

The Bardic Stories of Ireland

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Partholanus And His People.

Some three hundred years after the flood, Partholan (pr. *Parrolaun*), an exile from Migdonia (Macedonia?) in Greece, on account of the crime of parricide, landed in Inver Sceine (Kenmare River), accompanied by his wife, his three sons, and their wives, and a thousand soldiers. Partholan's favourite residence was at Inis Samer in Lough Erne. It got that name, meaning Samer's Island, from his wife's grey-hound, which he killed in revenge for her infidelity, a shabby and unjust instance of retaliation. It is gratifying to think that Irishwomen in general have not followed the evil example of this early *bean thierna* of our country. Partholan died thirty years after his arrival, at Moynealta (Plain of Birds) in Meath. His sons divided the fertile island between them, and there is little recorded of the deeds of themselves and their people for three hundred years ; the chief occurrences during the time being the bursting out of lakes and rivers. To weaken our confidence in the certainty of this early settlement, we are told that at the period last mentioned, the whole colony being settled between Howth (Ben Edair) and the Dublin hills, all were swept off by a plague. The present village of Tallaght (*Tam Leacht*, Plague Monument) is said to have got its name from this circumstance. The ancient writers called it *Tamleacht Muintir Parthaloin*, "The Plague Monument of Partholan's People," to distinguish it from other plague cemeteries through the country.

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The voyage of *Fintan* and his wife *Cesára* from Mesopotamia, their landing in the West of Ireland some short time before the flood, *Cesára's* tragic death, and *Fintan's* preservation to the time of St. Patrick, should have preceded this historic tradition, but they have been related already in *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts*.

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The Fight of The Southern Moytura.

THIRTY years after the destruction of *Partlaolan's* colony, *Nemid*, a hardy adventurer from the borders of the Black Sea, proceeded westwards across Europe. He probably obeyed the directions of some oracle in not making any stay till, crossing the two seas in thirty skiffs of some kind, he reached the "Wooded Isle." Our old northern city, Armagh, is said to have taken its name from his wife ; a doubtful tradition, as the word simply signifies "High Field." *Nemid* brought one thousand followers into the island. He seems to have been an ambitious and unscrupulous chief, for he employed four artificers of the Fomorian (African) race to build him four castles in the four quarters of the island ; and in order that no contemporary chief or king should possess piles of equal magnificence, he had the poor fellows murdered on the completion of their work. The names of the hapless gobans have been preserved—*Rog*, *Robog*, *Rodin*, and *Rooney*.

A blessing could not attend on such a vile deed. Their relatives and tribes generally gathered to the island in their long galleys ; they selected *Torry* island in the bleak northern sea as their rendezvous, and thence poured their hordes down on the thinly-inhabited land. If *Nemid* was deficient in a sound moral sense, he had no lack of animal courage. He engaged

and defeated them in pitched battles in Ulster, Conacht, and Munster ; but Leinster proved fatal to him and his people. There he lost his life, and his people their liberty.

Severe was the slavery in which the Nemedians were held by these Fomorach, who are represented as savage and ogreish in their disposition. A woman was appointed their income-tax collector, on the ground that no man can be so bad as a bad woman—other things being equal. She obliged every Nemedian family in the island to bring to an appointed spot near the shore of Loch Erne, on the festival of *Samhuin* (End of Summer, 31 Oct.) three measures of cream, three measures of wheat, and three of butter.

Their burdens becoming intolerable, the oppressed race uprose to a man against their tyrant rulers, attacked them in their stronghold in *Tor Inis* (Island of the Tower, Torry Island), and killed them nearly to a man. However, an absent Fomorach chief, returning with the crews of twenty-five galleys, assailed the victors, and so deadly and determined was the struggle on the strand, that neither party paid attention to the rising of the tide, till numbers on both sides were swept away in the strong rush of the waves.

Some of the Nemedians, under the command of Jarvan, sailed away in their wicker vessels, and passing among the western isles, afterwards called the Hebrides (Isles of St. Brigid), rounded the northern extremity of Caledonia and gained the southern coast of Sweden and the flat woody isles of Jutland. They announced to the natives that they were skilled in all the mysteries of the occult sciences, and would open colleges for general instruction. They were granted four cities, whose sites in this nineteenth century are not known, but whose names were Falias, Gorias, Finneas, and Murias.

After a couple of centuries of the exercise of their talents in teaching magic and divination, the whole of the race suddenly felt a wish to return to the land of woods, of sunny hills, of clear lakes and rivers, and of green plains, the memory of which had been vividly preserved for five generations. Accordingly they got into their galleys, and made their way west and south, bringing with them a magic spear, a magic sword, a magic cauldron, and a magic Lia Fail or stone of destiny—a gift from every one of their cities. They came in sight of the mighty giant pillars of the Northern coast, and still steering south-west, found shelter in the waters of Lough Foyle.

After the fatal fight at Torry, another party of the Nemedians had made their way from promontory to promontory, till they reached the remote land of Greece. They found people there speaking a dialect of their own tongue, and at first showing them kindness ; but this state of things was soon changed. They were reduced to the rank of serfs, and where barren hills occurred, they were obliged to carry soil up to their tops in leathern sacks, and hence the name *Firbolg* (bag-men), which their descendants have ever since borne. Their condition becoming insupportable, they assembled, seized on the ships of their cruel taskmasters, and sought again the Western Isle, under the command of the five leaders, Slainge, Ruaighre (Rory), Gann, Gannan, and Seangan. Everything about our early ancestors was marvellous. These chiefs landed in the mouths of five rivers, none of which is necessary to be here mentioned, except our own darling Slaney, into the bay at whose mouth steered Slainge and his craft. All the chiefs proceeding inland, met in the fertile plain of Bregia, overawed or subdued the descendants of the ill-conditioned Fomorian, took possession of some lioses, built others, cultivated the land, kept mighty herds of cattle, concluded marriages, and thanked the heavenly-host and the local deities that their bitter bondage was passed, and that they had a fruitful island to inhabit, where they might live in freedom, subject only to such laws as had been handed down from father to son among their ollamhs for the general good of the community. For thirty-six years they enjoyed peace and plenty, the few clan battles that took place not being worth mention, but at the end of that halcyon period, say 800 A.C, they were roused from their rest by the unwelcome visit of their kindred, the Danaans, now return-

ing from the Jutland Isles, 237 years after the ancestors of both peoples had separated at the strand of Torry.

It was told to King Achy (Chevalier) that a foreign people had been discovered in the fastnesses of Magh-Rein in Leitrim, and that they had penetrated so far from the great northern inlet by means of a fog raised by their skill in occult knowledge. Calling his council together, they despatched Sreng, a man of singular conduct and prowess, to ascertain the race, the country, and the present object of these intruders.

But the Danaans at the same time had come to a similar resolution, and forwarded to Achy's Court their champion Breas. The two deputies came in sight of each other in a short narrow defile, and the first impulse of each was to cover his body with his red-rimmed shield, grasp one of his spears in the act of flinging, and reconnoitre his man,

Breas was the first to speak, and Sreng was delighted to hear his own tongue, a variety of the Gaelic, spoken by the stranger. After the exchange of a few words, they laid down shield and spear, advanced and took hands, and then, seating themselves on an overturned tree-trunk, began their conference.

Each in turn related the fortunes of his own people from the fight of Tor Inis, and then came the real business of the moment on the carpet (grass in this instance). Breas requested, on the part of his King Nuadh, half the island. It was sufficiently large for both peoples, and their first care would be to enter into a strict alliance with each other, for the common defence of the country against the Fomorach and all other foreign marauders. "This," said Breas, "will bring a great advantage to your side. Our druids are so powerful that they have only to walk through the ranks of slain after a fight, and by their words of power they restore each warrior to his vigour of yesterday." Sreng, considering this assertion a bit of boast, retorted, "*Dar do lamh* (By your hand!) O Breas, I am glad to hear of this power in your wise men, hoping that an alliance may ensue. But if the fight was between you and us, their skill would be of no avail. If we fight, every horseman's attendant kern will bring into the field a dozen pointed stakes of the quicken tree, and as each Danaan warrior falls dead on earth, his body shall be transpierced and fastened to the soil by the stake of power." Breas merely shook his head, and no more was said of druid's spell, or virtue of mountain ash.

Sreng engaged to report the proposal to his king and council on his return to Tara, and then, after making an exchange of their spears—Sreng's being heavy, sharp, and rounded at the end, Breas' slender and finely pointed—they separated with mutual expressions of esteem.

Achy and his council came to the resolution of refusing the offer, and the forces on both sides moved to the unincumbered plain of Moy Tuir (Plain of the Towers), near Cong. There the fight commenced on midsummer day, devoted to the worship of Beal (the sun), and lasted till evening. Achy and his guard being afflicted with intolerable thirst, withdrew to a spring in the neighbourhood, and thither they were followed by three Danaan chiefs.

Round the spring they struggled with intense fury, and after the lapse of a few minutes the Firbolg King and his three foemen lay bereft of life on the bloody grass.

Still undismayed, the Firbolgs, commanded by Sreng, renewed the fight every morning for four days, in the last of which he encountered the Danaan King, and by a mighty stroke which clove his shield in two, he swept away his hand.

A skilful Druid stopped the blood, and a skilful worker in metals afterwards made a silver hand with articulated fingers, secured it on the maimed limb, and the wearer is known in the Bardic annals by the name of Nuadh Airgeadh Lamh (Nua of the silver hand).

On the fifth morning the brave Sreng, finding that he headed but three-hundred fighting men, sent a herald to Nuadh claiming the right then universally acknowledged among foes of the same race—of battle waged between equal numbers on both sides. Nuadh, either influenced by respect for the gallantry of his opponents, or feelings of race, or contempt of what so small a body could effect, invited Sreng and a dozen of his best warriors to meet himself and the same number of his own chiefs between both camps, and hold a conference. It was held, and an offer made by the Danaan King of the fifth part of the kingdom was accepted. All of the Firbolg family through the kingdom then repaired to Conacht, and there abode, keeping up a good understanding with the dominant Danaans. The Cyclopean ruins of Dun Aengus on the south-western cliffs of Arranmore still attest their energy and skill. Down to the reign of Conn of the Hundred Fights—second century of the Christian era—their province was called *Cuigead Sreing* (Sreng's portion). The peasantry of Conacht and neighbouring portions of Ulster and Leinster at this day, are considered the descendants of the brave and stubborn Firbolgs.

It being a stringent rule among each of the three races which held Ireland in succession, that no man suffering under loss of limb or organ of sense could sway the sceptre, Nuadh was obliged to resign office and endure a life of privacy till his skilful surgeon, Dianceacht, could drive pain and suffering from his mutilated limb, and his equally skilful artificers fashion a hand of silver with which he would be in a sense able to execute the functions of that which he had lost.

Breas, whom we have seen discharge the duty of envoy, ruled the kingdom as viceroy, and did all in his power to convert the very moderate degree of authority vested in the Celtic kings into absolute power. By various arts he contrived to leave but a shadow of authority to his chiefs, and in the indispensable virtue of a monarch of old days he was wretchedly deficient: there went abroad a homely saying concerning him, that “the knives of his people were not greased at his table, nor did their breath smell of his ale.”

This became insupportable, and the discontent and resentment of the chiefs was brought to a climax by the reception the poet and satirist Cairbre, son of the poetess Etan, received at the court. This gay professor coming to the palace in the afternoon, was surprised to find no concourse of chiefs or even high household officers to listen to his recitations when the early evening meal was over. Breas and his family took their solitary meal in private, and the irate bard was shown to a room where was neither chair, fire, nor bed, and where three small cakes placed on a small and mean table represented the measure of Breas's hospitality both as to food and rest. Cairbre appeared before the household next morning, and instead of the eulogium which would have rewarded a hospitable reception to the man of songs, he poured out invectives on Breas's systems of political and household economy, and denounced his unworthy treatment of the bardic body by the style in which he, its representative, had been fed and lodged. Breas appearing at the conclusion of the poetic satire, was surprised to find no resentment shown by his audience.

When the bitter lampoon was ended, there was a universal clucking of tongues against palates, raising of hands and eyes, and a sudden scattering of the auditors, each to the scene of his proper functions. The offended viceroy would have punished the satirist on the spot, but his hands were held by the universal respect paid to the bardic profession.

Ill news has a swift foot. The poet directed his steps to the lios of a neighbouring chief, and after the evening meal he found himself surrounded by a crowd of flaiths and their fol-

lowers, and in their presence he uttered a tirade of bitter sarcasm and contempt on the beggarly despot that ruled them rather like slaves than men of noble birth. "Alas," cried one, "that the princely and generous Nuadh is unable to wield sword or cast lance! otherwise tomorrow's noon would see him restored to his throne, and the man of the three wretched cakes driven forth." "Your loyal wish is not far from fulfilment," said the owner of the fort, and at his signal stepped from an inner room the noble Nuadh, the hand supposed powerless vigorously grasping the shield strap, and soon convincing the chief men in the assembly by the gripe it took on hand and arm, that their regretted king was again fitted to be their chief in fight as well as council.

Breas did not await the return of Nuadh to the royal dun. Neither attendant nor guard staid by him when the restoration of the king was reported, and thus deserted, he made his way to the coast, and thence to the stronghold of his father—a chief of the pirates—in an isle off Alba. Though the father was a pirate, he was anything but a niggard, and the three small cakes may be said to have disagreed with him as much as they had done with Cairbre. However, blood was thicker than water, and he furnished his son with ships and men, and recommended him to the favour of two great chiefs of their race, one being the redoubted Balor of the Evil Eye. So numerous were the new allies, that their war galleys reached from an island of the Hebrides even to the northern coast of Erinn. The forces disembarking proceeded to an advantageous spot in Sligo, which has since borne the same name (Moytura) as the field where Breas had distinguished himself a score of years before.

Both parties not only prepared to destroy each other with the steel or sharp bronze, but called in the aid of their druids and wise women. King Nuadh had the advantage of possessing two of the bravest and wisest chiefs in the world, Lucha and Daghdha. These, calling their smiths, their *cerds* (silver and brass workers), their carpenters, their surgeons and sorcerers, their poets and their witches together, ascertained what service each could perform, and set them to work accordingly.

Daghdha knew by his druidic skill that the sorcerers of the Fomorach had woven such spells against the arms of the Danaans that they would be of no more avail than rotten twigs in the ensuing battle. So he pronounced charms and spells on the hands of a renowned craftsman, who forged spears and swords as quickly as a score of men working together could have done. The chief druid of the Fomorach finding his charms counteracted, discovered the cause by his knowledge of occult things, and paid a visit to the workshop of the Danaan artist. He, beholding the sorcerer approach, became aware by his inward sight of the presence of a mortal foe, and made a sign to his assistant to be on his guard. The stranger entering repeated some words of blessing, which he counteracted at the moment by a motion of his thumb, and then expressing his surprise at the excellence of the workmanship, began to handle a bunch of newly finished spears. The goban, seeming to pay no attention to his presence, went on with his work, and the intruder, still pretending to poise and examine a spear, on a sudden darted it with force at his heart. But equally quick was the eye and hand of the assistant. Before the missile left the druid's hand, he felt the lance of the faithful helper tear through his neck. In a moment he was on the floor choking in his blood, and his weapon, diverted from its aim, quivering in the door-post.

At last came the day of fight, and the two forces met, each prepared to extirpate the other wholly, or perish in the effort. Desperately did the battle proceed, but the Danaans were better able to meet wounds and bruises than their foes. The skilful physician Dianceacht, his daughter Ochtriuil, and his sons Airmedh and Mioch, had previous to the battle gathered the chief sanative herbs in Erinn from the *Lus-Magh* (Plain of Herbs) in the present King's County, and had therewith composed a medical bath, reciting incantations during and after preparation. Their wounded men being brought to this pool of health, and immersed, were restored to their strength of the morning, and enabled to resume the struggle.

The fortune of the fight at last fell to the upholders of justice, the Danaans, but their king fell by the hand of Balor of the Evil Eye. He had but a short time to enjoy his success. A *Lia Milidh* (Champion's stone), flung from the strong hand of Lucha, crashing into his evil eye, drove it out through the back of his head, and ended his evil career.

Lucha of the long arm, who performed this meritorious deed, was the next monarch of the Danaans. He wore the crown and sceptre of Ard Righ for forty years, and did all in his power for his subjects' weal. Tailte, a Spanish princess, and widow of Achy, the brave Firbolg king, had superintended the education of Prince Lucha, and with such judgment and good will, that he always loved her as his mother. To commemorate her memory he instituted the national festival at Tailtean, in Meath, to be held on every first of August, the day of her death. Tournaments and other martial games took place on these occasions, marriages were agreed on, and engagements made for service.

The month was thenceforward called *Lugh nas* (Memorial of Lucha) from the king's name, and perhaps the English Lammas owns the same derivation.

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A thread of true history runs through these two historic legends. Students of our annals will get much information concerning the antiquities of the Southern Moytura, and the certainty of a severe engagement having been once fought there, from Sir William Wilde's *Lough Corrib*.

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The Children of Tuirrean.

WHILE the Danaan kings held sway, the Fomorians made another attempt to gain possession of the country, but were bravely opposed by a chief named Lucha. This hero being much straightened on one occasion by the foreign intruders, despatched his father, Cian Mac Ceinte, and his two brothers, to different parts of the island to summon aid. Cian, passing over the plains of Louth, saw approaching him the Firbolg brothers—Bran, Ur, and Urchorba, three of his deadliest foes. Knowing himself to be no match for them all, and espying some pigs on the plain near him, he struck himself with a druidic wand, and became one with the nighest of the animals. Bran, the most acute of the brothers, alone saw what had occurred, and revealed it to the other two : but they considered the capture of their foeman very uncertain, owing to the number of the swine. He, however, striking them with his druidic wand, they became dogs on the instant, and instinctively found out the disguised warrior, and gave chase. Bran launched a javelin, which pierced the outward disguise of Cian, and so, being rendered incapable of flight, he asked for life. Meeting a stern refusal, he begged permission to resume his human shape. This being granted, he exultingly enlarged on the much greater eric they would have to pay to his redoubted son Lucha, for slaying him in his own form rather than in that of the swine. This did not stay their hands : they killed him on the spot, and buried him where he fell ; but on going forward for some distance, and looking back, they saw the body above ground. They had to return and inter the body twice ; but on the third occasion, the grave having been made exceedingly deep, it troubled them no more

After Lucha had settled the business of the Fomorians, he became uneasy at not hearing from his father ; and returning to the spot where he last parted from him, he traced his steps like a sleuth-dog till he stood over his deep grave. He disinterred him with a heavy heart, and paid him the usual Celtic honours, raising a mound above his remains, and inscribing his name and virtues in ogham on a pillar-stone. He then took his way to the Midchuarta at Tara,

where he knew the murderers had taken refuge, and in the Ard-Righ's presence he demanded from them the eric of his father. They inquired the amount, and he modestly claimed but a few easily-obtained articles, such as a spit, a pig-skin, a chariot, a bunch of apples, a spear, three "hill-shouts," and two or three other trifles. The king allowed that his demands were reasonable, and decreed the eric to be collected forthwith. Alas ! when the vengeful son revealed the localities and circumstances of the different prizes, the guilty brothers gave themselves up for lost. They consulted Tuirrean, their father, who told them to ask of Lucha the magic horse, *Innbhear*, given to him by his tutor, the great Mananan, son of Lear. "He will refuse you," said he ; "so he will be obliged by law of geasa to grant you your next request, which must be, the magic boat of the same mighty sage." By aid of this boat they secured, but with a world of trouble, all the articles except the spit and the three "hill-shouts," which, through Lucha's magic influence, had escaped their memory. They went on their way again, recovered the spit in an island in the great western sea, and gave the three shouts on a hill in Fomor-Land, after having all been nearly wounded to death. A spear being driven through Bran's body, he had the shaft cut off at the two points where it projected from his sides, and thus returned, fearing to withdraw it, lest his life should issue forth at the same time. Even in this plight he bore his weaker brothers along. On their return, with all their commissions fulfilled, Lucha, who had the power, was besought by king and court to stretch forth his hand and prolong their lives. He remembered his murdered father, refused, and they fell lifeless on the hall floor.

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The Last of the Danaan Kings.

NATIVES of Ireland, when invited to dine at Guildhall with the Lord Mayor of London for the first time, cannot feel otherwise than awed by one of the grim statues that preside over the festivities. They feel as if they were likely to receive little welcome at the hands of such a truculent-looking Saxon, little suspecting him to be the representative of one of their great-great ancestors ; yet so it appears to be. Finusa, son of Baath, son of Magog, son of Japhet, son of Noah, was king of Scythia, a little after the building of Babylon by Nimrod. A studious monarch he was, and particularly devoted to the acquisition of languages, seventy-two of which had sprung from the mad attempt at Shinaar. As Heber, third in descent from Shem, had not consented to the erection of the Tower of Confusion, he and his family retained the original tongue spoken by Adam, Seth, and Noah ; and to his neighbourhood Finusa repaired to learn, this primal form of speech, and establish schools for the correct teaching of those seventy-two dialects just mentioned. He took his son Nial as partner in this meritorious scheme, and at his death left him all the privileges, honours, and profits of these establishments, committing the unpleasant task of governing his subjects to his duller brother.

Nial's fame, as philologist, was not less than that of his great father, it spread from Magh-Shinaar even to Egypt, and he was invited by Pharaoh, the contemporary of Moses, to visit his country, and give his subjects the benefit of his great lights and experience. There is here a trifling anachronism of a few hundred years ; but the large scale on which the bards did business did not leave them time to examine trifles of the kind.

So pleased was the King of Egypt with the performance and acquirements of Nial, that he gave him to wife his fair daughter Scotia, who bore a son named Gael ; and from this mother and child we derive our titles of Scots and Gaels. The first name also belongs to us as being of Scythian descent ; but we good-naturedly handed it over to our cousins of Caledonia, as we did the "Stone of Destiny." Concerning their gratitude to us for these valuable gifts, the less said the better !

Nial lived near the present site of Alexandria, and had a pretty sized fleet at command. Sympathising with the oppressed children of Shem, it is said that he offered them the use of his ships for the purpose of escape. The offer, though not accepted, was remembered with gratitude by the Israelites. Gaeidhil, or Gael, his little son, was fastened on by a serpent while he was engaged in some boyish sports in the fields. The reptile entwined itself round his neck, on which it inflicted a wound, but application being made to the great Hebrew Law-giver, he applied his miraculous rod to the part affected, and an immediate cure ensued. The child was called Gael-Glas, from the greenish mark that remained on the skin.

Sru, a descendant of this Gael, being obliged to quit Egypt in a hurry, could only avail himself of four galleys. In these he brought his people and their property to Crete. The bards disagree somewhat on the subject of the after voyages of the colony ; some making the fleet pass into the Black Sea, and thence into the Baltic, through the connecting water which then covered the Riphæan Valley, called Sarmatia (Poland) since the central portion of Europe emerged from under the sea. From the south of Sweden they sailed at a still later era to Spain ; the other account bringing them westwards directly into this country.

Our Scythians, having established their power in the Peninsula, lived, and loved, and fought till the birth of Gollamh, or Miles, who, being fond of adventure, went to assist his relatives the Phœnicians, and his relatives the Egyptians, and among both these distant connexions of his he obtained royal brides. These ladies presented him with eight children out of the thirty-two who called him father. Of his domestic comfort or the reverse, all the records are lost.

We shall introduce to the reader's notice three only of his sons—Heremon, Heber, and Amhergin, and his uncle Ith. This was the prince who first of his family, set foot on our coasts. Some ill-advised writers assert that he discovered our island from the top of a tower on the north coast of Spain, as he swept the horizon with a telescope. There are serious objections to this fact, arising from the principles of natural philosophy and the history of discoveries, and we shall not insist on its adoption.

No ; the fact was, that having to share his Spanish patrimony with so many, he preferred to look out for an island for himself. He landed on the northern coast, and a great concourse of the inhabitants collected to see the new comers, and ascertain their business. He mentioned that his people and they themselves were of the same blood, both having Magog for their ancestor, that his immediate relatives were in Spain, and that he was employing his leisure time visiting the neighbouring countries. In return they informed him that their three brother kings were at the moment assembled at a place a day's march south of where they stood, dividing treasure, and that if he paid them a visit he would be sure to meet a cordial welcome to their court. The hint was taken ; and next day Ith and one hundred of his followers were feasted by Mac Cuill, Mac Ceachta, and Mac Greine ; and the day following he was invited to settle the division of their treasure. He complied, and said that he had never seen an island so desirable to live in, and added that they would show wisdom by dividing it peaceably among themselves, or reigning in succession. He was thanked for his mediation, and feasted royally ; but after his departure matters took a strange turn.

“ Brothers,” said Mac Cuill, “ did you notice the unction and strength of the stranger's praises of our country ! “ We are not standing here if his intentions are sincere towards us. He is hastening to Spain, and will bring his half-hundred of brothers and their forces on our backs. But by our patron, Mananan, son of Lear, it shall not be ! Ho, there ! Sound the bugle, and gather round me all that can be equipped for a march within the quarter of a sand-glass.” And about the end of that time he was treading a northward forest path at the head of a hundred and fifty men of strength and Valour.

The rear-guard of the Milesians heard the tread of marching warriors behind them, and the blasts of the bugle-horns, and in a few minutes they were engaged in mortal combat with the Danaans. The fight was fierce and long ; but at last Ith received a mortal wound, and then the sole object of his son Lucha, and his faithful followers, was to carry his wounded body to the ships. They succeeded ; and, with determined wrath smouldering in their hearts, they spread all their sails to the northern breezes. The gallant barks swiftly sped over the dancing waves to Spain ; but the noble Ith did not touch its shores alive.

There was no lack of earnestness or eloquence in the address of Lucha to his relatives on his arrival ; and when the funeral rites of Ith were performed, thirty barks, each provided with thirty tried warriors and their followers, were ploughing through the rough sea that divided them from the “ Woody Isle.”

Mac Cuill received small thanks for his abortive attempt, which had only served to hasten and magnify the danger ; and as the available forces were not sufficient to meet the invading foe, the chief druids, at the desire of the princes, flung such darkness over the shores as the Spanish ships approached Loch Carmain (Wexford Bay), that no object could be distinguished at a yard’s distance from the vessel’s edge. Noises of the most frightful and lamentable character were heard at the same time ; and after a space they were able to discern, through an opening in the black cloud, what appeared the back of an enormous pig, stretching miles and miles on either side.

A baleful light fell round it, and from its surface shot up unceasingly mighty lances, as if a hedgehog was casting its prickles. These fell in and round the boats, and dismayed the mariners ; but the awful spectacle before them caused greater terror than could arise from mere personal danger. The thick dark fog still enveloped themselves, while the ghastly light played only on and round the bristling object of dread.

But a violent storm arose, and drove them at some distance from the coast, in a south-west direction ; and after a long interval of terror, suffering, and labour, they ran into a harbour in the extremity of Kerry. Amhergin’s wife happened to be drowned there, and it was for a long time called Inver-Sceine, from the name she bore.

Hearing that the princes were at Tara, they left a sufficient force to guard their vessels, and proceeded into the country. At Sliabh-Mish, in Kerry, they halted before a cheerful-looking rath, on the upper platform of which stood a majestic-looking woman, accompanied by a beautiful and richly-dressed concourse of ladies. She was hailed by the learned and valiant Amhergin, son of Miles, who, after complimenting her beauty, dignity, and state, begged to be honoured by the knowledge of her name. “ Courteous stranger,” answered she, “ I am the Queen consort of Mac Ceachtha ; my name is Banva, and Banva is the name of the whole island while I reign.” Amhergin returned suitable thanks, and the march was renewed. At Sliabh-Eilan, in Leinster, they accosted another equally beautiful and noble-looking lady, who, with her train, had taken her station there for the purpose of looking on the strange forces. She also made a courteous reply, “ I am the Royal consort of Mac Cuill. I am called Fœla, and Fœla is the name of the island while I reign.” At Usneach, in Meath, they were met by Eiré, wife of Mac Greine. She gave them similar information, and would have probably given it with more pleasure if she had known that her country would keep her name much longer in memory and veneration than those of her sisters.

So at length they approached the hill fortress of Tara in the flat country of Meath, and summoned the princes to resign the government of the country into their hands for having treacherously slain their relative while on a friendly visit to their shores. Mac Greine, dressed in great splendour, and surrounded by his enchanted guards, made answer that they were not prepared to resist such forces as appeared before them. He appealed to Amhergin whether it

would add to the glory of their memory in after times, when the bards would tell that they fell on a small body of fighting men and despoiled them of their possessions. “ We can cast such spells upon your swords, spears, and harness, if you drive us to extremity, that they will be as little use as twigs of sallow, and loricas made of marsh reeds, but we prefer this condition, honourable both to you and us. Depart to your ships, and stand out nine waves only from the shore, and if we are not in a condition to oppose you on your next landing, we will resign the country to your stronger arms.” Amhergin weighed the offer, and was induced to accept it from dread of their having recourse to magic aids. So the Gaels retraced their path to Inver-Sceine, ascended the sides of their galleys, and rowed till they were eight waves removed from land. All was quiet to this ; but, as they crossed the ninth wave, such pitchy darkness fell on the water, so furious blew the wind, and so dismayed were the mariners by wild and unearthly noises, that they lost all management of the barks, and they were driven in helpless confusion all round the coast and among the rocky isles. Six valiant chiefs, sons of Milesius, were destroyed at various headlands ; and at last Heber with his remnant once more gained the bay which they had imprudently quitted ; and Heremon was driven into the port of Drogheda, where his brave brother Colpa perished, and left his name to the unfriendly harbour.

A few days after Heber’s forces gained the shore, they were attacked near Sliabh-Mish by a strong body of the Danaans, under the command of Queen Eiré. There were lost in this fight, on the Milesian side, two chief druids—Scota, widow of Milesius, and Fais, another lady of rank. The fight was obstinate, but in the end Eiré’s troops were routed. She gallantly kept them together, and retired in good order to Tailtean, in Meath, where she met her husband and his brothers, and acquainted them with her want of success. They made the best disposition they could, and summoned the spirits of air, earth, and water to their aid. They invoked the spirit of the ocean, Mananan, but all the answers and omens were unpropitious ; they had ignored the ever-sacred claims of hospitality, and the faces of the guardian powers were averted.

So hope of victory there was none ; and when Heber and Amhergin from the south, and Heremon from the harbour of Inver-Colpa, united their forces, and attacked the three princes at Tailtean, they were received with a vigour and determination furnished by despair. After destroying many a brave Gadelian, Mac Greine, Mac Ceachta, and Mac Cuill sought the three surviving sons of Milesius, and put their strength, courage, and skill to a severe trial. But the sun of the Danaan dynasty had set, and the brave brothers perished by the might of Amhergin, Heremon, and Heber. Their chiefs, after causing the death of innumerable foes, fell exhausted on the heaps they themselves had raised ; and the devoted princesses would not survive their husbands and friends. From the appearance of the island on the approach of the Milesian Scots, it was afterwards occasionally styled *Inis na Maicé* (Isle of the Pig). So ended the dynasty of the Danaans, to whom a portion of our archaeologists attribute the round towers and those mysterious cavern-buildings on whose original uses antiquaries are not unanimous.

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Mac Cuill, *Mac Ceachta*, and *Mac Greine*, are in English, “ Son of the Log,” “ Son of the Plough,” and “ Son of the Sun.” The first was perhaps a clearer of forests ; the second, an agriculturist ; the third, an astronomer.

The Milesians having got the island into their possession, Heremon took possession of the central portion of the country, and Heber governed the south. In this latter division were two of the loveliest vales to be found in the world, but they did not fill up the cup of happiness of Heber’s queen. There was one beautiful vale in which Heremon’s queen took her pleasure, and if Heber would not add that to his other two, Heber’s wife was determined to give him no

rest night or day. As his sister-in-law was not agreeable, he was unwillingly obliged to make war on his brother, but was unfortunately slain in the battle of Geashil (King's County) ; so his poor wife lost her husband, and vales, and all, as Æsop's dog did his piece of meat a few centuries later.

In Heremon's reign, the Picts in their journey from the east, landed in Wexford Bay, helped the natives against a marauding body of the Cymry, and afterwards proceeded to Caledonia, as related in detail in the *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts*. The early Christian historians were, with scarcely an exception, individuals in monastic institutions, whose special province it was to make copies of the chronicles and genealogies transmitted to them, and to eke them out with the contemporary transactions learned from visitors, or the MSS. of learned men entertained at the residences of kings or chiefs. They always began with the Mosaic narrative. Whoever put the foregoing historic romance together, had for authority some Pagan tradition of an invasion of the island by Spaniards, whose ancestors had come from the east. This was not sufficient for the Christian scribe. He felt himself bound to furnish Gollamh or Milesius with ancestors found in the Old Testament, and to supply fathers, sons, and grandsons, with romantic adventures by sea and land. The historical descent of the Milesians on the island may have occurred any time between 1350 and 750 ANTE CHRISTUM.

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How Emania was built.

About the year 300 A.C. (Keating says 400), three princes of the line of Ir agreed to reign in succession (some say twenty-one years each - an improbable circumstance). Red Hugh having reigned, and having been succeeded by the other two in order, did not live to enjoy his second span of power, and no male heir was present to take his place. Diathorba, next in succession, now put in his claim ; but the Lady Macha, who, like her father Hugh, was gifted with red hair, stoutly disputed his pretensions. Taking for husband Cimbaoth, who might otherwise have caused her trouble, she gave battle to her rival, routed his forces, and killed himself ; and his five sons were obliged to fly, and take refuge in the woods.

Many parties had gone in quest of the fugitive princes, but had not succeeded in capturing them. The approach of a large party would be felt before they could do anything effective, and few small detachments would venture too near the five vigorous and undaunted young warriors. Macha feeling uncomfortable, and anxious to secure them at any risk, changed her royal robes for the more convenient garb of a huntress, shook the flour of rice on her fiery locks, and thus metamorphosed, ventured into the tangled forest where she was informed the outlaws were. It happened that she met one of them near their retreat, and he, not apprehensive of any covert design on her part, freely entered into conversation with her. The talk became very interesting, and just as he thought he was beginning to find favour in the eyes of the beautiful and stoutly-built huntress, she pinioned his arms, strongly secured them at the wrists with small but very strong whip-cord, placed a gag in his mouth, and imitated the cry of a bird. This was a signal to some of her attendants, who cautiously approached, and bore the captive, bursting with rage, to the edge of the forest. In this mode she enticed another to the same point in the wood, and secured him. Having found out the common refuge by this time, she boldly approached it, charmed the refugees by her presence, put them off their guard by her grace and animated converse, playfully mentioned her fear of weapons, and requested them to remove them from her presence and lay them in the corner of their cavern. They complied, each being very anxious to become a favorite with the charming amazon. While engaged in an exciting conversation, and totally inapprehensive of danger, they were surrounded by a score of armed men, some of whom lost no time in securing their weapons. Shame and rage took possession of the princes, but Macha's first care was to soothe

them. “ Brave chiefs,” said she, “ it is no disgrace to the boldest warrior in the world to submit to a woman. I am Macha, daughter of Aodh Rua ; consent to be my friends, and neither rope nor chain shall touch your limbs.” The attendants made no movement to seize them, and after a few seconds’ hesitation, still under the fascination of the lady’s beauty and the kindness expressed in her countenance, they approached, kissed her hand, and all quitted the forest. When Macha arrived at her fortress, in company with her captives, there was some division in the councils of her husband and chiefs concerning the outlaws. Some were for putting them to death or imprisoning them for life, but she stoutly overruled their opinion. “ She alone had secured them, and it was hers to decide on their fate.” Already they were her personal friends, and they had promised to superintend the building of the new fortress, the plan of which, cut on a smooth strip of beech with her gold bodkin, she exhibited to the council. Her husband, her chiefs, and her captives found her irresistible. The fortress of Emania, whose ruins are still traceable near Armagh, arose under the superintendence of the five sons of Diathorba, and there the famous Order of the Red Branch Knights held their sittings in after times. Archaeologists, adopting the opinion of the reliable chronicler, Tighernach, who died at Clonmacnois in 1083, date the commencement of reliable Irish history from the reign of Cimbaoth and Queen Macha.

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From the Spanish occupation of the country no great change of dynasty occurred till the gradual occupation of the island by the Anglo-Normans, the Danes getting only possession of some maritime, and a few inland cities. The posterity of Heremon ruled Conacht and Leinster ; the descendants of his brother Heber Fionn (the Fair), and of Lucha, son of Ith, ruled in Munster ; and those of Heber, son of Ir, one of Heremon’s brothers, in Ulster. The chiefs of these great families occasionally dislodged each other, and now one, and now another occupied the uncomfortable throne at Teamur (Tara), so called from Tea, Heremon’s second wife. The Leinster kings dwelt at Naas or Dunrigh on the Barrow, near Leighlin Bridge ; the Munster kings at Cashel ; the Conacht kings at Rathcroghan in Roscommon ; the Ulster kings at Ailleach, a great stone enclosure in the north-east of Donegal, or at Eamain near Armagh. If an ambitious provincial sovereign made war on the Ard-Righ, this last, gathering his own forces and those of the other petty sovereigns who chose to abide by him, proceeded against the insurgent. The campaign concluded with the one engagement. The defeated king scarcely ever survived : he rushed into the thickest of the fight and was there slain. His conqueror immediately was proclaimed head sovereign.

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