills of north Down make a frame for the green of the meadows, as the tide laps and murmurs close to the old monastic church. Grey Abbey owes its foundation to the piety of a princess of the Isle of Man, wedded to De Courcy, the Norman warrior whose victories and defeats we have recorded. The great beauty of its church is due to the soaring loftiness of the eastern window, and the graceful daring of the arches which in former days upheld the central tower.

Other Cistercian foundations are commemorated in the names of Abbey-leix in Queen's county, and Abbey-dorney and Abbey-feale in Kerry; all three dating from after the reformation of the order by Saint Bernard the Younger, though the work of that ardent missionary did not apparently extend its influence to Ireland until a later date. This reformer of the Cistercians must not be confused with the elder Saint Bernard, whose hospice guards the pass of the Alps which bears his name. Saint Bernard of the Alps died in 1008, while Saint Bernard the reformer was born in 1093, dying sixty years later as abbot of Clara vallis or Clairvaux, on the bank of the Aube in northern France. It was at this Abbey of the Bright Vale, or Clara vallis, that Archbishop Maelmaedog resigned his spirit to heaven, five years before the death of the younger Saint Bernard, then abbot there. This is a link between the old indigenous church and the continental orders of the Friars.



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Killmallock Abbey, in Limerick, belonged to the order of the Dominicans, founded by the scion of the Guzmans, the ardent apostle of Old Castile, known to history as Saint Dominick. Here again we have a beautiful abbey church with a square central tower, upborne on soaring and graceful arches from the point where the nave joined the choir. There is only one transept—on the south—so that the church is not fully cruciform, a peculiarity shared by several other Dominican buildings. The eastern window and the window of this transept are full of delicate grace and beauty, each containing five lights, and marked by the singularly charming manner in which the mullions are interlaced above. Enough remains of the cloister and the domestic buildings for us to bring back to life the picture of the old monastic days, when the good Friars worked and prayed there, with the sunlight falling on them through the delicate network of the windows.

Holycross Abbey, near Thurles in Tipperary, was another of the Cistercian foundations, its charter, dating from 1182, being still in existence. Its church is cruciform; the nave is separated from the north aisle by round arches, and from the south aisle by pointed arches, which gives it a singular and unusual beauty. The great western window of the nave, with its six lights, is also very wonderful. Two chapels are attached to the north transept, with a passage between them, its roof supported by a double row of pointed arches upheld by twisted pillars. The roof is delicately groined, as is the roof of the choir, and the whole abbey breathes a luxuriant richness of imagination, bearing everywhere the signs of high creative genius. The same lavish imagination is shown everywhere in the interlaced tracery, the black limestone giving the artist an admirable vehicle for his work. Though the charter dates from the twelfth century, some of the work is about two centuries later, showing finely the continuity of life and spiritual power in the old monastic days.

[Illustration: Holy Cross Abbey, Co. Tipperary.]

The Friars of Saint Augustine, who were in possession of the abbey at Newtown on the Boyne, had another foundation not far from West port in Mayo, in the Abbey of Ballintober, founded in 1216 by a son of the great Ruaidri Ua Conobar. Here also we have the cruciform church, with four splendid arches rising from the intersection of nave and choir, and once supporting the tower. The Norman windows over the altar, with their dog-tooth mouldings, are very perfect. In a chapel on the south of the choir are figures of the old abbots carved in stone.

One of the Ui-Briain founded a Franciscan Abbey at Ennis in Clare about 1240, which is more perfectly preserved than any of those we have described. The tower still stands, rising over the junction of nave and choir; the refectory, chapter house, and some other buildings still remain, while the figure of the patron, Saint Francis of Assisi, still stands beside the altar at the north pier of the nave.



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Clare Abbey, a mile from Ennis, was founded for the Augustine Friars in 1195, and here also the tower still stands, dominating the surrounding plain. Three miles further south, on the shore of Killone Lake, was yet another abbey of the same period, while twenty miles to the north, at Corcomroe on the shore of Galway Bay, the Cistercians had yet another home.

We might continue the list indefinitely. Some of the most beautiful of our abbeys still remain to be recorded, but we can do no more than give their names: Bonamargy was built for the Franciscans in Antrim in the fifteenth century; the Dominican priory at Roscommon dates from 1257; the Cistercian Abbey of Jerpoint in Kilkenny was begun in 1180; Molana Abbey, in Waterford, was built for the Augustinians on the site of a very old church; and finally Knockmoy Abbey in Galway, famous for its fourteenth century frescoes, was begun in 1189. We must remember that every one of these represents, and by its variations of style indicates, an unbroken life through several centuries. The death-knell of the old life of the abbeys and priories, in Ireland as in England, was struck in the year 1537 by the law which declared their lands forfeited to the crown; as the result of the religious controversies of the beginning of the sixteenth century.

XIII.

The triumph of feudalism.

A.D. 1603-1660.

The confiscation of the abbey lands, as the result of religious controversy, closed an epoch of ecclesiastical life in Ireland, which we cannot look back on without great regret for the noble and beautiful qualities it brought forth in such abundance. There is a perennial charm and fascination in the quiet life of the old religious houses—in the world, yet not of the world—which appeals to aesthetic and moral elements in our minds in equal degree. From their lovely churches and chapter-houses the spirits of the old monks invite us to join them in an unworldly peace on earth, a renewal of the golden age, a life full of aspiration and self-forgetfulness, with all the burdens of egotism laid aside.

Yet after all is said, we can hardly fail to see that out of the spoliation and scattering of the religious orders much good came. There was a danger that, like the older indigenous schools which they supplanted, these later foundations might divide the nation in two, all things within their consecrated walls being deemed holy, while all without was unregenerate, given up to wrath. A barrier of feelings and hopes thus springing up, tends to harden from year to year, till at last we have a religious caste grown proud and arrogant, and losing all trace of the spiritual fervor which is its sole reason for being.



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The evils which surround a wealthy church are great and easily to be understood, nor need we lay stress on them. There is, indeed, cause for wonder in the spectacle of the followers of him “who had not where to lay his head” become, in the Middle Ages, the greatest owners of land in Europe; and we can see how temptations and abuses without number might and did often arise from this very fact. Ambition, the desire of wealth, the mere love of ease, led many to profess a religious life who had never passed through that transformation of will and understanding which is the essence of religion. The very purpose of religion was forgotten, or allowed to be hidden away under things excellent in themselves, yet not essential; and difference of view about these unessential things led to fierce and bitter controversy, and later to open strife and war.

We take religion, in its human aspect, to mean the growth of a new and wider consciousness above the keen, self-assertive consciousness of the individual; a superseding of the personal by the humane; a change from egotism to a more universal understanding; so that each shall act, not in order to gain an advantage over others, but rather to attain the greatest good for himself and others equally; that one shall not dominate another for his own profit, but shall rather seek to draw forth in that other whatever is best and truest, so that both may find their finest growth. Carried far enough, this principle, which makes one’s neighbor a second self, will bring to light in us the common soul, the common life that has tacitly worked in all human intercourse from the beginning. Individual consciousness is in no way effaced; something new, wider and more humane, something universal, is added to it from above; something consciously common to all souls. And through the inspiration of that larger soul, the individual life for the first time comes to its true power—a power which is held by all pure souls in common.

We can see that something like this was the original inspiration of the religious orders. Their very name of Friars or Brothers speaks of the ideal of a common life above egotism. They sought a new birth through the death of selfishness, through self-sacrifice and renunciation. All their life in common was a symbol of the single soul inspiring them, the very form of their churches bearing testimony to their devotion. More than that, the beauty and inspiration which still radiate from the old abbey buildings show how often and in how large a degree that ideal was actually attained.

Nevertheless we can very well see how the possession of large wealth and costly offerings might be a hindrance to that spirit, fanning back to life the smouldering fires of desire. We can see even more clearly that the division between the secular and the religious life would tend to raise a moral barrier, hardening that very sense of separation which the humane and universal consciousness seeks to kill. Finally,



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we should see what the world has often seen: the disciples of the Nazarene dwelling in palaces, and vying with princes in the splendor of their retinues. This is hardly the way to make real the teaching of "the kingdom not of this world." This world, in the meaning of that saying, is the old world of egotism, of self-assertion, of selfish rivalry, of the sense of separation. The kingdom is that very realm of humane and universal consciousness added from above, the sense of the one soul common to all men and working through all men, whether they know it or not.

We can, therefore, see that the confiscation of the monasteries, and even the persecution of the religious orders, might be the cause of lasting spiritual good; it was like the opening of granaries and the scattering of grain abroad over the fields. The religious force, instead of drawing men out of the world, thenceforth was compelled to work among all men, not creating beautiful abbeys but transforming common lives. Persecution was the safeguard of sincerity, the fire of purification, from which men's spirits came forth pure gold. Among all nations of the world, Ireland has long held the first place for pure morals, especially in the relations of sex; and this is increasingly true of those provinces where the old indigenous element is most firmly established. We may affirm that the spiritualizing of religious feeling through persecution has had its share in bringing this admirable result, working, as it did, on a race which has ever held a high ideal of purity.

Thus out of evil comes good; out of oppression, rapacity and confiscation grow pure unselfishness, an unworldly ideal, a sense of the invisible realm. We shall presently see the same forces of rapacity and avarice sowing the seeds for a not less excellent harvest in the world of civil life.

The principle of feudalism, though introduced by the first Norman adventurers in the twelfth century, did not gain legal recognition over the whole country until the seventeenth. The old communal tenure of the Brehon law was gradually superseded, so that, instead of innumerable tribal territories with elected chiefs, there grew up a system of estates, where the land was owned by one man and tilled by others. The germ of this tenure was the right of private taxation over certain districts, granted by the Norman duke to his barons and warriors as the reward for their help in battle. Feudal land tenure never was, and never pretended to be, a contract between cultivator and landowner for their mutual benefit. It was rather the right to prey on the farmer, assigned to the landowner by the king, and paid for in past or present services to the king. In other words, the head of the Norman army invited his officers to help themselves to a share of the cattle and crops over certain districts of England, and promised to aid them in securing their plunder, in case the Saxon cultivator was rash enough to resist. The baronial order presently ceased to render any real service to their duke, beyond upholding him that he might uphold them. But there was no such surcease for the Saxon cultivator. The share of his cattle and crops which he was

compelled to give up to the Norman baron became more rigidly defined, more strictly exacted, with every succeeding century, and the whole civil state of England was built up on this principle.



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The baronial order assembled at Runnymede to force the hand of the king. From that time forward their power increased, while the king's power waned. But there was no Runnymede for the Saxon cultivator. He continued, as to this day he continues, to pay the share of his cattle and crops to the Norman baron or his successor, in return for services—no longer rendered—to the king. The whole civil state of England, therefore, depends on the principle of private taxation; the Norman barons and their successors receiving a share of the cattle and crops of the whole country, year after year, generation after generation, century after century, as payment for services long become purely imaginary, and even in the beginning rendered not to the cultivator who was taxed, but to the head of the armed invaders, who stood ready to enforce the payment. The Constitution of England embodies this very principle even now, in the twentieth century. Two of the three Estates,—King, Lords and Commons,—in whom the law-making power is vested, represent the Norman conquest, while even the third, still called the Lower House, boasts of being “an assembly of gentlemen,” that is, of those who possess the right of private taxation of land, the right to claim a share of the cattle and crops of the whole country without giving anything at all in return.

This is the system which English influence slowly introduced into Ireland, and with the reign of the first Stuarts the change was practically complete, guaranteed by law, and enforced by armed power. The tribesmen were now tenants of their former elected chief, in whom the ownership of the tribal land was invested; the right of privately taxing the tribesmen was guaranteed to the chief by law, and a share of all cattle and crops was his by legal right, not as head of the tribe, but as owner of the land, with power to dispossess the tribesmen if they failed to pay his tax.

But very many districts had long before this come under the dominion of Norman adventurers, like the De Courcys, the De Lacys, and the rest, of whose coming we have told. They also enjoyed the right of private taxation over the districts under their dominion, and, naturally, had power to assign this right to others,—not only to their heirs, but to their creditors,—or even simply to sell the right of taxing a certain district to the highest bidder in open market.

The tribal warfare of the Middle Ages had brought many of the old chiefs and Norman lords into open strife with the central power, with the result that the possessions of unsuccessful chiefs and lords were continually assigned by the law-courts to those who stood on the side of the central power, the right to tax certain districts thus changing hands indefinitely. The law-courts thus came into possession of a very potent weapon, whether for rewarding the friends or punishing the enemies of the central power, or simply for the payment of personal and partisan favors.



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During the reign of the first Stuarts the full significance of this weapon seems to have been grasped. We see an unlimited traffic in the right to tax; estates confiscated and assigned to time-serving officials, and endless abuses arising from the corruption of the courts, the judges being appointed by the very persons who were presently to invoke the law to their own profit. The tribal system was submerged, and the time of uncertainty was taken advantage of to introduce unlimited abuses, to assign to adventurers a fat share of other men's goods, to create a class legally owning the land, and entitled, in virtue of that ownership, to a share of the cattle and crops which they had done nothing to produce.

The Stuarts were at this very time sowing the seeds of civil war in England by the introduction of like abuses, the story of which has been repeatedly told; and we are all familiar with the history of the great uprising which was thereby provoked, to the temporary eclipse of the power of the crown. The story of the like uprising at the same epoch, and from kindred causes, in Ireland, is much more obscure, but equally worth recording, and to this uprising we may now turn.

Its moral causes we have already spoken of. There was, first, the confiscation of the abbey lands, and the transfer of church revenues and buildings to Anglican clergy—clergy, that is, who recognized the sovereign of England as the head of the church. This double confiscation touched the well-springs of intense animosity, the dispossessed abbots using all the influences of their order in foreign lands to bring about their re-installation, while the controversy as to the headship of the church aroused all the fierce and warring passions that had been raging on the Continent since the beginning of the sixteenth century.

There were, besides, the griefs of the dispossessed chieftains, whose tribal lands had been given to others. Chief among these was the famous house of O'Neill, the descendants of Nial, the old pagan monarch whose wars are thought to have brought the captive of Slemish Mountain to Ireland. The O'Neills, like their neighbors the O'Donnells, descendants of Domnall, had been one of the great forces of tribal strife for eighty generations, and they now saw their lands confiscated and given over to strangers. But they were only representatives of a feeling which was universal; an indignant opposition to arbitrary and tyrannous expropriation.

The head of the O'Neills had made his peace with the Tudors on the very day Queen Elizabeth died, and the tribal lands had been guaranteed to him in perpetuity. But within four years plots were set on foot by the central authorities, possibly acting in good faith, to dispossess him and the chief of the O'Donnells on a charge of treason; and in 1607 both fled to the Continent. Their example was followed by numberless others, and the more restless and combative spirits among the tribesmen, who preferred fighting to the tilling of their fields, entered the continental armies in large numbers.



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When the chiefs of the north fled to the Continent, their lands were held to have reverted to the crown; and not only was the right to tax the produce of these lands assigned to adherents of the central power, but numbers of farmers from the Scottish lowlands, and in lesser degree from England, were brought over and settled on the old tribal territory. The tribesmen, with their cattle, were driven to less fertile districts, and the valleys were tilled by the transplanted farmers of Scotland. This was the Plantation of Ulster, of 1611,—four years after the flight of O'Neill and O'Donnell. The religious controversies of Scotland were thereby introduced into Ireland, so that there were three parties now in conflict—the old indigenous church, dispossessed of revenues and buildings, and even of civil rights; the Anglicans who had received these revenues and buildings, and, lastly, the Dissenters—Presbyterians and Puritans—equally opposed to both the former.

The struggle between the king and Parliament of England now found an echo in Ireland, the Anglican party representing the king, while the Scottish and English newcomers sympathized with the Parliament. A cross-fire of interests and animosities was thus aroused, which greatly complicated the first elements of strife. The Parliament at Dublin was in the hands of the Puritan party, and was in no sense representative of the other elements of the country. There was a Puritan army of about ten thousand, as a garrison of defence for the Puritan newcomers in Ulster, and there were abundant materials of an opposing national army in the tribal warriors both at home and on the Continent.

These national materials were presently drawn together by the head of the O'Neills, known to history as Owen Roe, an admirable leader and a most accomplished man, who wrote and spoke Latin, Spanish, French and English, as well as his mother-tongue. Owen Roe O'Neill had won renown on many continental battlefields, and was admirably fitted by genius and training to lead a national party, not only in council but in the field. The nucleus of his army he established in Tyrone, gaining numbers of recruits whom he rapidly turned into excellent soldiers.

This took place at the end of 1641 and the beginning of 1642, and the other forces of the country were organized about the same time. The lines of difference between the Anglican and Catholic parties were at this time very lightly drawn, and the Norman lords found themselves able to co-operate with the Catholic bishops in forming a General Assembly at Kells, which straightway set itself to frame a Constitution for the country.



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The Norman lords had meanwhile assembled and organized their retainers, so that there were now three armies in Ireland: the garrison of the Scottish settlers under Monroe, strongly in sympathy with the Puritans; the tribal army under Owen Roe O'Neill; and the army of the Norman lords. The General Assembly outlined a system of parliamentary representation in which the Lords and Commons were to form a single House, the latter, two hundred and twenty-six in number, representing all the important cities and towns. A supreme Cabinet was to be formed, composed of six members for each of the four provinces, twenty-four in all, who might be lords spiritual or temporal, or commoners, according to the choice of the Parliament. This Cabinet, thus selected from the whole Parliament, was the responsible executive of the country; and under the Supreme Council a series of Provincial Councils and County Councils were to be formed along the same lines.

[Illustration: Donegal Castle.]

This plan was adopted at a general meeting of all the influential forces of the country, which assembled in May at Kilkenny, where many Parliaments had sat during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Writs were issued for elections under the new Constitution, and the date of the first assembly of the new Parliament was fixed for October. The new national body enjoyed abundant revenues, and no small state marked its deliberations in Kilkenny. We read of an endless series of illuminations, receptions, banquets and balls,—the whole of the Norman nobility of Leinster lavishing their great wealth in magnificent display. The Supreme Council journeyed in state from Kilkenny to Wexford, from Wexford to Waterford, from Waterford to Limerick and Galway, surrounded by hundreds of horsemen with drawn swords, and accompanied by an army of officials. We hear of “civil and military representations of comedies and stage plays, feasts and banquets, and palate-enticing dishes.”

The General Assembly, duly elected, finally met on October 23, 1642, at Kilkenny. On the same day was fought the battle of Edgehill, between the king of England and the forces of the English Parliament. This battle was the signal for division of counsels in the new Assembly. The Norman lords of Leinster, who stood on the ground of feudalism, and lived under the shadow of royal authority, were strongly drawn to take the side of the king against the English Parliament, and overtures of negotiation were made, which came near gaining a recognition and legalization of the General Assembly by the English Crown.

While the leaders at Kilkenny were being drawn towards the royalists of England, Owen Roe O'Neill was successfully holding Ulster against the Puritan forces under Monroe and Leslie, with their headquarters at Carrickfergus. Thus matters went on till the autumn of 1643, when we find him inflicting a serious defeat on the English army under Monk and Moore at Portlester in Meath, in which Moore was killed and his forces driven back within the walls of Drogheda.



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The General Assembly continued to exercise sovereign authority at Kilkenny, collecting revenues, maintaining courts of justice in the provinces, and keeping several armies in the field, most effective of which was undoubtedly that of Owen Roe O'Neill. We find matters still in this condition three years later, in May, 1646, when Monroe and the Scottish forces prepared to inaugurate an offensive campaign from their base at Carrickfergus. General Robert Monroe had about seven thousand men at Carrickfergus; his brother George had five hundred at Coleraine; while there was a Scottish army at Derry, numbering about two thousand men. It was decided to converge these three forces on Clones, in Monaghan, and thence to proceed southwards against the government of the General Assembly, then centered at Limerick. Clones was sixty miles from Derry, and rather more from Coleraine and Carrickfergus, the two other points of departure.

Owen Roe O'Neill was then at Cavan, fourteen miles south of Clones, with five thousand foot and five hundred horse, all "good, hopeful men," to use his own words. General Robert Monroe, starting from Carrickfergus, and marching by Lisburn and Armagh, expected to reach Glasslough, some sixteen miles from Clones, on June 5th. By a forced march from Cavan, Owen Roe O'Neill reached Glasslough a day earlier, and marching along the northern Blackwater, pitched his camp on the north bank of the river. Here he was directly in the line between the two Monroes, who could only join their forces after dislodging him; and Robert Monroe, who by that time had reached Armagh, saw that it would be necessary to give battle without delay if the much smaller forces from the north were not to be cut off.

Robert Monroe began a movement northwards towards Owen Roe's position at dawn on June 5th, and presently reached the Blackwater, to find himself face to face with Owen Roe's army across the river. The two forces kept parallel with each other for some time, till Robert Monroe finally forded the Blackwater at Caledon, Owen Roe then retiring in the direction of the current, which here flows north. Owen Roe, in his movement of withdrawal, brought his army through a narrow pass, which he left in charge of one of his best infantry regiments, with orders to hold it only so long as the enemy could be safely harassed, meanwhile carrying his main body back to the hill of Knocknacloy, the position he had chosen from the first for the battle, and to gain which he had up to this time been manoeuvring.

At Knocknacloy he had the center of his army protected by the hill, the right by a marsh, and the left by the river, so that, a flanking movement on Monroe's part being impossible, the Scottish general was forced to make a frontal attack. Under cover of the rearguard action at the pass, which caused both delay and confusion to Monroe's army, Owen Roe formed his men in order of battle. His first line was of four columns, with considerable spaces between them; his cavalry was on the right and left wings, behind this first line; while three columns more were drawn up some distance farther back, behind the openings in the front line, and forming the reserve. We should remember

that not only was Owen Roe's army outnumbered by Monroe's, but also that Owen Roe had no artillery, while Monroe was well supplied with guns.



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Meanwhile Monroe's army came into touch with Owen Roe's force, and the Scottish general opened fire with guns and muskets, to which the muskets of Owen Roe as vigorously replied. The Scottish artillery was planted on a hillock a quarter-mile from Owen Roe's center, and under cover of its fire an infantry charge was attempted, which was brilliantly repulsed by the pikemen of Owen Roe's army. A second attack was made by the Scottish cavalry, who tried to ford the river, and thus turn the left flank of the Irish army, but they were met and routed by the Irish horse. This was about six in the evening, and the sun, hanging low in the sky, fell full in the faces of the Scottish troops. Owen Roe promptly followed up the rout of the Scottish horse by an advance, making a sweeping movement from right to left, and thereby forcing Monroe towards the junction of two streams, where he had no space to move. At this point Owen Roe's army received a notable accession of strength in the form of four squadrons of cavalry, sent earlier in the day to guard against the possible approach of George Monroe from Coleraine.

At a signal from Owen Roe, his army advanced upon Monroe's force, to be met by a charge of the Scottish cavalry, instantly replied to by a charge of the Irish cavalry through the three open spaces in the front infantry line of Owen Roe's army. Monroe's first line was broken, and the Irish pikemen, the equivalent of a bayonet charge, steadily forced him backwards. It was a fierce struggle, hand to hand, eye to eye, and blade to blade. The order of Owen Roe's advance was admirably preserved, while the Scottish and English forces were in confusion, already broken and crowded into a narrow and constricted space between the two rivers. Finally the advancing Irish army reached and stormed the hillock where Monroe's artillery was placed, and victory was palpably won. The defeat of the Scottish and English army became an utter rout, and when the sun set more than three thousand of them lay dead on the field.

It is almost incredible that the Irish losses were only seventy, yet such is the number recorded, while not only was the opposing army utterly defeated and dispersed, but Monroe's whole artillery, his tents and baggage, fifteen hundred horses, twenty stand of colors, two months' provisions and numbers of prisoners of war fell into the hands of Owen Roe; while, as a result of the battle, the two auxiliary forces were forced to retreat and take refuge in Coleraine and Derry, General Robert Monroe escaping meanwhile to Carrickfergus. It is only just to him to say that our best accounts of the battle come from officers in Monroe's army, Owen Roe contenting himself with the merest outline of the result gained, but saying nothing of the consummate generalship that gained it.



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For the next two years we see Owen Roe O'Neill holding the great central plain, the west and most of the north of Ireland against the armies of the English Parliamentarians and Royalists alike, and gaining victory after victory, generally against superior numbers, better armed and better equipped. We find him time after time almost betrayed by the Supreme Council, in which the Norman lords of Leinster, perpetually anxious for their own feudal estates, were ready to treat with whichever of the English parties was for the moment victorious, hoping that, whatever might be the outcome of the great English struggle, they themselves might be gainers. At this time they were in possession of many of the abbey lands, and there was perpetual friction between them and the ecclesiastics, their co-religionists, who had been driven from these same lands, so that the Norman landowners were the element of fatal weakness throughout this whole movement, willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike. While praying for the final defeat of the English parliamentary forces, they dreaded to see this defeat brought about by Owen Roe O'Neill, in whom they saw the representative of the old tribal ownership of Gaelic times, a return to which would mean their own extinction.

Matters went so far that the Supreme Council, representing chiefly these Norman lords, had practically betrayed its trust to the Royalist party in England, and would have completed that betrayal had not the beheading of King Charles signaled the triumph of the Parliamentarians. Even then the Norman lords hoped for the Restoration, and strove in every way to undermine the authority of their own general, Owen Roe O'Neill, who was almost forced to enter into an alliance with the Puritans by the treachery of the Norman lords. It is of the greatest interest to find Monroe writing thus to Owen Roe in August, 1649: "By my own extraction, I have an interest in the Irish nation. I know how your lands have been taken, and your people made hewers of wood and drawers of water. If an Irishman can be a scourge to his own nation, the English will give him fair words but keep him from all trust, that they may destroy him when they have served themselves by him."

On November 6, 1649, this great general died after a brief illness, having for seven years led his armies to constant victory, while the Norman lords, who were in name his allies, were secretly plotting against him for their own profit. Yet so strong and dominant was his genius that he overcame not only the forces of his foes but the treacheries of his friends, and his last days saw him at one with the Normans, while the forces of the Parliamentarians in Ireland were calling on him for help.



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We see, therefore, that for full eight years, from the beginning of 1642 to the close of 1649, Ireland had an independent national government, with a regularly elected Representative Assembly, and a central authority, the Supreme Council, appointed by that Assembly, with judges going circuit and holding their courts regularly, while the Supreme Council held a state of almost regal magnificence, and kept several armies continuously in the field. While Owen Roe O'Neill lived, that part of the army under his command was able not only to secure an unbroken series of victories for itself, but also to retrieve the defeats suffered by less competent commanders, so that at his death he was at the summit of power and fame. If regret were ever profitable, we might well regret that he did not follow the example of the great English commander, his contemporary, and declare himself Lord Protector of Ireland, with despotic power.

After his death, the work he had done so well was all undone again, in part by treachery, in part by the victories of Oliver Cromwell. Yet ten years after the Lord Protector's arrival in Ireland, his own work was undone not less completely, and the Restoration saw once more enthroned every principle against which Cromwell had so stubbornly contended.

XIV.

The Jacobite wars.

A.D. 1660-1750.

The Restoration saw Cromwell's work completely undone; nor did the class which helped him to his victories again rise above the surface. The genius of the Stuarts was already sowing the seeds of new revolutions; but the struggle was presently to be fought out, not between the king and the people, but between the king and the more liberal or more ambitious elements of the baronial class, who saw in the despotic aspirations of the Stuarts a menace to their own power.

These liberal elements in England selected as their champion Prince William of Nassau, before whose coming the English king found it expedient to fly to France, seeking and finding a friend in that apostle of absolutism, Louis XIV. We have already seen how the interests of the feudal lords of Ireland, with the old Norman families as their core, drew them towards the Stuarts. The divine right of the landowner depended, as we saw, on the divine right of kings; so that they naturally gravitated towards the Stuarts, and drew their tenants and retainers after them. Thus a considerable part of Ireland was enlisted on the side of James II, and shared the misfortunes which presently overtook him—or in truth did not overtake him, as the valiant gentleman outran them and escaped. Nothing is more firmly fixed in the memories of the whole Irish people than a good-natured contempt for this runaway English king, whose cause they were induced by the feudal

lords to espouse. We shall follow the account of an officer in the Jacobite army in narrating the events of the campaigns that ensued.



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James, having gained courage and funds from his sojourn at the court of Louis XIV, presently made his appearance in Ireland, relying on the support of the feudal lords. He landed at Kinsale, in Cork, on March 12, 1688, according to the Old Style, and reached Dublin twelve days later, warmly welcomed by Lord and Lady Tyrconnell. The only place in the country which strongly declared for William was the walled city of Derry, whence we have seen the Puritan forces issuing during the wars of the preceding generation. James, this officer says, went north to Derry, in spite of the bitterness of the season, "in order to preserve his Protestant subjects there from the ill-treatment which he apprehended they might receive from the Irish," and was mightily surprised when the gates were shut in his face and the citizens opened fire upon him from the walls.

[Illustration: Tullymore Park, Co. Down.]

James withdrew immediately to Dublin, assembled a Parliament there, and spent several months in vain discussions, not even finding courage to repeal the penal laws which Queen Elizabeth had passed against all who refused to recognize her as the head of the church. James was already embarked on a career of duplicity, professing great love for Ireland, yet fearing to carry out his professions lest he might arouse animosity in England, and so close the door against his hoped-for return.

Enniskillen, on an island in Lough Erne, dominated by a strong castle, was, like Derry, a settlement of Scottish and English colonists brought over by the first of the Stuarts. These colonists were up in arms against the grandson of their first patron, and had successfully attacked his forces which were besieging Derry. James, therefore, sent a small body of troops against them; but the expedition ended in an ignominious rout rather than a battle, for the Jacobite army seems hardly to have struck a blow. The Irish leader, Lord Mountcashel, who manfully stood his ground in the general panic, was wounded and taken prisoner.

The armies of James, meanwhile, made no headway against the courageous and determined defenders of Derry, where the siege was degenerating into a blockade, the scanty rations and sickness of the besieged being a far more formidable danger than the attacks of the besiegers. James even weakened the attacking forces by withdrawing a part of the troops to Dublin, being resolved at all risks to protect himself.

So devoid of resolution and foresight was James that we only find him taking means to raise an army when Schomberg, the able lieutenant of William, was about to invade the north of Ireland. Schomberg landed at Bangor in Down in August, 1689, and marched south towards Drogheda, but finding that James was there before him, he withdrew and established a strongly fortified camp near Dundalk. James advanced to a point about seven miles from Schomberg, and there entrenched himself in turn, and so the two armies remained; as one of Schomberg's officers says, "our General would not risk anything, nor King James venture anything." The long delay was very fatal to

Schomberg's army, his losses by sickness and disease being more than six thousand men.



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Early in November, as winter was already making itself felt, James decided to withdraw to Dublin; as our narrator says, “the young commanders were in some haste to return to the capital, where the ladies expected them with great impatience; so that King James, being once more persuaded to disband the new levies and raising his camp a little of the soonest, dispersed his men too early into winter quarters, having spent that campaign without any advantage, vainly expecting that his Protestant subjects of England who were in the camp of Schomberg would come over to him. And now the winter season, which should be employed in serious consultations, and making the necessary preparations for the ensuing campaign, was idly spent in revels, in gaming, and other debauches unfit for a Catholic court. But warlike Schomberg, who, after the retreat of James, had leisure to remove his sickly soldiers, to bury the dead, and put the few men that remained alive and were healthy into winter quarters of refreshment, took the field early in spring, before Tyrconnell was awake, and reduced the castle of Charlemont, the only place that held for James in Ulster, which was lost for want of provisions; and the concerns of the unfortunate James were ill-managed by those whom he entrusted with the administration of public affairs.”

We come thus to the spring of 1690. Derry was still holding out valiantly against the horrors of famine and sickness, the blockade being maintained, though nothing like a determined storm was attempted. A little of the courage shown by the apprentices of Derry, had he possessed it, might have revived the drooping fortunes of the fugitive English king. It seems, however, that even Schomberg’s withdrawal to Carrickfergus failed to arouse him to more vigorous and valiant measures. It is clear that he was ready to abandon his Irish allies, hoping by their betrayal to gain favor with his “subjects in England,” whom he confidently expected to recall him, as they had recalled his brother Charles thirty years before. James found an able lieutenant in Tyrconnell, who thoroughly entered into his master’s schemes of duplicity; and it is fairly clear that these two worthies, had occasion offered, would have betrayed each other with a perfectly good grace.

Thus matters dragged on quite indecisively until June, 1690, when King William landed at Carrickfergus with a mixed force of English, Scottish, Dutch, Danish, Swedish and German troops, and joined his forces to the remnant of Schomberg’s army. James, as we saw, had disbanded his army on breaking up his camp in the previous autumn, and had made no effective effort to get a new army together. Nor could he have used a strong army, had he possessed one. Nevertheless James marched north with such troops as were available, leaving Dublin on June 16th. He took up a strong position on the borders of Ulster and Leinster, thus blocking William’s way south to the capital, only to abandon it again on the news of William’s approach, when he retired to Drogheda and encamped there. He thus gave the whole advantage of initiative into the hands of his opponent, a brave man and a skillful general.



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James seems to have hoped that William's army would be mowed down by disease, as Schomberg's had been in the preceding campaign. And there is reason to believe that Tyrconnell, foreseeing the defeat of James, wished to avoid any serious fighting, which would be an obstacle in his way when he sought to patch up a peace with the victor and make terms for himself. But his opponent was inspired by a very different temper, and William's army advanced steadily southwards, to find James encamped on the southern bank of the Boyne.

There were several fords by which William's army would have to cross on its way south. But James was such an incapable general that he did not even throw up trenches to defend the fords. William's army arrived and encamped on the north bank of the river, and the next day, June 30th, was employed in an artillery duel between the two armies, when considerable injury was inflicted on William's forces, although he was far stronger in artillery than his opponent. During that night, James, already certain of defeat, sent away most of his artillery to Dublin, leaving only six guns with his army on the Boyne.

It seems tolerably certain that, when the battle began again next day, William's army numbered between forty-five and fifty thousand, with the usual proportion of cavalry,—probably a tenth of the whole. James, on the other hand, had from twenty to twenty-five thousand men, about a tenth of them, probably, being mounted; he had, by his own fault, only six guns against about fifty in William's batteries. William's line of battle was formed, as usual, with the infantry in the center and the cavalry on the wings. He gave the elder Schomberg command of the center, while Schomberg's son, with the cavalry of the right wing, was sent four or five miles up the river to Slane, to cross there and turn the left flank of the opposing army. William himself led the cavalry on the left wing, and later on in the battle, descending the river, crossed at a lower ford. He could thus attack the right flank of his opponent; the infantry composing the center of his army advancing, meanwhile, under cover of a heavy artillery fire, and forcing the fords of the Boyne.

The river is shallow here, and in the middle of summer the water is nowhere too deep for wading, so that it was a very slight protection to the army of James. A better general would at least have chosen a stronger position, and one which would have given him some manifest advantage. Such positions were to be found all along the road by which William had advanced from Carrickfergus. The country on both sides of the Boyne is flat; rolling meadows with the shallow river dividing them—a country giving every opportunity to cavalry.

William's right, under the younger Schomberg, made several unsuccessful attempts to cross the river at Slane, being repeatedly beaten back by Arthur O'Neill's horse. Finally, however, the way was cleared for him by a vigorous cannonade, to which O'Neill, having no cannon, was unable to reply, and William's right wing thus forced the passage of the Boyne.



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William's center now advanced, and began the passage of the river, under cover of a heavy artillery fire. Every foot of the advance was stubbornly contested, and such headway was made by the Irish troops that Schomberg's bodyguard was scattered or cut to pieces, and he himself was slain. The center of William's army was undoubtedly being beaten back, when, crossing lower down with eighteen squadrons of cavalry, he fiercely attacked the right flank of the Irish army and thus turned the possibility of defeat into certain victory. That the Irish troops, although outnumbered two to one and led by a coward, fought valiantly, is admitted on all sides. They charged and re-charged ten times in succession, and only gave way at last under pressure of greatly superior numbers. The retreat of the Irish army was orderly,—the more so, doubtless, because the former king of England was no longer among them, having most valiantly fled to Dublin, and thence to Kinsale, where he took ship for France, leaving behind him a reputation quite singular in the annals of Ireland.

Within a week after the battle, the Irish army, which had preserved order and discipline even in the face of the flight of James, occupied Limerick, and made preparations to hold that strong position, with the untouched resources of the western province behind them, and the hope, unshaken by their rude experience, that the runaway king might reinforce them by sea. Through all the events that followed, presently to be narrated, it must be understood that Tyrconnell was steadily seeking to undermine the resolution of the Irish army, hoping the sooner to make his peace with King William, to secure his Irish estates, and, very possibly, be appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, under the new king.

William meanwhile brought his army southwards, being welcomed to Dublin by the large English element there, and presently continued his march to Waterford, which was surrendered to him, as was alleged, by Tyrconnell's orders. He also reduced Kilkenny, to which Tyrconnell had failed to send reinforcements, though repeatedly appealed to by its commander. About this time, on July 28th or a day or two later, the brave garrison of Derry was relieved by some of William's ships, which broke the line of blockade across the river and brought abundant provisions to the emaciated defenders.

A section of William's army under Douglas was sent to take Athlone, the strong fortress which guarded the ford, and later the bridge across the Shannon—the high road from Leinster to the western province of Connacht, beyond the river. Douglas, after a fierce attack lasting seven days, was compelled to retreat again to the main army encamped at Waterford. The French auxiliaries under Lauzun, who had not hitherto greatly distinguished themselves for valor, losing less than a score of men at the Boyne, now deserted Limerick and retreated to Galway, taking with them, if the fugitive king may be credited, a great quantity of ammunition from the fortress of Limerick.



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[Illustration: Thormond Bridge, Limerick.]

Finally, on August 9th, William's army appeared before Limerick, and the famous siege began. Tyrconnell signalized himself by deserting the fords over the Shannon and departing to Galway, declaring that the town would certainly surrender within a week. The city, however, was of a different opinion. The garrison, under Sarsfield, made vigorous preparation for a defence, and a party under Sarsfield himself cut off one of William's convoys from Dublin, destroying the siege-train which was being brought for the attack on the city. William's cavalry, taking advantage of Tyrconnell's retreat, crossed the ford of the Shannon to complete the investment of the city on that side, but they presently returned, having done nothing effective.

We hear of more attempts by Tyrconnell to undermine the resolution of the army, and of attacks by William's force, which gave him possession of the outworks, so that he was able presently to begin cannonading the walls, to make a breach for an assault. The officer in the Irish army whom we have already quoted, gives this account of the siege: "Never was a town better attacked and better defended than the city of Limerick. William left nothing unattempted that the art of war, the skill of a great captain and the valor of veteran soldiers could put in execution to gain the place; and the Irish omitted nothing that courage and constancy could practice to defend it. The continual assaults of the one and the frequent sallies of the other consumed a great many brave men both of the army and the garrison. On the nineteenth day, William, after fighting for every inch of ground he gained, having made a large breach in the wall, gave a general assault which lasted for three hours; and though his men mounted the breach, and some even entered the town, they were gallantly repulsed and forced to retire with considerable loss. William, resolving to renew the assault next day, could not persuade his men to advance, though he offered to lead them in person. Whereupon, all in a rage, he left the camp, and never stopped till he came to Waterford, where he took shipping for England; his army in the meantime retiring by night from Limerick."

During this first siege of Limerick the garrison numbered some twenty thousand, by no means well armed. William's besieging army was about forty thousand, with forty cannon and mortars. His loss was between three and four thousand, while the loss of the defenders was about half that number.

William, presently arriving in England, sent reinforcements to his generals in Ireland, under Lord Churchill, afterwards famous as the Duke of Marlborough. Tyrconnell had meantime followed his runaway king to France, as was involved in a maze of contradictory designs, the one clear principle of which was the future advantage of Tyrconnell. Louis XIV, who had reasons of his own for wishing to keep the armies of William locked up in Ireland, was altogether willing



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to advise and help a continuance of hostilities in that country. James seems to have recognized his incapacity too clearly to attempt anything definite, or, what is more probable, was too irresolute by nature even to determine to give up the fight. Tyrconnell himself sincerely wished to make his peace with William, so that he might once more enjoy the revenues of his estates. The Irish army was thoroughly determined to hold out to the end.

With these conflicting desires and designs, no single-hearted and resolute action was possible. Matters seem to have drifted till about January, 1691, when Tyrconnell returned; "but he brought with him no soldiers, very few arms, little provision and no money." A month later a messenger came direct to Sarsfield, then with the army at Galway, from Louis XIV, promising reinforcements under the renowned soldier Saint Ruth. This letter to a great extent revealed the double part Tyrconnell had been playing at the French court, and did much to undermine his credit with the better elements in the Irish army.

The French fleet finally arrived at Limerick in May, 1691, under Saint Ruth, bringing a considerable quantity of provisions for the Irish army; but it is doubtful whether this arrival added any real element of strength to the army. The Irish army, soon after this, was assembled at Athlone, to defend the passage of the Shannon. Much vigorous fighting took place, but Ginkell, William's general, finally captured that important fortress in June. The road to Galway was now open, and Ginkell's army prepared to march on that important city, the strongest place in Connacht. Saint Ruth prepared to resist their approach, fixing his camp at Aughrim, The Hill of the Horses, some eighteen miles from Athlone and thirty-five from Galway. We may once more tell the story in the words of an eye-witness:

"Aughrim was then a ruined town, and the castle was not much better, situated in a bottom on the north side of the hill, where the Irish army encamped. The direct way from Ballinasloe was close by the castle, but there was another way about, on the south-east side of the hill. The rest of the ground fronting the camp was a marsh, passable only for foot. The army of Ginkell appeared in sight of Aughrim on July 12th. The Irish army, composed of about ten thousand foot, two thousand men-at-arms, and as many light horse, was soon drawn up by Saint Ruth in two lines; the cavalry on both wings flanking the foot; and having placed Chevalier de Tesse on the right wing of the horse, and Sarsfield on the left, and giving their several posts to the rest of the chief commanders, Saint Ruth obliged himself to no certain place, but rode constantly from one side to another to give the necessary orders where he saw occasion. Ginkell being now come up at so near a distance that his guns and other battering engines might do execution, he ordered them to be discharged, and as he had a vast number of them he made them play incessantly



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on the Irish army, hoping by that means to force them from the hill, which was of great advantage. But the Irish, encouraged by the presence and conduct of Saint Ruth, kept their ground and beat the English as often as they advanced towards them. The fight continued from noon till sunset, the Irish foot having still the better of the enemy; and Saint Ruth, observing the advantage of his side, and that the enemy's foot were much disordered, was resolved, by advancing with the cavalry, to make the victory complete, when an unlucky shot from one of the terrible new engines, hitting him in the head, made an end of his life, and took away the courage of his army. For Ginkell, observing the Irish to be in some disorder, gave a notable conjecture that the general was either killed or wounded, whereupon he commanded his army to advance. The Irish cavalry, discouraged by the death of Saint Ruth, and none of the general officers coming to head them in his place, gave back, and quitted the field. The foot who were engaged with the enemy, knowing nothing of the general's death or the retreat of the cavalry, continued fighting till they were surrounded by the whole English army; so that the most of them were cut off, and no quarter given but to a very few; the rest, by favor of the night then approaching, for Saint Ruth was killed about sunset, made their escape."

To this we may add the testimony of the runaway monarch: "The Irish behaved with great spirit. They convinced the English they had to do with men no less resolute than themselves. Never assault was made with greater fury nor sustained with greater obstinacy. The Irish foot repulsed the enemy several times, particularly in the center. They even looked upon the victory as certain.... The Irish lost four thousand men. The loss of the English was not much inferior."

The army of Ginkell, thus in possession of the key of Connacht, advanced upon its most important city, arriving before Galway a few days after the battle of Aughrim. Galway, however, was full of divided counsels, and speedily surrendered, so that Limerick alone remained. Limerick was greatly weakened, now that Galway, and with Galway the whole of Connacht to which alone Limerick could look for supplies, was in the hands of the enemy. Ginkell turned all his efforts in the direction of Limerick, appearing before the city and pitching his camp there on August 25, 1691. Beginning with the next day, our narrator tells us, "he placed his cannon and other battering engines, which played furiously night and day without intermission, reducing that famous city almost to ashes. No memorable action, however, happened till the night between September 15 and 16, when he made a bridge of boats over the Shannon, which being ready by break of day, he passed over with a considerable body of horse and foot on the Connacht side of the river, without any opposition. This so alarmed Sheldon, who commanded the cavalry at that time, that without



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staying for orders, he immediately retired to a mountain a good distance from Limerick, and marched with such precipitation and disorder, that if a hundred of the enemy's horse had charged him in the rear, they would in all likelihood have defeated his whole party, though he had near upon four thousand men-at-arms and light horse; for the man, if he was faithful, wanted either courage or conduct, and the party were altogether discouraged to be under his command. But Ginkell did not advance far, and after showing himself on that side of the bridge, returned back into his camp the same day. Yet Sheldon never rested till he came, about midnight, fifteen miles from the Shannon, and encamped in a fallow field where there was not a bit of grass to be had: as if he had designed to harass the horses by day and starve them by night.... Ginkell, understanding that the Irish horse was removed to such a distance, passed the river on the twenty-third day with the greatest part of his cavalry, and a considerable body of foot, and encamped half-way between Limerick and the Irish horse camp, whereby he hindered all communication between them and the town. On the twenty-fourth, the captains within Limerick sent out a trumpet, desiring a parley," and as a result of this parley, a treaty was ultimately signed between the two parties, Limerick was evacuated, and the war came to an end. This was early in October, 1691.

The war had, therefore, lasted nearly four years, a sufficient testimony to the military qualities of the Irish, seeing that throughout the whole period they had matched against them greatly superior numbers of the finest troops in Europe, veterans trained in continental wars, and at all points better armed and equipped than their adversaries.

What moves our unbounded admiration, however, is to see the troops displaying these qualities of valor not only without good leadership, but in face of the cowardice of the English king, and of duplicity amounting to treachery on the part of his chief adherents. Foremost among these time-servers was Talbot, Earl of Tyrconnell, whose name shows him to have sprung from one of the Norman families, and we see here the recurrence of a principle which had worked much harm in the eight years' war of the preceding generation. The Duke of Ormond, sprung from the Norman Butlers, was then the chief representative of the policy of intrigue, and many of the reverses of both these wars are to be attributed to the same race.

It is tragical to find the descendants of the old Norman barons, who at any rate were valiant fighters, descending thus to practices quite unworthy; yet we can easily understand how the fundamental injustice of the feudal principle on which they stood, not less than the boundless abuse of that already bad principle under the first Stuarts, could not fail to undermine their sense of honor and justice, preparing them at length for a policy of mere self-seeking, carried on by methods always doubtful, and often openly treacherous.



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The old tribal chieftains lived to fight, and went down fighting into the night of time. Owen Roe O'Neill, last great son of a heroic race, splendidly upheld their high tradition and ideal. No nobler figure, and few more gifted captains, can be found in the annals of those warlike centuries. The valor of Cuculain, the wisdom of Concoabar, the chivalry of Fergus—all were his, and with them a gentle and tolerant spirit in all things concerning religion, very admirable in an age when so many men, in other things not lacking in elements of nobility, were full of bitter animosity, and zealous to persecute all those who differed from them concerning things shrouded in mystery.

It may be said, indeed, that Owen Roe is in this only a type of all his countrymen, who, though they suffered centuries of persecution for a religious principle, never persecuted in return. Their conduct throughout the epoch of religious war and persecution was always tolerant and full of the sense of justice, contrasting in this, and contrasting to their honor, with the conduct of nearly every other nation in Christendom.

The history of Ireland, for the half century which followed this war, offers few salient features for description. The Catholics during all this time were under the ban of penal laws. The old tribal chiefs were gone. The Norman lords were also gone. The life of the land hardly went beyond the tilling of the fields and the gathering of the harvests. And even here, men only labored for others to enter into their labor. The right of private taxation, confirmed by law, and now forfeited by the feudal lords, was given as a reward to the adherents of the dominant party in England, and their yearly exactions were enforced by an armed garrison. The more vigorous and restless elements of our race, unable to accept these conditions of life, sailed in great numbers to the continent, and entered the armies of many European powers. It is estimated that, during the half century after the Treaty of Limerick, fully half a million Irishmen fell in the service of France alone.

XV.

Conclusion.

A.D. 1750-1901.

The Treaty of Limerick, signed when the army of Sarsfield came to terms with the besiegers, guaranteed equal liberty to all Ireland, without regard to difference of religion. There is no doubt that William of Nassau, scion of a race which had done much for liberty, a house that had felt the bitterness of oppression, would willingly have carried this treaty out in a spirit of fidelity and honor. But he was, helpless. The dominant powers in England and Ireland were too strong for him, and within the next few years the treaty was violated in letter and spirit, and the indigenous population of Ireland was disarmed, deprived of civil rights, reduced to servitude.

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It is best, wherever possible, to secure the word of witnesses who cannot be suspected of prejudice or favor. We shall do this, therefore, in describing the condition of Ireland during the eighteenth century. We find the Lord Chancellor of England declaring, during the first half of that period, that “in the eye of the law no Catholic existed in Ireland.” The Lord Chief Justice affirms the same doctrine: “It appears plain that the law does not suppose any such person to exist as an Irish Roman Catholic.” The law, therefore, as created by England for Ireland, deprived of all civil, religious, intellectual and moral rights four-fifths of the whole population, and gave them over as a lawful prey to the remaining fifth: a band of colonists and adventurers, who favored the policy of the party then dominant in England. This was the condition of the law. We shall see, presently, what was its result on the life of the nation. It should be a warning, for all time, of the dangers which arise when one nation undertakes to govern another. For it must be clearly understood that the Sovereign and Parliament of England believed that in this they stood for honor and righteousness, and had a true insight into the spirit and will of the Most High. It was, indeed, on this superior knowledge of the divine will that they based their whole policy; for what else is the meaning of legal discrimination against the holders of a certain form of faith?

[Illustration: Salmon Fishery, Galway.]

In the second half of the eighteenth century, in 1775, the Congress of the United States sent its sympathy in these words to the people of Ireland: “We know that you are not without your grievances; we sympathize with you in your distress, and we are pleased to find that the design of subjugating us has persuaded the administration to dispense to Ireland some vagrant rays of ministerial sunshine. Even the tender mercies of the government have long been cruel to you. In the rich pastures of Ireland many hungry parasites are fed, and grow strong to labor for her destruction.”

Three years later, in 1778, Benjamin Franklin wrote thus to the Irish people: “The misery and distress which your ill-fated country has been so frequently exposed to, and has so often experienced, by such a combination of rapine, treachery and violence as would have disgraced the name of government in the most arbitrary country in the world, has most sincerely affected your friends in America, and has engaged the most serious attention of Congress.”

It must be assumed that the men who drew up the Declaration of Independence knew the value of words, and that when they spoke of misery and cruelty, of rapine, treachery and distress, they meant what they said. Franklin’s letter brings us to the eve of the Volunteer Movement, of which much has been said in a spirit of warm praise, but which seems to have wrought evil rather than good. This Movement, at first initiated wholly by the Scottish and English colonists and their adherents, was later widened so as to include a certain number of the indigenous population; and an armed force was thus formed, which was able to gain certain legislative favors from England, with the result

that a Parliament sitting in Dublin from 1782 to 1799 passed laws with something more resembling justice than Ireland was accustomed to.



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But this Parliament was in no sense national or representative. It was wholly composed of the Scottish and English colonists and their friends, and the indigenous population had no voice in its deliberations. It is, therefore, the more honor to Henry Grattan that we find him addressing that Parliament thus: "I will never claim freedom for six hundred thousand of my countrymen while I leave two million or more of them in chains. Give the Catholics of Ireland their civil rights and their franchise; give them the power to return members to the Irish Parliament, and let the nation be represented." At this time, therefore, four-fifths of the nation had neither civil rights nor franchise,—because they differed from the dominant party in England as to the precedence of the disciples of Jesus.

It may be supposed, however, that, even without civil or religious rights, the fate of the people of Ireland was tolerable; that a certain measure of happiness and well-being was theirs, if not by law, at least by grace. The answer to this we shall presently see. The Volunteer Movement, as we saw, included certain elements of the indigenous population. The dominant party in England professed to see in this a grave danger, and determined to ward off that danger by sending an army to Ireland, and quartering troops on the peasants of all suspected districts. We must remember that the peasants, on whom a hostile soldiery was thus quartered, had no civil rights as a safeguard; that the authorities were everywhere bitterly hostile, full of cowardly animosity towards them.

The result we may best describe in the words of the English generals at the head of this army. We find Sir Ralph Abercrombie speaking thus: "The very disgraceful frequency of great crimes and cruelties, and the many complaints of the conduct of the troops in this kingdom—Ireland—has too unfortunately proved the army to be in a state of licentiousness that renders it formidable to everyone except the enemy." Sir Ralph Abercrombie declared himself so frightened and disgusted at the conduct of the soldiers that he threw up his commission, and refused the command of the army.

General Lake, who was sent to take his place, speaks thus: "The state of the country, and its occupation previous to the insurrection, is not to be imagined, except by those who witnessed the atrocities of every description committed by the military,"—and he gives a list of hangings, burnings and murders.

Finally, we have the testimony of another English soldier, Sir William Napier, speaking some years later: "What manner of soldiers were these fellows who were let loose upon the wretched districts, killing, burning and confiscating every man's property? ... We ourselves were young at the time; yet, being connected with the army, we were continually among the soldiers, listening with boyish eagerness to their experiences: and well remember, with horror, to this day, the tales of lust, of bloodshed and pillage, and the recital of their foul actions against the miserable peasantry, which they used to relate."



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The insurrection against this misery and violence, which began in May, 1798, and its repression, we may pass over, coming to their political consequences. It is admitted on all hands that the morality and religion of England reached their lowest ebb at this very time; we are, therefore, ready to learn that the Act of Union between England and Ireland, which followed on the heels of this insurrection, was carried by unlimited bribery and corruption. The Parliament of Ireland, as we know, was solely composed of Protestants, the Catholics having neither the right to sit nor the right to vote; so that the ignominy of this universal corruption must be borne by the class of English and Scottish settlers alone.

The curious may read lists of the various bribes paid to secure the passage of the Act of Union in 1800, the total being about six million dollars—a much more considerable sum then than now. And it must be remembered that this entire sum was drawn from the revenues of Ireland, besides the whole cost of an army numbering 125,000 men, which England maintained in Ireland at the time the Act was passed. What the amenities of the last three years of the eighteenth century cost Ireland we may judge from these figures: in 1797, while the hangings, burnings and torturings which brought about the insurrection of the following year were in an early stage, the national debt of Ireland was under \$20,000,000; three years later that debt amounted to over \$130,000,000. It is profitless to pursue the subject further. We may close it by saying that hardly can we find in history a story more discreditable to our common humanity than the conduct of England towards Ireland during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The French Revolution wrought a salutary change of heart in the governing class in England, for it must in justice be added that the tyranny of this class was as keenly felt by the “lower orders” in England as in Ireland itself. It is fairly certain that only the Reform Bill and the change of sovereigns which shortly followed prevented an insurrection of the peasants and servile classes in England which would have outdone in horrors the French Revolution itself. The Reform Bill was the final surrender of the baronial class in England; a surrender rather apparent than real, however, since most of the political and all the social power in the land still remains in the hands of the same class.

[Illustration: O’Connell’s Statue, Dublin.]

Through the salutary fear which was inspired by the horrors of the French Revolution, and perhaps through a certain moral awakening, the governing classes in England came to a less vicious mind in their dealings with Ireland. They were, therefore, the more ready to respond to the great national movement headed by Daniel O’Connell, with his demand that Irishmen might all equally enjoy civil and political rights, regardless of their form of faith. In 1829, as the result of this great movement, the Catholics were finally relieved of the burden of penal laws which, originally laid on them by the Tudors, were rendered even more irksome and more unjust by Cromwell and William of Nassau, —men in other things esteemed enlightened and lovers of liberty.



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Thus the burden of persecution was finally taken away. To those who imposed it, the system of Penal Laws will remain a deep dishonor. But to those who bore that burden it has proved a safeguard of spiritual purity and faith. The religion of the indigenous race in Ireland was saved from the degeneration and corruption which ever besets a wealthy and prosperous church, and which never fails to engender hypocrisy, avarice and ambition. In England, the followers of the Apostles exercise the right to levy a second tax on the produce of all tilled lands, a second burden imposed upon the conquered Saxons. As a result, the leaders of the church live in palaces, while the people, the humbler part of their congregation; have sunk into practical atheism. In France, the reaction against a like state of things brought the church to the verge of destruction, and led the masses to infidelity and materialism. The result to the moral life of the people is too well known to need remark. Not less evil consequences have flowed from the enriching of the church in other lands. That wealth has always carried with it the curse, so prophetically pronounced, against those who trust in riches. For the ministers of religion, in a supreme degree, the love of money has been the root of evil.

We may, therefore, see in the spirituality and unworldliness of the native church in Ireland a result of all the evil and persecution the church suffered during almost three hundred years. From this purification by fire it comes that the people of Ireland are almost singular throughout Christendom in believing sincerely in the religion of gentleness and mercy—the kingdom which is not of this world.

In 1829 the Catholics were at last freed from the galling burdens which had weighed on them since 1537, when they failed to recognize Henry VIII as the representative of God on earth. They were still, however, under the shadow of a grave injustice, which continued to rest on them for many years. When their church lands were confiscated and their faith proscribed by law under the Tudors, a new clergy was overlaid on the country, a clergy which consented to recognize the Tudors and their successors as their spiritual head. As a reward, these new ministers of religion were allowed to levy a second tax on land, exactly as in England; and this tax they continued to collect until their privilege was finally taken away by Gladstone and the English Liberals. Needless to say that through three centuries and more four-fifths of this tax was levied on the indigenous Catholics, in support of what was to them an alien, and for most of the time a persecuting church.

One heavy disability still lay on the whole land. With its partial removal a principle has emerged of such world-wide importance in the present, and even more in the future, that we may well trace its history in detail.



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The Normans, as we saw, paid themselves for conquering the Saxons and Angles by assuming a perpetual right to tax their produce; a right still in full force, and forming the very foundation of the ruling class in England. The land tenure thus created was, under the Tudors and the first Stuarts, bodily transferred to Ireland. In Ireland the land had ever been owned by the people, each tribe, as representing a single family, holding a certain area by communal tenure, and electing a chief to protect its territory from aggression. For this elective chieftainship the English law-courts substituted something wholly different: a tenure modeled on the feudal servitude of England. This new principle made the land of the country the property not of the whole people but of a limited and privileged class: the favorites of the ruling power—"hungry parasites" as the Congress of 1775 called them. This "landed" class continued to hold absolute sway until quite recently, and it was this class which succumbed to bribery in 1800, and passed the Act of Legislative Union with England. The clergy of the Established church were little more than the private chaplains of the "landed" class, the two alien bodies supporting each other.

Folly, however, was the child of injustice; for so shortsighted were these hungry parasites that they developed a system of land-laws so bad as to cause universal poverty, and bring a reaction which is steadily sweeping the "landed" class of Ireland to extinction and oblivion. The fundamental principle of these bad land-laws was this: the tenant was compelled to renew his lease from year to year; and whenever, during the year, he had in any way improved the land in his possession,—by draining marshes, by reclaiming waste areas, by adding farm-buildings, the "owner" of the land could demand an enhanced rent, as the condition of renewing the lease. The tenant had to submit to a continually ascending scale of extortion, sanctioned by law and exacted by armed force; or, as an alternative, he had to give up the fruit of his industry without compensation and without redress.

Anything more certain to destroy energy, to cut at the roots of thrift, to undermine all the best qualities of manhood, it would be impossible to imagine. The slave on the plantation could in time purchase his freedom. The tiller of the soil in Ireland found, on the contrary, that the greater his industry, the greater was the sum he had to pay for the right to exercise it. We saw that there never was any pretence of free contract in the feudal land-tenure of England; that there never was any pretence of an honest bargain between farmer and landlord, for their mutual benefit. The tenant paid the landlord for services rendered, not to him, but to his Norman conqueror. So it was, in an even greater degree, in Ireland. There was no pretence at all that tenant and landlord entered into a free contract for their mutual benefit. Nor did either law, custom, religion or opinion require the landlord to make any return to his tenants for the share of the fruit of their toil he annually carried away.



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The tiller of the soil, therefore, labored from year to year, through droughts and rains, through heat and cold, facing bad seasons with good. At the end of the year, after hard toil had gathered in the fruit of the harvest, he saw the best part of that fruit legally confiscated by an alien, who would have been speechless with wonder, had it been suggested to him that anything was due from him in return. Nor was that all. This alien was empowered, and by the force of public opinion incited, to exact the greatest possible share of the tiller's produce, and, as we saw, he was entitled to the whole benefit of whatever improvements the tiller of the soil had made; and could—and constantly did—expel the cultivator who was unable or unwilling to pay a higher tax, as the penalty for improving the land.

It may be said that bad as this all was, it was not without a remedy; that the cultivator had the choice of other occupations, and might let the land lie fallow, while its "owner" starved. But this only brings to mind the fact that during the eighteenth century England had legislated with the deliberate intention of destroying the manufactures and shipping of Ireland, and had legislated with success. It should be added that this one measure affected all residents in Ireland equally, whatever faith or race. There was practically no alternative before the cultivator. He had the choice between robbery and starvation.

It would be more than miraculous if this condition of things had not borne its fruit. The result was this: it ceased to be the interest of the cultivator of the land to till it effectively, or to make any improvement whatever, whether by drainage, reclaiming waste land, or building, or by adopting better agricultural methods. In every case, his increase of labor, of foresight and energy, would have met with but one reward: when the time came to renew the lease, he would have been told that his land had doubled in value during the year, and that he must, therefore, pay twice as much for the privilege of tilling it. If he refused, he at once forfeited every claim to the fruit of his own work, the whole of his improvements becoming the property of the land owner.

The cultivators, as an inevitable consequence, lost every incentive to labor, energy, foresight and the moral qualities which are fostered by honestly rewarded work. They worked as little as possible on their farms, and the standard of cultivation steadily declined, while the mode of living grew perpetually worse. If it were intended to reduce a whole population to hopeless poverty, no better or more certain way could be imagined.

The steady lowering of the arts of cultivation, the restriction of crops, the tendency to keep as close as possible to the margin of sustenance, thus zealously fostered, opened the way for the disastrous famine of 1846 and 1847, which marks the beginning of a rapid decline in population,—a decrease which has never since been checked. The inhabitants of Ireland shortly before the famine numbered considerably over eight millions. Since that time, there has been a decrease of about four millions—a thing without parallel in Christendom.



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The amendment of the land-laws, which were directly responsible for these evil results, was by no means initiated in consequence of the famine. It was due wholly to a great national agitation, carried out under the leadership of Charles Stewart Parnell, which led to the land-acts of 1881 and 1887. These new laws at last guaranteed to the cultivator the fruit of his toil, and guarded him against arbitrary increase of the tax levied on him by the "owner" of the land. But they did not stop here; they initiated a principle which will finally make the cultivator absolute owner of his land, and abolish the feudal class with their rights of private taxation. This cannot fail to react on England, so that the burdens of the Angles and Saxons will at last be lifted from their shoulders, as a result of the example set them by the Gaels, for generations working persistently, and persistently advancing towards their goal. Nor will the tide thus set in motion spread only to Saxon and Angle; its influence will be felt wherever those who work are deprived unjustly of the fruit of their toil, whether by law or without law. The evils suffered by Ireland will thus be not unavailing; they will rather bring the best of all rewards: a reward to others, of whatever race and in whatever land, who are victims of a like injustice.

The story of Ireland, through many centuries, has thus been told. The rest belongs to the future. We have seen the strong life of the prime bringing forth the virtues of war and peace; we have seen valor and beauty and wisdom come to perfect ripeness in the old pagan world. We have seen that old pagan world transformed by the new teaching of gentleness and mercy, a consciousness, wider, more humane and universal, added from above to the old genius of individual life. With the new teaching came the culture of Rome, and something of the lore of Hellas and Palestine, of Egypt and Chaldea, warmly welcomed and ardently cherished in Ireland at a time when Europe was submerged under barbarian inroads and laid waste by heathen hordes. We have seen the faith and culture thus preserved among our western seas generously shared with the nascent nations who emerged from the pagan invasions; the seeds of intellectual and spiritual life, sown with faith and fervor as far as the Alps and the Danube, springing up with God-given increase, and ripening to an abundant harvest.

To that bright epoch of our story succeeded centuries of growing darkness and gathering storm. The forces of our national life, which until then had found such rich expression and flowered in such abundant beauty, were now checked, driven backward and inward, through war, oppression and devastation, until a point was reached when the whole indigenous population had no vestige of religious or civil rights; when they ceased even to exist in the eyes of the law.

The tide of life, thus forced inward, gained a firm possession of the invisible world, with the eternal realities indwelling there. Thus fixed and founded in the real, that tide turned once again, flowing outwards and sweeping before it all the barriers in its way. The population of Ireland is diminishing in numbers; but the race to which they belong increases steadily: a race of clean life, of unimpaired vital power, unspoiled by wealth or luxury, the most virile force in the New World.

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It happens very rarely, under those mysterious laws which rule the life of all humanity, the laws which work their majestic will through the ages, using as their ministers the ambitions and passions of men—it happens rarely that a race keeps its unbroken life through thirty centuries, transformed time after time by new spiritual forces, yet in genius remaining ever the same. It may be doubted whether even once before throughout all history a race thus long-lived has altogether escaped the taint of corruption and degeneration. Never before, we may confidently say, has a single people emerged from such varied vicissitudes, stronger at the end in genius, in spiritual and moral power, than at the beginning, richer in vital force, clearer in understanding, in every way more mature and humane.

For this is the real fruit of so much evil valiantly endured: a deep love of freedom, a hatred of oppression, a knowledge that the wish to dominate is a fruitful source of wrong. The new age now dawning before us carries many promises of good for all humanity; not less, it has its dangers, grave and full of menace; threatening, if left to work unchecked, to bring lasting evil to our life. Never before, it is true, have there been so wide opportunities for material well-being; but, on the other hand, never before have there been such universal temptations toward a low and sensual ideal. Our very mastery over natural forces and material energies entices us away from our real goal, hides from our eyes the human and divine powers of the soul, with which we are enduringly concerned. Our skill in handling nature's lower powers may be a means of great good; not less may it bring forth unexampled evil. The opportunities of well-being are increased; the opportunities of exclusive luxury are increased in equal measure; exclusion may bring resentment; resentment may call forth oppression, armed with new weapons, guided by wider understanding, but prompted by the same corrupt spirit as of old.

In the choice which our new age must make between these two ways, very much may be done for the enduring well-being of mankind by a race full of clean vigor, a race taught by stern experience the evil of tyranny and oppression, a race profoundly believing the religion of gentleness and mercy, a race full of the sense of the invisible world, the world of our immortality.

We see in Ireland a land with a wonderful past, rich in tradition and varied lore; a land where the memorials of the ages, built in enduring stone, would in themselves enable us to trace the life and progress of human history; we see in Ireland a land full of a singular fascination and beauty, where even the hills and rivers speak not of themselves but of the spirit which builds the worlds; a beauty, whether in brightness or gloom, finding its exact likeness in no other land; we see all this, but we see much more: not a memory of the past, but a promise of the future; no offering of earthly wealth, but rather a gift to the soul of man; not for Ireland only, but for all mankind.



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