

The Country beyond Ile

Loch Etive and the sons of Uisnach

Robert Angus Smith

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THIS book was begun as the work of holidays, and was intended to be read on holidays, but there is not the less a desire to be correct. The primary object is to show what is interesting near Loch Etive, and thus add points of attachment to our country. There is so much that is purely legendary, that it was thought better to treat the subject in a manner which may appear preliminary rather than full, going lightly over a good deal of ground, and, from the very nature of the collected matter, touching on subjects which may at first appear childish. It is believed that to most persons the district spoken of will appear as a newly discovered country, although passed by numerous tourists. The landing of the Irish Scots has held a very vague place in our history, and it is interesting to think of them located on a spot which we can visit and to find an ancient account of their King's Court, even if it be only a fanciful one written long after the heroes ceased to live. The connection of Scotland and Ireland, previous to the Irish invasion, is still less known, and to see any mention of the events of the period by one who may reasonably be supposed to have spoken in times which for Scotland can scarcely be called historic, excited much surprise and interest in the author of this volume, and it is believed will be pleasing to those who for the first time read the account of the children of Uisnach.

These two eras belong to the earliest notices of our land. The first mentioned has generally been noticed by historians, but little has been said to make us think it real. The other has not passed into history, and it stands at present as our very first account of a connection between Scotland and Ireland which seems to be authentic, although despised as belonging only to Bardic legends. The dreamy state in which the accounts come to us, has led to a desire not to use either the historic or severely critical style in this volume. In the discussion relating to places the wish has been to avoid arguments well known, and as friends have in some cases communicated new ones, these have been chiefly retained as more interesting. The importance given in the main legends to Bards and Druids has led the author to say something of them. It has been his aim whilst beginning with the more distant allusions native to these lands, to describe, after frequent visits and investigations, the remains of antiquity of a pre-historic character as they now appear near Loch Etive, connecting, by historic theories, the larger body of Celts in Europe with the people who were the actors in that region. He wishes to shew that it has required several races to make up the population of countries called Celtic, judging either from their early history or from their present condition.

The slightness of the older materials affected in various ways the mode of treatment, and it was decided to bring together several persons to represent the various views. A Highlander, of course, was necessary to shew part of the ground, but an Irishman was equally required—indeed nearly all the Celtic literature quoted is Irish. A Lowlander was brought to give un-biassed opinions, and he brings three of his family to vary the tone of thought or mode of observation. All, however, take interest in the district, and are supposed to have given to the subject some previous attention. A few of the names are spelt in various ways by writers of good standing, and the author sometimes thought it well not to confine himself to one form, when it does not shew any quality that gives it prominence.

DUN ADD.

“ They passed away from us
With the splendour of swiftness,
To dwell by valour
In the land of the country beyond He” [1] (Islay).

LOUDOUN.— We shall sail to the fastnesses of the sons of Uisnach, and to the islands where they hunted and fished. We shall visit the woods and bays which they frequented, and speak of their history, the romance of their doings, their well-known traditions, and the fancies relating to them. And this I at least do, not merely because of them, for after all they are little known, and much, if not all, is in uncertainty ; but they are links of union with early days, and they present a human interest with which to adorn our mountains. We rejoice in the hills, but have too little to say of them. Their natural features are large. We like some thoughts that lead us more into details, and besides on a holiday we require easy thoughts, and these seem for most men, and certainly for most women, such as refer to persons. By linking our wild hills to the history of persons, we have a mode of enjoying them and a reason for loitering among them, and if we search out the homes of the legendary names, we have places to visit more interesting than the best of modern houses. But still, as I was taught, I also take a de-light in our Highland hills for themselves, and in our Highland 'air. The Highland archæology supplies grave studies, and even labour, when we return home. The sail to Oban is rapid, and through scenery too beautiful for such swift steamers, and I propose that we stay at Crinan.

Margaet.—Of all places on the route, Crinan I would have chosen last. Everybody leaves it as soon as possible. There is a rush from canal-boat to sea-boat and dinner, and are five minutes not enough for its little pier and the general waste around it ?

O'Keefe.—I am sorry to hear this. I wish you had known and remembered the great cauldron that cooked for as many persons as were to dine there, and gave everybody enough and according to his requirements. No place in the world was better supplied with food ; hunger was less there than anywhere else, with a few similar exceptions in Ireland ; and, if things have changed, at least sympathise with the past, even if its greatness has departed.

Sheena — Oh ! that alters the case. I thought Crinan had no romance, and people fancy it has no beauty ; is it not common-place in appearance ?

O'Keefe.— By no means. Row after row of islands defend it from the Atlantic, large and little, rugged and flat, whilst rocks innumerable rise out of the waves, and dangerous currents frighten the reason. They are ramparts and guardians for many quiet bays and towns, whilst their various forms are themselves a wild story and a constant wonder. Steamboats and hotels do not make it easy to dwell there long, but we shall stay a little, and even the sons of Uisnach will not hurry us, since we shall halt at the earliest seat of the Dalriad Scots, and look at their first fortress also, which is passed unheeded as a mere stony heap, instead of the beginning of a great history.

Sheena.—I did not know that it had a history.

O'Keefe.— You may be sure that the English Government that made the canal were not the first who found the value of this narrow passage from sea to sea, nor were the present Scots the first to see that a fine palace might be built in this valley : many a one must have come from the raging sea outside, which cannot reach Crinan until it spends its force upon Mull, rages on the Islands of Saints, roars through Corrievreacan, and calms itself down at the

Dorus Mor—the “ Great Door.” The Dalriad Scots came from Ireland here and settled. I dare say some of them knew the way long before. We can imagine the expedition avoiding Cantire and Jura, as there is a long line of coast which would too clearly show their coming. I dare say they knew also that had they taken earlier landing places on the mainland they would have been as much isolated as if in islands, for the long peninsula of Cantire stretches far south, and is the inner breakwater of the calm and cheerful Clydesdale seas. West Loch Tarbert would entice them, but they probably thought that which a later king asserted, that the narrowness of the isthmus made the land an island. At any rate we shall imagine the Dalriads sailing to Crinan from Mull, and one of their earliest establishments was on that island ; we can think of them avoiding the rough rocks outside Scarba and the violent currents, and coming down south of Eilean-na-naoimh to look for a calmer opening between Scarba and Jura, and finding a whirlpool. And we can imagine them shouting with no small fear, “ This is Corrievreca” (Corrie Bhreca). Breca was the son of an Irish king, and he had nothing to do with this coast, but when he was sailing between Ballycastle and Rathlin he got entangled in the terrible sea commotion or whirlpool there, and went down with his ships and men. It was then named after him. The name of the Scotch Corrie must have been given to it by men familiar with the Irish one, and about the Dalriadic times Breca was fresh in the minds of men from the West. St. Columba knew of King Breca, and had an interest in him, since it is told of him that one day, when sailing through that rough passage at Rathlin, the wind made such terrible troughs in the sea that he saw the bottom of it, and bones lying there, and it was revealed to him that these were the bones of Breca and his companions. The saint was glad and prayed for their souls, and he had the pleasure of seeing the soul of Breca rise before him at once from purgatory up to heaven. The death of Breca was in 440.

This whirlpool would frighten the Dalriads, and they would turn north again and try to make their way among the numberless little islands and rocky points that defend the entrance to Crinan, and we can imagine the next shout to be much more cheerful, “ This is the way,” “ this is the door,” and to this day we go in to the bay by the *Dorus mor*. We may imagine Fergus the son of Ere coming in this way, and Gabhran after him going backwards and forwards, and still more, Aedan making permanent the settlement and keeping his power in the islands. We must imagine few at first, since the valley is small.

But do not suppose that they landed on a desert or lived in peace ; if so, you are far wrong. We shall get a boat here, and good rowers will in a few minutes take us over to Duntroon, that old castle which was built by a branch of the Campbells in later but still in dangerous times. Now a peaceful clergyman has brought his southern learning gained among people then unknown here, but when the Scots landed we have no reason to believe that any building occupied that spot. In those days the people could not build a wall closely knit and standing perpendicularly on a bare steep rock. They went farther back, and there in the wood we shall find the remains of their fortress in the form of numerous vitrified heaps in the direst confusion. The invaders would see a black wall on the hills, the stones of the lower part melted sufficiently together to keep them united ; having no mortar to bind them the builders resorted to fusion ; and having no tools probably to cut them into shape or to quarry great masses, they used the pieces as they found them and thus bound them together. It was not easy to vitrify the wall to a great height, and they probably raised it higher than the vitrified part by masses of loose stones forming a dry dyke which would enclose small stone buildings. The lesser people would live outside in huts built sometimes with loose stones only, and sometimes with interwoven branches or wickerwork.

Sheena.— I should like to know the names of the people and the places, and what kind of people lived in vitrified forts.

Loudoun.— You ask difficult questions, but I suppose Picts lived here—Cruithne. The vitrified forts seem to have come from the north-east of Scotland to the west, and to have made an inroad into Ulster, but only for a little way. It was a curious invention, and it may have been obtained from other countries. There is a fine one in Bohemia, but whether men came to commence it in Scotland from the Continent we do not know ; it is most probable.

O'Keefe.— If the people were Picts I should have expected them to live in Picts' towers, and is it not the case that Mr. Anderson of the Scottish Society of Antiquaries speaks of seven of these towers or brochs at Craignish close to Crinan ?

Cameron.— Yes, but he says also that we cannot go beyond the fifth century for them, and if they began in the north and east they would take some time to come south and west. Now Fergus came only at the end of the fifth century, and probably did not see these forts, which were a new step, an advance on the vitrified. At any rate there are the remains of a vitrified fort, and we hear of no Picts' towers in the same valley. But the Picts may have continued near ; we know that as a nation they were not for a long time conquered, and we can readily suppose them bringing in the new style of building for their defence. The Dalriadic kings did not adopt the broch, but some of the chiefs may have used it ; still we may fairly picture the invaders looking at the black line of the old fort with its half melted wall, and the few people living in comparative abundance on the chase, with protection from storms in their abundant material, and protection from cold in an ample supply of wood and peat. We might even say more by help from Irish analogous living, but we must not imagine too much, and I dare say you would like to hear how the strangers landed.

Sheena.— We should like first to know what the people were like.

Loudoun.— I think we shall speak of them some day when we have more time, but I may say by the way that they were mixed even then. Do not suppose that the world began with the people immediately before the Dalriads, or magnify the events of this little part of our world. There are dark people in Argyle, and most are either dark or inclined to dark, but there are light also ; now the greatest inroad known to us of people from north and east has been of the light class. This, I think, is a sufficient reason for believing that there were dark people then.

Sheena.— But you said they were mixed, meaning, I suppose, that there were light people also even then.

Loudoun.— Yes, I said so, and for one simple reason. The Caledonians of the North-East are said by Tacitus to have been light, or at least red-haired, and as it is evident that north-eastern habits, especially as to building, came to Argyle, it is probable that the people sent specimens of themselves also. Besides, Celtic Ireland was peopled in the earliest times by light and dark people, as we shall see some day, and the opposite coast much resembled it in population in all probability—we might say certainty. There were small men in Ireland and large ; it is probable that there were so here also then as now, but this is less easily shown. The existence of the small is considered certain by most, but whence came the large ? We cannot suppose that the small changed rapidly ; we must bring in a tall and dark people.

Sheena.— Then, do you think they were exactly as now ?

Loudoun.— Not in the same proportion. We have not decided what the Picts were like. The people of Ulster had been communicating with Ireland before the time we speak of, and even if there had been a pure Pictish race in Argyle at one time, it would have become mixed. But the dark and small race were very numerous at the time in Ireland, under the name of Fir-

bolgs, and they seem to have come over to the West of Scotland also. The Irish traditions would lead us to think of other races of Ireland keeping a close communication with Scotland. Cuchullin, for example, is said to have gone to Skye for education. There may have been as the chief people in Argyle the Picts or at least Cruithne, and a considerable mixture. These Picts are not to be supposed as all coming immediately from the North of Scotland. They had a settlement in Ireland, from whence they went to Galloway, and they are well known as opponents of the Romans farther south. Where they came from we do not know, but they had a peculiar dialect, which Mr. Skene has investigated from the few words remaining, concluding it to be somewhat between Gaelic and Cymric. If we want to picture to ourselves these Cruithne we shall find many difficulties. Scottish folklore makes the "Pechs" small men, but perhaps this does not deserve attention. Had the whole of the Pictish region been peopled by small Firbolgs—called by some Iberians—more traces would have been left. Even the fearfully murderous times that the Norsemen brought and continued long could not have destroyed them all. If so, the Norsemen would have left only themselves, and we do not find such proofs of extirpation; on the contrary, we find in the very Pictish Northern regions a tall people with long faces and abundant specimens of dark hair, which Norway, Sweden, and Denmark could not brighten or redden, although there is everywhere a tinge of red, reminding of old Caledonians. These red Caledonians had made advances in civilization. Four hundred years previously, according to Pytheas, no such men had appeared in the North of Scotland. They were invaders evidently. A proverb in Lorn says, "Better to be brown haired than black, better to be black than fair (ban), better to be fair than red, better to be red than bald (carrach), better to be bald than headless." I can only say that I think the races at Crinan were mixed, but the Picts dominant; this is not proved.

O'Keefe.—Well, however that may be, we must suppose them to be on the shore as we are, and the old black fort frowning upon them. If Duntroon is *Dunt-Sroine*—the "Dun of the point" or nose—the old fort would not be so called.

Sheena.—You have told us of the fort and the people. Was the land the same as now?

Loudoun.—I fear the sea has made some inroad, as the plain was called the great moss or great peat bog, and this is probably in part washed away, and in being washed there would be a great deal of black muddy looking material, which caused later men to call it Poltalloch or the dirty pool. Then there has been found on the plain a stone coffin the bottom being 45 feet above the mean sea level, according to Mr. J. Lawson, R.E. The place appears to me swampy, and one would imagine they would not bury there unless in haste, whereas this was not a hasty burial, and, on the contrary, seems one of the most careful, as there are carvings of hatchets, flint or otherwise without handles, and lines very like Oghams, on the stone. This would point to the spot being at least as dry at the time as now, and not being washed by the sea. The Oghams are imperfect, and it has been doubted if they are Oghams, but this is probably because the people who try cannot read them. Still this burial may have been rather later than the time spoken of, and the argument is imperfect. [2]

Enough to say that the evidence points to a little change of shore from very early times, but to no geological upheaval having taken place. We may suppose this grave to have been made when Oghams were in use, but written badly in this distant place. If they went out in the west of Britain, as Professor Rhys thinks, in the eighth or ninth century, they must have been in use some centuries before, probably in some places, later. Styles did not change rapidly in early times, and languages change slowly in all times; a few cases excepted, for there really are exceptions.

Willie.—You have not told us where they landed.

O'Keefe.— I must of course imagine, but when the black fort was on the left, we may be sure that the invaders would take the right side. No army would land under the natives' stronghold if it could find a safer place. They would land at Crinan or as far up the stream as circumstances allowed, and so take solid possession of lodging room. The land is rugged ; there are many pleasant knolls giving good shelter, but suited only for a small army, and the men could run up the side of the river, keeping near the present canal line. They would thus take the rugged side of the glen and look towards their enemies on the warmer, sunnier, and better cultivated side. It was fitter for cultivation then as now from natural position. And so we can imagine them working their way round. After having made considerable progress they settled.

Loudoun.—Is there not a conical hill near the modern house, called, perhaps, by an old Christian name—Kilmahonig, at Crinan, and having an appearance of stones placed round like a moat hill or a Thing.

Cameron.—I know what you mean — it seems to me rather like the works of nature as they are in the district, but I did not examine, and at any rate Thingvölr is Norse, and if the cone be of that class it would be much after the time of our Hibernian friends. And now I wish you to allow that even then the country must have been beautiful—it is so now and it was so seven centuries ago, and we must suppose it so five centuries earlier. An Irish poet says of Scotland in the twelfth century :—

“ Beloved to me—it is natural to me,
Are the beautiful woods of Alban.
Though strange, I love dearer still
This tree from the woods of Erin.”

This was written by Mac Conmidhe when on a mission to Scotland : he preferred the one tree or stick from Ireland to all the fine woods of the eastern land. [3]

O'Keefe.—I will let you have your way there, as it may be right, but if Duntroon is an old name it might be made to mean the fort of the Druids, and Crinan or Grianan or Greenan, the sun-place, the place where the sun was worshipped. The name may have included all the valley, and these great stones towards Kilmartin may have been the temple.

Loudoun.—I suppose you know that you are talking heresy. I wish I could make out something so clear. It is by some believed that there were not any real Druids in Scotland, but the word with its compounds is well known, and we may talk of it some day. At present, however, you may be reminded that although Greenan, pronounced Creenan, means really a sunny place, it is used for the bright part of a building, the pleasant part of the residence where the lady presided, and indicates an important dwelling or palace, so that we do not require to imagine it to refer to more than to the fort opposite, as that is near enough to give a name to the whole. Still your idea is a pleasant fancy ; one likes to think of the religion of a people. In it we learn the character, the very inner souls of the men ; and your remark throws around the place a still greater air of romance and of mystery. However, I fear that your derivation of Duntroon is too strained to assist us in forming a true picture. It may be added, not as an argument, that the invaders, however pagan in their notions, were by profession, I suppose, all Christians ; not so the people who were invaded.

O'Keefe.—But in any case these invaders landed, and they brought their mode of building with them, and on the top of that rough and rocky isolated *Add* they built a *dun*. Perhaps *Add*

was the name of the river then, and the fort would be called after it. Celts are fertile in etymology and they could derive the word from *adh*, *law* and *joy* in their language, but this might not be in any way true ; in so far as I see, it might have been called from *adhbha*, a palace, or from Aedh, son of the king to be spoken of, or better, the king himself, Aedan, the son of Gabran, the true founder of the Dalriad kingdom, as Skene says. It is also called Dunat and Dunaet, which does not contradict the last and natural derivation. We can and we must imagine some hard fighting with the people of the vitrified fort some two miles distant, and many must have been killed.

There were at any rate two parties at the time we are speaking of. The pleasant valley which is now well cultivated would for a while be divided between them, and on the Dun Add side we see great and tall standing stones. If these were erected by the invaders, they would not be for worship ; indeed, it is the opinion at present that all such stones were memorials of the dead. When large, in long lines, or even in very great circles, it has long been imagined that something more was intended, although this belief is not at present in fashion. Pre-Christian worship existed in some form, although we know not much on the subject. Stones were with certainty connected with it. Old notices sufficiently authentic show this superstition in France, and the very oldest notices in Ireland indicate the same. I know of nothing equally clear from Alba, although there are signs of it, and beliefs existed in the time of Hector Boece that the large circles were not private graves merely.

We shall go up the valley on the west, but we move only a little before coming to the great modern mansion of Poltalloch. This name is supposed to stigmatise the plain below, but it has a fine sound whatever be its meaning. Here it stands, a fine object in the valley, with a fine park and many trees encircling the prospect. Behind it on the bare rock there are some of those strange carvings called cups and circles ; the first are little round depressions cut on the stone, the second sometimes single, sometimes several concentric ; sometimes the cups are connected by straight lines ; the like are to be seen in various Celtic places, and more or less similar in Scandinavian lands. Dr. Mapleton mentions something very like them on a stone in India.

If we move on by the road we find over the wall at our left a cairn and very complete stone circle made of boulders. It is apparently as first made, and it is very like those found on Loch Etive, near a vitrified fort which we shall see. As we go on towards Kilmartin, a place which had no such name at the time we are thinking of, since there were no churches here and no saints, we find in the field a greater cairn recently opened and showing a gallery which had not been covered with heavy stones as in Brittany, but comparatively light ones, the remaining scarcely sufficient to keep the two sides from soon meeting. So much has been removed, that it is all ready to be destroyed, unfortunately. Nearer still to the Kilmartin church is another with a long passage to it lined with boulder walls, showing abundant care and some power of building.

If we pass down the other side, and towards Ardrishaig, we soon come to the high stone pillars spoken of, and we can imagine the two parties, invaders and natives, struggling long, and burying their dead in different methods, keeping their own side of the glen. This is supposing the large stones to indicate burying places—the most favoured opinion. I am giving, perhaps, a little too much supposition, but each must judge for himself. We do not go far until the road to the right leads us to Dun Add. This isolated hill, perhaps 150 feet high, has so many stones irregularly around it that one scarcely feels sure which have been left by nature, but after consideration one feels sure that much has been touched by man. Indeed one may fancy, and even more, one may almost feel certain, of a passage winding upwards, consisting partly of rocks and partly of building. When half way up on the south there is found a less

uneven spot where dwellings may have been, and on the upper part and near it, certain remains of very definite buildings, the most definite being at the very summit, where the lower ranges of stone are in some parts undisturbed. Here certainly was an artificial fort, and around it many people may have dwelt ; here the invaders made their stronghold. In old times the land in the plain could not have been drier than now. I believe, indeed, the ancient name, as Mr. Skene and Dr. Donovan say, was Dunmonadh, and although there are some arguments for making that apply to Dunstaffnage, they seem quite insufficient, and we are safer to follow the guidance of these Celtic-learned. Dunmonadh means the fort of the peatmoss, and so we may suppose still more peat than now, but not a great deal, as people seldom put houses on peat, at least I have that belief. Men, too, wanted their cattle fed, and required grass ; and in the old days cattle were the great wealth, although wild swine and deer were abundant on the hills. Birds were less easily caught, still they were not neglected.

Sheena.—But do you think they had little houses and gardens, and kept cattle, and grew vegetables ?

O'Keefe.—Little houses they would have, perhaps some round bee-hive ones, and almost certainly wherever there were trees, wattle cottages, made of sticks plaited together. I do not see that they had raths like the Irish, places surrounded with earth walls, for their cattle ; but I believe in later times they used wattle fences for the same purpose, and perhaps even then. Their cattle would probably be in some such enclosure in times of commotion, and they would in some such way take care of their little brown-wooled, many-horned sheep ; and surely some of their long-legged pigs would be at home, since it would be difficult to catch them when they had leave to ramble freely in the woods or on the hills.

Of course the brown wool made brown dresses, and I suppose that the men had the short kilt and the women the long over-gown, the upper part of the man's body being often uncovered amongst the poorer.

We must now suppose the Dalriads to have settled here, to have conquered the people of the black fort, and that vitrified fort itself to have begun to decay, whilst several little but ambitious kings, much admired in their time, held their court on this hill, and had still their so-called Druids, perhaps soothsayers of a kind, and their bards certainly, and their fine apparel and their pride of conquest. We must suppose Aedan to have passed away, he who settled the kingdom of Dalriada, and whose power was great enough to lead an army, including Angles, into Northumberland. We have supposed him to have made Dun Add important, and to have given it its name ; we may learn better. His life was troubled, although he was blessed by St. Columba ; and perhaps he might have been better at home than fighting in England. I am inclined only to think at present of his successor, the yellow-haired Eochy or Eochy Bui (Buidhe), appointed by the same saint. It is pleasant to have a picture of him in all the glory of his court as painted with the cheeriness of Celtic imagination by an Irish writer or bard. What the foundation was who can tell, but there is generally some for the bright pictures drawn by the class. We cannot say that the account was written in the king's day, and we do not know how late, but it is found in the yellow book of Lecan, transcribed in 1390 according to O'Curry. We must make a great jump, but information exists scantily ; when we want to know exactly the extent of purely historic knowledge we must go to Skene's Celtic Scotland.

Cameron.—And of what age are you speaking ?

O'Keefe.—King Eochy began his reign in 606 A.D., and this may be enough of chronology for the present. The time is not doubted by Skene, and the man is no myth, although he may have been too much exalted by a writer, who, according to Dr. Donovan, wrote of him

before the year 1197, or about six centuries after the events. The earlier authorities are lost, and we take our account of his court from the story as it is extracted from the book of Lecan. Let us imagine the valley lighted by the brightness of the company, an invading and successful people, and the king with the yellow hair to be as he is painted, and proud of his warlike sons.

Eochy was the grandfather of Congal Claen, a young man who sought to be king of Ulster, and who felt himself so insulted at the feast of Dun na n' Gedh that he determined to redress his wrongs. He had not been fed as the other guests were, for they had had wild goose eggs on silver plates, and he was left out, and, as he thought, with intention. So he sought his grandfather King Eochy in Dun Add, and took with him a hundred warriors.

A Druid from the Dun met the ships with greetings. His name was Dubhdhiah, but he is elsewhere called Drostan, as we find in Dr. Samuel Ferguson's poem of Congal, where the story is told in the adventures of that fierce warrior, as an incident which led to the famous battle of Moira (spelt Magh Rath). These incongruous spellings often sound sweetly in the modern pronunciation. The Druid's name I do not know how to make soft, but you may leave out the *bh* and the *dh*.

The Druid said—

Margaet.—But before you tell us what he said, what had Druids to do there? I thought the invaders had been Christians, and blessed by St. Columba.

O'Keefe.—That is true; but Druids of some kind we must admit. The Druids, then, if they did come over with the Dalriads, may not have been exactly like Caesar's Druids, and at any rate all these tales have a thoroughly heathen ring, and seem to have grown out of unchristianized ages. Perhaps Christianity had but a slight hold of the people, and still less of the bards and magicians, who would keep long to their traditions, notwithstanding St. Patrick's great success. We have here our Druid and his welcome, and I consider the modified and so-called Druidism, or witchcraft if you prefer, at the court, much more credible than any real Christianity. The Druid came to meet the boats, and we can imagine him standing on the shore, when he said to Congal Claen in a dignified style of welcome:—

“ My favour was to your bright fleet,
Which I saw at a distance.
Declare your race of stainless fame,
And what your country, whence you came.”

Congal said—

“ We come from noble Erin,
Oh, proud and noble youth;
And we have come hither
To address Eochy Bui.”

The Druid—

“ If you come hither
To confer with Eochy Bui,
After your arrival over the sea,
I tell to you my affection.”

Sheena.—I do not admire the poetry.

O'Keefe.—A literal translation never sounds well, and Dr. O'Donovan, whose translation it is, wished to be exact.

The King of Alba was sitting in an assembly of his nobles.

Sheena.—Over there ?

O'Keefe.—Yes, on the spot contemptuously very early called Dunmonadh, and now disregarded. The king and his men welcomed Congal, and in a right royal way promised him the forces of Alba, and sent him to confer with his sons, who were there in conference. He said, “ I have four sons, Aedh, of the green dress, Sweeny (Suibhne), Congal Menn, and Donald (Domhnall) Brec, the eldest of thy maternal uncles ; it is they who have command of the forces of Alba.” He had promised never to fight against the king of Erin, but with diplomatic duplicity, royal even then, he promised all his forces. The uncles were all delighted to see the young man from Erin, and all wanted to take him home and feast him ; they had all separate houses not far off, and all these are spoken of as having been well appointed.

Sheena.—One wonders how food could be found for any large number of people here.

O'Keefe.—You forget the abundance I spoke of, and that Eochy the king could entertain any number of guests with abundant food, because he had the great magic cauldron which always cooked food enough for whatever number of guests there were. Aedh, the youngest, in his green dress, asked Congal to stay with him, and refused to fight if this were not granted. Donald Brec said he was the eldest, and ought to have the guest, and the others put in their demands, until the Druid was obliged to interpose, as Congal did not wish to offend any one. Dubhdhiah said, “ Tell them that you will stop with that one of them who shall obtain the regal cauldron which is in the king's house to prepare food for thee, and that the person who shall not get the cauldron is not to be displeased with thee in consequence, but with the king.”

Sheena.—This is rather depreciating the capabilities of the sons, is it not ? It supposes that they could not feed Congal well enough.

O'Keefe.—No one would despise the use of such a cauldron. It was able to return its due share to each, and no party ever went away from it dissatisfied, for whatever quantity was put into it, “ there was never boiled of it but what was sufficient for the company, according to their grade and rank ;” there were other cauldrons in Ireland with this same power.

The sons then sent their wives to petition the king for the cauldron. Aedh or Hugh's wife went first.

I cannot remember all the speeches, but the king asked this Hugh's wife why the cauldron should be given to her, and she said it was because her husband never refused any gift to any man ; he had a bounty more extensive than the world, and the jewels of the green-faced earth would not remain an hour on his hand ; he would put upon small spits all that his proud brothers would give to guests. But the king said, “ I will not give you the cauldron as yet,” and turning to Congal Menu's wife, asked her why her husband should have the preference. Because, was the reply, there is no king's son. better than he, his shield can shelter a hundred heads, he is brave, not small, and jealous.

That was not enough for the king. So Donald Brec sent his wife, who gave her reasons for preference “ If the great Sliabh Monaidh were of gold, he would distribute it in an hour ; no king ever ruled better than Donald Brec.”

Sweeny's wife then came and boasted of the size of the house—

“ One hundred goblets, one hundred cups,
One hundred hogs, and one hundred joints,
And one hundred silver vessels,
Are yonder in the house.”

But after all the old king had the feast in his own house, and so prevented quarrelling ; still it was after asking the advice of the Druid, whose answer was very wary.

The King.—“ Let my austere Druid decide
Between the wives of Mogaire's sons,
To what fair-skinned yellow-haired woman
Of them my cauldron shall be given.”

Dubhdhiadh.—“ If it were a golden cauldron,
With golden hooks to move it,
Oh Eochy of the hosts of men,
It should be given to Donald.

“ If it were a cauldron of silver,
From which would issue neither steam nor smoke,
It should be given to the plundering Hugh,
The youngest of the sons of Eochy.

“ If it were a cauldron very great,
It should be given to Congal of the beauteous tunic.
That renowned man of great prosperity,
Who makes lawful of unlawful properly.

The cauldron with ornament,
Oh Eochy, oh great king,
Should be given to the host,
To Sweeny in the middle of the house.”

The king gave his blessing to his sons' wives, and feasted everybody.

I must not follow Congal ; having excited your interest, you may read of his collecting troops in Britain, and his failure in Ireland. [4]

Margaet.—We must now leave Dun Add, and see the valley. But before we go I should like to know what happened to the place, and why it is so solitary.

O'Keefe.—Perhaps a good deal more may be gleaned. I can tell you some little. We shall not go over the history. The Dalriads had four divisions, and one of these was in Lorne, the chief of which lived in the castle of Dunolly, the head of all being at Dun Add. The whole of the power was taken from them again by Angus, the king of the Picts, who laid waste the country, took Dun Add, and burnt Creich, their western centre in Mull. You must read Skene's history to see the order of things till the Picts and Scots were united in Kenneth M'Alpin, and as that king lived at Forteviot, near Perth, and died in 858, the old capital here would go early to wreck, and you see what it has become in a thousand years. It has been difficult to unearth the little we know, and to connect the stories of old with these broken fragments of buildings.

Margaet.— You said the sons had houses ; can you tell where they lived ?

O'Keefe.—That is asking much. I told you of cups and circles over at the new castle, and if we go a couple of miles nearer to Lochgilphead you will see a farm house called Achnabreac. This, they say, means the field of the spots. Breac is not uncommon as applied to places ; it might mean also in the Irish, the field of the wolves, and this is much more sensible. The word is not given in Scotch Gaelic dictionaries as meaning wolf, but it is in Irish. It means also a trout, which is spotted ; but one fancies that it might take its name from Donald Breac or Brec, who became king. He was no mean person, and his power extended far.

Cameron.—Would that be good Gaelic—would not Achnabreac suit the wolves better than the king ?

O'Keefe.—That may be, but a similar form might easily pass into Achnabreac when the original idea was forgotten, and that king has been long forgotten here. Another son may be remembered in the names Sweeny, Loch Sweeny, and Castle Swin. One may be fanciful at times, but we must take care to keep our fancies free in the sense of distinct, so as not to confound them with facts. I daresay the cups and circles were old at the time we speak of, and Donald Breac would not know their meaning, and the word would not relate to these spots ; but even this is only an opinion. I believe in many old traditions among the Dalriads.

Cameron.—It is getting late. At Carnban, the white cairn, we can see more cups and circles, and we may go back to Kilmartin to stay, so as to dream for a night, and wander for a morning in this valley of the Scottish kings ; for these men were Scottish invaders, intruding on the men of Alba and the Picts.

Loudoun.—To-day is fine. We may take a walk up the valley, and have a peep at least at the tower of Carnassery, where the Carswells lived, where, I suppose, Bishop Carswell was born. It is a long step to him, although he was successor to St. Columba after 1000 years, as Bishop of Argyll and the Isles, after being rector or minister of the parish of Kilmartin. He did not care for old stories, and tried much to suppress them. We owe him, therefore, a certain grudge, although we may thank him for translating into Gaelic John Knox's Liturgy, which has been so carefully edited by the Rev. Dr. M'Lauchlan. Bishop Carswell made poems, and rather melancholy ones, warning us to think of death, whilst the neighbours made lampoons upon him, and called him greedy ; but his size was great, and his eating may have astonished people scantily fed in the troublous times of the sixteenth century. He requested to be buried at Ardchattan ; and he was carried there with difficulty on a wild and stormy day. We intend to visit the place, but we shall not find anything to remind us of him, so we shall leave him connected in our minds with the paternal tower standing high in the wood to our left hand going to Lochawe, and making a fourth style of building still to be seen, before the old Highland cottage, which is a fifth, brings us to our modern varieties.

The steamer will take us to Oban. We can meet it at Crinan pier. We have scarcely time to look at the little conical hill alluded to, said to be a Scandinavian hill of meeting, but we can mark the wondrous twistings of the road, and the scanty arable land among the many prettily wooded hills.

It needs a poet to describe a sail to Oban. Swift steamers run in two hours or little more, but it is a new land to those coming from the South or East. There is a new geology to them ; the hills have changed their shapes, the land is cut out into forms difficult to remember, places that look inland are suddenly seen to be sea-ports, and the ocean is sprinkled over with rocks, whilst it rushes in violent currents. Old shores stand up and show themselves, remind-

ing us that they too in their time had borne the ravages of the waves, and were glad of rest. Islands deserted tell of men also who had suffered and fled ; and the Garveloch Isles at our left, containing Eilichanave (Eilean-na-naoimh), the isle of the saints, reminds us of terrible struggles that Christian civilization had in these stormy regions.

Eilichanave has remains of churches and a monastery nearly as old as those of Iona. It was called Hinba before the saints made it famous, and now it descends to be called one of *mare* islands, a corruption, as Skene thinks, of *Eileann an mhara*, isles of the sea, [5] an expression indicating loss of tradition and fading interest. This name has been changed again into Horse Island ; and this derivation may account for several islands named so.

We are going to Loch Etive, and we cannot wait for all the visits that these isles tempt us to make ; we cannot wait where the slates are leading men deep under the sea, and where, I daresay, the workers have frightened the Gruagach, who lived about this spot, and who himself frightened so many people long ago. [6] We shall pass the rugged turning of Seil, which stands like a smaller Ardnamurchan, and looks to those ever threatening precipices of Mull. We shall pass the great walls of basalt dykes built by rocks better fused than the walls of the vitrified forts, and outlasting all around, defying the sea and rain when others have been ground into mud and long cleared away.

We are coming into a new district ; we may rest and look for the old tower of Dunolly, and the cheerful white houses of Oban, which tell us to be ready to land in its well-protected bay.

NOTES.—This presumes that we do not know the really first arrival of the JS Scots in Britain, and that we are equally ignorant of the exact boundaries of Picts to the west.

Dr. Fergusson says that the “ Brochs ” were built by the Norwegians, but this does not affect the arguments here.

Marc is a word for *horse*, and may have been mistaken for *mara*.

[1] From the additions, Irish and Pictish, to *Historia Britonum*. Skene’s Translation. Said of the Picts from Ireland.

[2] See account by the Rev. R. J. Mapleton.

[3] O’Curry and O’Sullivan, *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, vol. III., p. 272.

[4] Dr. (now Sir) Samuel Ferguson has written a poem called “ Congal,” the hero being the Irish sub-king of Ulster. His course is illustrated till his end arrives at Moira.

[5] *Life of St. Columba*, by Dr. Reeves, 1874, Appendix, p. 319.

[6] I remember this in Campbell’s *West Highland Tales*, but cannot turn to it at present.

Loch Etive and the sons of Uisnach (1885)

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