

Culdees & Irland It Mikla

The Irish in America one thousand years before Columbus

Martin John Mulroy

1906

•

Culdees & The Northmen

In 1849 the German Schroeter, who was very much devoted to collecting and perpetuating local traditions, thus speaks of these islands,— “ This archipelago was ravished by the Northmen as were the Orcades and the Shetland Isles, but the traditions and remembrances of the Culdees still linger there. When the Northmen invaded these islands, they found there men whom they regarded as of a different creation, for they had books and could write, which contrasted so strongly with their own savage nature, while they understood nature so well that they were able to heal both men and animals. They made predictions according as the general catch of the fish, and the health of the people, were favorable or unfavorable.

They did not live as others, for their food consisted only of milk, wild birds' eggs, roots and sea weed. They tamed some goats which supplied them with milk, but they neither killed an animal nor spilled blood, preferring like the ancient Egyptians, to live upon the vegetable kingdom, and we have no doubt this fact contributed much to the advanced state in which learning and science then prevailed. The only things they accepted as presents or in remuneration for their services, were unleavened bread, the cuttle-fish, and a species of composite cloth, called drugget, which is made of a mixture of flax and coarse wool. They still point out several localities where these pious and good men inhabited. When the Norwegians arrived, some of them fled by sea to other desolated places, and there took refuge in the caverns. Through all this one can easily see the Irish Culdees who dwelt there and converted the inhabitants to their own principles of belief.”

But where did the fugitives go when they left the Faroe Islands ? Dicuil, the astronomer, who wrote a learned tract on the measurement of the orb of the earth, says it was to Iceland, an island distant about two days' sail from Bretagne. That it was peopled by the Scots at one time, but those being driven out by the savage Northmen, its only tenants then were wild beasts and sea fowl.

Faithful to their spirit of initiating and propagating, the Culdees always sought new lands where they might teach others their native cult, and find repose.

The first land which they met to the north was Iceland. Dicuil calls it Thule, but the description which he has left leaves no doubt, because Iceland is the only one of all the islands around the Polar Circle, where the Culdees could land and reside on quitting the Faroe Islands. We will let himself describe his voyage. He says, “ Some of the clerics who lived there for thirty years have told me, that from the first of February, almost to the first of August, the sun does not set, except during the Summer Solstice, and a few days before and after, when he appears to hide himself behind a hill, so that darkness prevails only for a very short duration. In fact it is so short that one can see to pursue all his occupations, even to the most minute, during the entire time between the periods above specified, and it is probable that if one was on the top of a mountain, the sun would not be so hidden from his view. They have contradicted those who have said that this was an island surrounded by a sea of ice, because these clerics have told me that they went there in the coldest season, and were able to

land. It is true they have said, that in wandering to the north of this isle, they have found the entire ocean impenetrable.”

The Culdees, as we see, were enterprising, and if they were not hindered by these unsurmountable barriers of ice, against which have been shattered all the heroic and daring attempts from Pythias to Nansen, they would have carried their Celtic doctrines and civilization far beyond Iceland, wherever man was found, and have planted there the Gal Greine or Sunburst of the Gael.

In the direction of the north, Iceland was their final goal, and when the Northmen landed there in the latter portion of the ninth century, after ravaging the Irish ecclesiastical establishments that were within their reach, the monks ceded the place to them, and wandered into other lands. But Aré Frodhe says in his “*Islendina, Segur*,” 1843, “Some of those monks, however, remained in the country of Iceland. It was evidently an Irishman, or his descendant, who in 986, A.D., accompanied Erick Raudhe in his expedition into Greenland, and composed a poem entitled “*Hafderdingar*,” of which the refrain has been preserved in the *Landnamabok*, thus, “I pray that Power who submitted the monks to those salutary tests, to favor my voyage ; that the Master of the celestial vault reaches out to me a helping hand.”

The same author remarks, “There were in Iceland, at this time, Christians, whom the Sagas tell us were Irish, and whom the Norwegians called Papae, but these latter departed, because they did not wish to remain with the Pagan Northmen. They left behind them, Irish books, bells and crosses, from which it was justly concluded that they were Irish.”

In another place the *Landnamabok* or Book of Invasions says, “Before Iceland was colonized by the Norwegians, there had been in the island some men whom the Northmen called Papae. They were Christians, and it is asserted and believed they came from some country west of the ocean, for the objects found among them must certainly have come from Ireland. They had a church dedicated to St. Columbcille, and was built in honor of Aslof-Aslik, one of a dozen Irish teachers who had been established in Rengarthnig, and who did not wish to have any intercourse with the surrounding Pagans.” The things thus found were made at Papey and Papylae. We see thus by English books that there existed an intercourse between them.

All the archipelagoes of the northern seas, as well as Iceland, have been travelled and colonized by the Culdees, but being impeded by the ice they were unable to push their investigations further, and stopped from their labors by the Northmen in their inhumanity and brutality of conquest, they were obliged to recoil before them, as formerly the Phoenicians before the Greeks, and attempt new discoveries in this ocean, which even to them had not deceived any of their hopes. They boarded their currachs once more and from tempest to tempest, from storm to storm, they finally landed on American soil which they named “*Irland It Mikla*” or “Greater Ireland.”

Beauvais in his “*Discovery of the New World by the Irish*” and his “*First Traces of Christianity in America Before the Year 1,000 A.D.*,” gives an elaborate account of the civilization and humanity of those Irish Culdees from the tenth to the fourteenth century, and quotes authorities to which we, alas, have not access, all eminent French explorers and missionaries, who had no purpose to serve nor vanity to gratify, but only to tell the truth, of what they found, to their own countrymen who sent them.

The Scandinavian Sagas are practically in accord with these stories of our own, and only differ in being more full and giving our people greater credit for those early exploits than we claim for them, for we have been taught a false modesty in conceding to the Spaniard, the

Italian, the Englishman and the Jew, the deeds which should shine as halos in our own bright, lustrous crowns.

Irland It Mikla (Greater Ireland.)

The Culdees profiting by their former experience with the savagery of the North, took good care on this occasion to guard their discoveries and watched with jealous care, lest they should become known on the European side of the Atlantic. These are the Northmen from Iceland who established themselves on these new domains, and it is in the works written by them, that we shall find the proof of this first establishment of a true Celtic civilization in the New World.

Three Icelandic works speak of “Irland It Mikla” or Greater Ireland. The first is the “Landnamabok” or “Book of Invasions of Iceland.” It is a genealogical history of the principal Icelandic families from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries. It was composed or begun by Aré Thorgilsson, surnamed Frodhe, or the philosopher, and completed by five other historians or genealogists.

Aré Frodhe lived from 1067 to 1148, A.D., and thus speaks of his great-grand-father, Aré Marsson. “Aré the son of Mar and of Thorkatla was driven by a tempest on the Huitramannaland, that some call “Irland It Mikla”. This country is situated to the west of the sea, near Vinland St. Godha, and they say about six days’ journey from Ireland. This was first made known by Rafin, Hlymreksfare, who had for a long time lived in Hlymrek in Ireland.”

“Thorkell Gellisson reports also that some Icelanders said they learned from Thorfinn, chief of the Orkneys, that Aré had been met and known in Huitramannaland ; that he could not leave it but was treated with great honor there as chieftain ; that Rafin who lived a long time in Limerick, Ireland, got his information from Irish voyagers returned from America.”

Here then is an Icelander, Aré Marsson, thrown by a tempest on a land where he was well received by the people, who would not permit him to return again to his own country. The reports of these voyagers spread nevertheless, and there are two Icelanders, Rafin and Thorkell Gellisson, who transmitted them to the compilers of the “Book of Invasions of Iceland.” As this Rafin lived, we are told, for a long time in Limerick, Ireland, it is safe for us to assume that he gleaned the information from those Celtic sailors who had ventured beyond the Atlantic waves and on their return home had reported the story of their travels.

As to Thorkell Gellisson, he was the paternal uncle of Aré Frodha. He had voyaged much, learned much, and transmitted a great deal to his nephew, through whom the story and facts have been preserved, which we ought to have had made known centuries ago, but which like all other attributes and facts of our former greatness have been studiously destroyed, and nothing preserved by those trusted few, but something detrimental to our fame or character, painted to exaggeration, to show a necessity for redeeming us. Yes, men who claim to be our countrymen have actually belied their own ancestors for the sake of a living and left it for the French and the German scholars to undo what they had villainously done.

These facts, then, rest upon the testimony of the chief of the Orcades or Western Isles, who told of a country colonized by the Irish Culdees, and who, without doubt, had preserved some relations with the other colonies founded by the same order of men ; that they occupied a great country to the west, and that they hindered all the navigators, who, either by hazard or storm, had been driven on the shore from landing in their newly acquired territory.

But we have a new fragment of Irish chronology, more conclusive still. It is taken from the Eyrbyggja Saga, which was composed in 1148, A.D., before the Irish submitted to the king of

Norway, in 1204, A.D. It has been published twice on the continent of Europe in its entirety in 1782, A.D., at Copenhagen, and in 1864, A.D., at Leipsic. Beauvais has given extracts from it in his “Scandinavian Discoveries in America from the X. to the XIII. Centuries.” It is a history of notable persons of the peninsular of Thorness and of Erbygges in Western Iceland.

According to this Saga, Bjern, son of Asbrand, was smitten by the charms of the beautiful Thuride of Frodha, and remained on intimate terms with her after his marriage with another lady named Thorold. From this followed hostilities and assassinations. Being arrested and brought before the chief judge for having killed two of his adversaries, Bjern was sentenced to exile, where he distinguished himself for his bravery and returned to Iceland after six years, but always preserving the same affection for his former love Thuride. Compromised by his assiduities and pursued by the hatred of the family of Thuride who did not favor her illegitimate relations, Bjern was exiled a second time, and set sail under a strong north-easterly wind which blew continually for a long period. Nothing is heard of this ship for several years afterwards.

Irish Chronology.

The second exile of Bjern occurred in the year 1,000, A.D., and about thirty years afterwards, or 1030, towards the end of the supremacy of St. Olaf, a rich Icelandic ship owner, Gudhlief, having made a voyage to Dublin, Ireland, sailed towards the west, returning into Iceland, but a strong northeastern wind drove him so far to sea, towards the west or south-west, that he lost his course and did not know where to land. Towards the end of Summer his sailors prayed and made vows, in case they should be preserved from shipwreck, and very soon after they descried land at a distance which proved to be a very large tract, that they knew nothing about, for they had never seen it or heard of it before this occasion.

Gudhlief and his crew, fatigued by a long and dreary voyage, were glad to meet land and as soon as the opportunity offered came ashore. They found a good port and were only a little while landed when some men arrived to meet them, of whom they knew nothing save that they spoke the Irish language. Soon this multitude, increased to several hundreds, assailed the navigators, seized them all as captives, secured them with chains, and brought them inland to the high country.

They were conducted before an assembly to be judged, where they learned from the conversation and discussions, that some of the people wished to end their career at once by massacre, but that others, more lenient and humane, counselled saving their lives, but reducing them to slavery for a time and dividing them among the several communities or tribes.

During the deliberations, they saw approaching a troop of horsemen bearing a standard resembling the Irish flag, from which they concluded that the chief of the assembly was of the company. When the troop arrived, they saw riding beneath the banner, a noble and vigorous looking man, already aged and hair tinged with gray. All the assistants bowed before this personage and received him with every mark of honor. To him was left the final settlement of the affair.

The old man, came to seek Gudhlief and his people, and speaking to them in a northern language asked them from what country did they hail. Gudhlief replied that the majority came from Iceland. “And which of you comes from Iceland?” Gudhlief said he was one of them, and saluted the old man who saluted him and received him so kindly and asked him, “From which part of Iceland are you?” Gudhlief said he was from the Cantred of Borgarfoerdh. He then questioned him about all the personages in the locality of any standing, as well as those in the district lying around Bredhaf joerdh. In this conversation he asked him

of everything in particular regarding Snorre Godha, and his sister Thuride of Frodha ; but above all of Kjartan, son of Thuride, who was at that time master of Frodha.

As the inhabitants were growing impatient and demanded a speedy solution of the affair, the chief declared that he should let the strangers go free, but said in confidence to Gudhliof : “ Now that the Summer is well advanced, I advise you to set sail from here promptly, because it is not necessary or good that you trust yourselves too much to the inhabitants, as they are now annoyed and believe that the law has been violated in your favor.”

“ But,” said Gudhliof, “ if we should ever arrive in our native country, who, shall we say, has saved us from this catastrophe ?” “ I cannot tell you that,” said he, “ for I would not wish my parents, friends or brothers-in-arms, to know where I am, lest they might make a voyage here as you have done and then, perhaps, I might not be here to protect them. There are in this land chiefs more powerful than I am, although not in this locality where you landed, but if they chanced to be here they would have little regard for strangers.”

In spite of the entreaties of the Icelanders the old chief would not tell his name, but pressed their departure, assisted them in embarking and gave them many presents destined for Thuride and her son, but in parting admonished them sternly, “ If anybody shall insist on knowing or believing to know from whom those objects come, tell them from me that I object, and that I oppose anyone, whoever he may be, coming on my part, to find me. It would be a dangerous enterprise, unless it should happen them as it did you, that they should get a favorable landing place. This country is large and badly provided with places to land, but above all, tell them, that there is a very bad reception given to strangers.” Gudhliof and his crew betook themselves immediately to their ships, and arrived in Dublin, Ireland, late in the Autumn, where they spent the Winter. The following Spring they set sail for Iceland, where they arrived in good season, and delivered the presents to their proper destination. Some writers hold for certain that this chief was Bjern, but there is no proof for it, other than this we have just quoted.

No doubt, these adventures are very romantic, and the fortuitous meeting of Bjern and Gudhliof appear arranged to suit, but it is not incredible and besides it is preserved in an Icelandic Saga, whose authenticity has never been contested. But if we accept the truth of this story, we must conclude that the two Icelanders, Bjern and Gudhliof, have both been cast by a tempest in a civilized country, situated far to the west, where the Irish language was freely spoken, but where the inhabitants, for reasons of self-preservation, either massacred or reduced to slavery, all those plundering Northmen, who chanced to come among them. Then, again, this country was situated to the west of Ireland and of Iceland, in the direction of America, and appears to correspond to the Irland It Mikla, where Aré the son of Marsson, had previously landed.

A third Saga, that of Thorfinn Karlsefne, composed from the accounts of one of the many Northmen, who discovered Vinland, contains a passage of great importance, relative to the establishment of the Irish in the New World. It is said that some time about the year 1,000, A.D., Thorfinn and his companions after having passed three years in Vinland, or America, were returning into Greenland, when they found upon their way five Skroelligs or Esquimaux, a man with beard, two women and two children. The people of the Karlsefne, captured the children, but the man and the women escaped and hid among the burrows of the rocks. The children were taken along and soon learned the northern language, when they told their captors that “ their father’s name was Uvaege, and their mother they called Vetthilde. They said that the Skroelligs were controlled by two kings or chiefs, one called Avalldania, and the other Valldidida ; that they had no houses, but dwelt among the rocks or in holes in the earth ; that another great country close to theirs was inhabited by a people who dressed in white, and often when travelling in great numbers carried poles from which hung long pieces of cloth,

while they cried aloud : “ This great country is believed to have been Huitramannal and or Irland It Mikla.”

Who were those people, dressed in white ? Who, but the ancient Culdees, or some of the original inhabitants, amongst whom they settled, and who retained faithfully the costume of Columbcille. Perhaps, these were the Indian tribes who were called Cneistneaux by the French (the letters “ r” and “ n” are commutable). They dwelt close to the great lakes, west of Michigan. What were these poles borne aloft and hung with draperies ; and what were these chants, which had struck and had so much affected the imaginations of the young Esquimaux? Is it not easy to recognize a procession of some chanters, of which those Culdees would have preserved the custom even in their new country ? The Icelandic Saga of Thorfinn says so, and reference is made to those early Irishmen in each of five manuscripts, preserved in Iceland, and published by Rafin in his “ American Antiquities,” and by the “ Greenland Historical Society” in their transactions.

Irish Documentary Proofs.

From these three Irish documents, preserved by the Landnamabok, the Eyrbyggja, and the Saga of Thorfinn Karlsefne, it is proved that the Irish had discovered, in the West, a country, to which they gave the name of Irland It Mikla, or “ Greater Ireland.” That this other name of “ Huitramannaland” or “ Land Where Man Dressed in White” recalls the customs of the Culdees ; that they had preserved the usages of the Celtic language, and remained faithful to their Celtic civilization ; that they celebrated with processions and the singing of hymns ; and finally that they were without pity for shipwrecked sailors, because, being themselves several times pursued and banished from their settlements, by the cruel Northmen, they wished to ensure future security, and for that reason concealed, as much as possible, all their discoveries. America, therefore, has been known and partly colonized by the Irish, and although the testimony from their own literature fails in precision owing to the immense quantity of their native books that were ruthlessly destroyed, still the existence of Irland It Mikla can and must be considered as an established historical fact.

Two other documents, the one of Italian origin, the other from the province of Gaul, confirm the reality of this colonization of America by the Irish long before Columbus dreamt of venturing on the Atlantic storms.

At the end of the fourteenth century, two patricians of Venice, Nicolo and Antonio Zeno, compelled by the chances of an adventurous life, in the regions, situated in the Northwest of Europe, visited, one after another the countries formerly colonized by the Culdees or white-robed monks of the Irish Cult. They wrote an account of their voyages, and described all the countries visited in glowing pictures and eloquent words. In describing the Faroe Islands they said : “ About the year 1360, A.D., an old fisherman belonging to one of those islands had been beyond the Atlantic and there saw a large country, very rich and very populous.”

But before the Zenos, in the time of King Robert of Sicily, another Italian, Edrisi, recounts a curious piece of intelligence which he learned from one of the Northmen at the court of King Robert (1130-54) A. D. “ Four fishing vessels set sail westward, but soon they were assailed by a violent storm which blew for several days in the same direction, until they were driven from their known course, and had lost all knowledge of their whereabouts in the ocean. When it grew calm, they discovered an island far to the west, and named it Estotiland. They thought themselves then more than one thousand miles from Friesland, their native home. One of the vessels and six men were taken by the natives to a village or community which was very thickly populated, where the chief lived. He asked them several questions but neither one could understand the other. The chief however sent out one of his subordinates, who soon returned with another stranger that was able to talk with them in their own

language. He asked them, on behalf of the king, who they were and where did they come from, and told them that he had been driven upon the island himself some years previously, and had made his home there.

When the king or chief was told about them, he resolved to make them prisoners, They had no choice, but submit readily, as the best policy. They remained here for five years and learned the language of the natives. One of them visited several places, and when, later, he visited his native land, gave his lord an accurate and lengthy account of what he observed. He described it as “ very rich, abundantly provided with all the goods of the world, and a little smaller than Iceland, but much more fertile. About the middle of it was a very high mountain from which four streams flowed that watered the entire land. The inhabitants were ingenious and as far advanced as the Frieslanders, where they must have originally traded, because they observed in the king’s hall several books which, however, they could not understand for their language and alphabet differed much from that of the Frieslanders. They work mines and have gold in abundance. They have commercial relations with Greenland, from which they get skins in exchange for sulphur and pitch. South of this was an immense region, very rich and very populous, where the people cultivate grain and make a kind of drink which is greatly in use among those western peoples, like wine among the Italians. They have towns, villages, and mansions; they construct vessels and navigate but they know nothing of the usage of the lodestone, or governing their ships by the direction of the North Pole.”

“ According to these extraordinary adventures of which more shall be said elsewhere, this fisherman of Friesland, succeeded in equipping his vessel at their expense and returned to his native country, where he reported to his lord the discovery of such a rich country.”

Now what was this rich country, and who were those civilized people, dwelling upon what seemed to those wanderers to be an island ? Their name, their mode of living, their caution against admitting strangers, and above all, their library of strange books at such an early period would prove that they were either Celts or Greeks ; but as it is well known the Greeks did not go so far west until centuries later, while the Irish Celts were, for several reasons missionaries, both to the west and to the east, it is fair to assume that this highly civilized people were no other than the Irish Culdees, who, to escape the savage civilization of the South and the plundering hordes of the north of Europe, went West, where they could enjoy in peace, the fruits of their labor.

We believe that this land corresponds exactly with Irland It Mikla, not only because its inhabitants had preserved the customs, as in the time of Bjern and Gudhliof, of fortifying themselves against strangers, by detaining them as prisoners, but above all because they enjoyed such a very advanced civilization, seen by the words of the Friesland fisherman, and had considerable communication with Europe.

Literature of the Period Establishing New Facts.

Again, they had a literature, their king possessed a library, and without forcing the conclusion very much we can say that the Latin books, found in this library were brought there by the Culdees, who carried them very carefully with them in all their wanderings. True, indeed, they may not have comprehended the Latin tongue, but then we must remember that these Americans of Irish origin had no teachers schooled in the Universities of Ireland.

It is not alone the name of Estotiland, which lends a new proof to this probable identity of Irland It Mikla, and of this country discovered by the Friesland fishermen ; for Ireland, during all the Middle Ages is called Scotia or Scotland ; and if the first editor of the voyages of the Zenoës, had misunderstood his text, and printed Estotiland for Escotiland, it is quite possible that the Escotilanders descended in fact from the Irish colony, of which we have

already told the story. For a further account of this colony we refer the reader to the “ Voyages of the Venetian Brothers, Nicolo and Antonio Zeno, to the Northern Seas in the Fourteenth Century” which was published in English, in London, in 1873. It is true that many ages have rolled since the days when Bjern and Gudhlielph exchanged their compliments, to the days when Zeno wrote about his voyages, and in this interval of near four hundred years, we find little or nothing in contemporary documents, which would allow us to warrant, that the Irish of Europe had not forgotten their brothers in America, but it is none the less very probable that some other mariner should wish to visit a country that had so enriched a number of his brave companions. There is no doubt, the reports of these voyages have not been preserved in history, although they ought to be by right and authenticity, and it is only by admitting the existence of *Irland It Mikla*, that we can explain a very curious Gaulish document, whose authenticity was never denied or even contested, and which appears to us to apply to this mysterious region so long ago colonized by the Irish monks.

In the twelfth century, about the year 1170, a dispute arose between the sons of Owen Guyneth, king of Western Gaul, concerning the succession to the throne. Madoc, one of these princes, wearied and disgusted by these discussions, decided to emigrate, and seek a more tranquil sojourn. He directed his course, straight for the west, and leaving Ireland far behind him, he arrived in a strange country, which appeared so agreeable to him, that he returned to his own country and took with him a number of his followers, whom he persuaded without much trouble to exchange a cold and sterile country for a magnificent region ; and the disturbances of a civil war for the peaceful possession of a country which no one could dispute.

But David Powell, the Gaulish historian, who has preserved this curious and valuable history, is not the only one who can be brought forward in support of Madoc. A bard, his co-patriot, Meredith, by name, also records the voyages of this Madoc in the unknown western seas. Now, this bard lived a long time before the discovery by Columbus, when no one could be suspected of having invented this story for the purpose of national conceit, or of giving to his country a glory which it did not deserve.

The writer, Hakluyt, who published an account of the voyages of the English nation in 1600, A.D., quotes largely from this bard, but there is a better account given in the *Gallic Triades*, a work which appears to be transcribed in the twelfth century, and refers to the losses suffered by the Isle of Bretagne in Macdewag, Ab. Owen Gwyned, who with six hundred men, embarked in six ships, and arrived they knew not where.

But this tradition, then, is it true ? Most certainly it is. The inhabitants of the principality of Gaul, have always been energetic mariners. The coasts indented with bays and harbors, the wooded hills which descend almost to the very waves, the continual view of the ocean, all, as well as the traditions of their ancestors, contribute to inspire them with the idea of voyages beyond the seas. They had not forgotten, neither their King Arthur, nor the mysterious Avallon, who, they expected some day, would chase the Saxons ; but above all, every Gaul expected to meet this much-desired land in one of his fishing trips upon the ocean.

The Gauls and the Whaling Industry.

The Gauls, in fact, were the first to pursue the whale from the shore into the deep sea, and braving the tempest led back their dead captive, as an emblem of adventure and trophy. When dividing the spoils the harpooner received one-fourth more than his comrades, as a token of their appreciation of his skill and daring.

In these difficult voyages, carried on for passion or cupidity, they have often gone beyond the limits of their maritime experiences, and perhaps surprised by a tempest, they were driven

upon unknown shores, which would be quite natural, when we recall that the space from where they hunted the whale to the American shores was only a short distance, and also the astonishing voyages that were taken in these frail barks. Some of them, who returned, recounted the marvels of the country which they had visited, and this, in itself was enough to excite in all the nation the ardor of adventure. The chiefs of the country were effected, and one of them more daring than the others, resolved to see the glories of the great western land, the “ Greater Ireland” of his fathers.

Some say that the voyage of Madoc, had been invented from several others, and that Powell and Hakluyt had fabricated it, to sustain and legalize the projects of Walter Raleigh, who, as his name shows, O’Rahallaigh or O’Reilly, was of Celtic origin. But here let us remark, that the English are not illustrations of like or similar analogies. Whenever they want to establish themselves in a country, they do not look to precedents or the arguments of retrospective eruditions except with a view to deceive, and only look to brutal force which has always characterized their settlements, and scruple not at the means employed so long as the desired end is accomplished. Success is their object, and once accomplished, with “ whatever is right” both church and state sing in concert, “ the end justifies the means.”

Besides, the reign of Elizabeth, which was an open war with Spain, had little time to spare, and little cared for its rights to possession in the New World, seeing its own very existence was in danger, and we can affirm it boldly, that the haughty and gallant Raleigh never dreamt to pose as the heir and successor to the Gaulish Madoc. It was thus in a virgin country, and at the head of a purely English expedition that Raleigh intended to create in America a new England, greater than the old.

If the bard, Meredith, or the historian, Powell, or if the compiler of the “ Triades” have retold the voyage of Madoc, it is because the voyage was really executed, and that all things happened in it as it was recorded. We must not reject it because of tradition, for no less an authority than the great Humboldt, says in referring to a similar matter, “ I have not indulged in, nor do I sanction the contempt with which these national traditions have been treated. I have, on the contrary, the firm persuasion, that with more assiduity in that direction, facts, entirely unknown to-day, shall be brought to light, which will give much explanation to intricate historic problems.”

We shall now endeavor to show from what country the Gaulish prince set sail, and to what people he belonged. Hakluyt pretended to find it in Yucatan, and he gave it as proof, the great number of crosses found in this country by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century; but the worship of the cross was propagated in America and the Old World ages before Christianity. This, then, proves nothing.

Horn, also, believed in the reality of Madoc’s voyage, but thought that he landed in Virginia. He attempted to support it by the traditions of the native Indians. He recalled that the Virginia Indians rendered homage to a certain Madeczunga or Madinga, whose name presented a certain analogy to that of Madoc. Laertes, enumerates with complacency, fifty words used by the Virginia Indians, and which are analogous to the Gaelic. These resemblances have been more signally marked by Ulloa in his “ Philosophical Memoirs of the Discovery of America,” but a great portion of them would appear forced to any but Celtic scholars, and it is for this reason that Robertson endeavored to ridicule them in his “ History of America,” edition of 1777. Shall we, then, conclude from the identity of the Virginian and Gaelic tongues, because that the former, in the time of Raleigh, had a Gaelic salute or address. Hoa, horis, Ioch ; or else they called the bread, bara ; the egg, toy ; the mother, mam ; the father, tas ; the barrel of a pen, colaf ; a fox, clynog ; a nose, trwyn, or the heaven, neaf . Perhaps these resemblances are accidental, or may have been introduced at a very late

epoch. To tell the truth, the necessities of contemporary science absolutely repels a parallel system of proofs.

But they have still maintained upon other points of America, some pretended traces of the Gaelic language. Thus Torres Caicedo, in the *Revue Americaine* says, that the Tuneba language, spoken by the Indians of Tierro Adentro, in the province of Tunja, north of New Granada, abounds in Gaulish words, which they have used for a very long time.

Filson's Proof of the Celtic Tongue being Spoken by American Indians.

Now where did this Madoc, in 1170, settle among his kindred people ? We can only, now, conjecture, but offer you some of the many evidences that exist. Filson in his "History of Kentucky" tells of one Captain Abraham, who in the Revolutionary War, was cast among a tribe of Indians, that conversed freely in the Gaelic tongue with a number of Gallo-French soldiers, who were with him. The Frenchmen understood the Indians thoroughly, and from them learned a great deal concerning themselves and the western country.

Another Gaul, named Beatty, was one day surprised by a party of Carolina savages, who prepared to kill him, as our highly civilized nations would a supposed spy. A minister of God, by trade, he looked to heaven for sympathy and assistance, and loudly addressed a few words to the invisible powers, for pardon of past offences. He was fortunate. They were not spoken in Latin, English, or Hebrew, but in good, plain Gaelic, and they were not spoken in vain, for it was the language of his captors, who, instead of executing him, took him some distance inward where they had a flourishing colony, and where he had the pleasure of preaching to them on several occasions ; but what surprised him most was a roll of manuscript which they showed him, and told him was a copy of their own sacred Celtic Scriptures in their own tongue and script, but entirely different from anything he had ever seen. In his "Journal of Two Months" he refers to this episode at great length, and is supported by the "Philosophical Memoirs" of Lefebvre, who quotes another adventurer named Sutton, that was fortunate enough to fall among this same Indian tribe.

Owen in his "British Antiquities" cites another peculiar case of one Morgan Jones, who was made prisoner by the Doegs and Tuscaroras of Virginia, in 1685, A.D., but was spared by them because he spoke their own language. "They treated us most affably," writes Mr. Jones, "I spoke to them on numerous things in the Gallic language, and preached three sermons for them, every week, in Gallic. It gave them great pleasure to communicate their most difficult affairs to me, and when we were leaving them, they treated us with much civility and manliness."

It is certainly not necessary to place a confidence too absolute in these testimonies, of which some have, perhaps, been invented in later days, and a little suspected, but still it shows that the tradition of Madoc has never been lost, even in America, and that it was not the Irish alone, who knew of a great western island, called Greater Ireland, but that their kinsmen, the Gauls, were well aware of the existence of this land, and when Madoc set out to visit his kinsmen, he was well aware of their existence, and the location they occupied.

Now, it is not in Yucatan, Virginia, Carolina, Kentucky, or New Granada, that we must seek the site of the colony headed by Madoc. It is only in Irland It Mikla that we are sure to find it. The Irish and the Gauls are, in fact, the same race. They have always had kindred relations and intercommunications. It is thus we see by the Pagan and Christian legends of which we have given the analysis, that the Gauls as well as the Irish, believed in the existence of isles and continents on the other side of the Atlantic.

In spite of the precaution taken by the Irish, for the purpose of hiding their maritime discoveries, it was impossible that vague rumors should not be known, and especially to their neighbors and kinsmen, the Gauls. So it was, that when Madoc formed the project of emigrating, it was not to chance, that he entrusted his adventures upon the ocean. He knew of the existence of "Irland It Mikla," and it was there that he particularly directed his steps, where he was sure to find before him, some of his kinsmen, and consequently, expected a good and a hearty reception.

The Implanting of the Cross on American Soil.

Nothing now remains but to find the site of this Irland It Mikla, this land of asylum in the Middle Ages, where was successively sheltered, the Irish, chased from their maritime possessions by the Northmen, and the Gauls, who left their homes, to search adventure beyond the seas.

Several savants are unwilling to reproduce an assertion of Rafin, who placed "Irland It Mikla" in the middle portion of the United States, and founded his statement upon a vague tradition of the Savannah Indians, according to which Florida should have been formerly inhabited by men of a white race, who used iron tools. He further alleges pretended analogy of language and persistent traces of Christianity there. Beauvais, however, in his "Discovery of the New World by the Irish" has demonstrated by an attentive study of texts, and a rigid argumentation, that the true position of "Irland It Mikla" should be placed much further to the north, perhaps, somewhere round the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

It resulted in fact from different passages in the Northern Sagas, that "Irland It Mikla" was situated between Helluland and Vinland. Helluland, according to the voyages of the Northmen in America, was our present Labrador, and Vinland corresponded nearly to the present States of New York, Rhode Island and Massachusetts ; and as they placed Irland It Mikla between those two countries, it must have occupied the southern shores of the St. Lawrence and the islands which stud the Gulf.

The authenticity of this new theory is confirmed by the continual traces of Christianity, or some other cult with common origin, in this region, when first visited by French missionaries from Canada. One of these, a Father Le Clerque, was stationed for twelve years (1675-87), in Gaspasia, the region which corresponds to the ancient Huitra-manna-land.

Very much surprised to find the worship of the cross established among the savages, he was delighted while evangelizing them. He studied their manners and traditions, and on returning to France, embodied his observations in a work, now very rare, which was published in Paris 1691. "The ancient worship and religious custom of the Cross," wrote this priest, "which is admired to-day among those savages should persuade us that this people have formerly received a knowledge of the cross, evangelism and Christianity, which was lost by the negligence of their ancestors."

Father Le Clerque Concludes that THE Cross was Implanted on American Soil by the Gauls.

Father Le Clerque concludes that the civilization of the Cross was implanted in those regions by some Gaulish or kindred people, who venerated the ideas expressed by those symbols. He says, "These Indians, infidel though they be, hold the cross in great veneration." "They bear it, figured upon their clothes, and upon their skin, they hold it in their hands when travelling either by sea or land, and placed it at both ends of their houses as a mark of honor, to distinguish them from the other tribes of Canada." The good priest endeavored to find out the origin of this form of worship, but its origin, like that of all forms of religious worship was so obscure, that it was impossible in his day, 1675, to say just when it began.

However, he learned enough from their traditions to assert, that they first received a knowledge of the cross from a man who came across the seas and having settled among them, devoted his time to the instruction of the people. One old man said, that : Their ancestors were dying of hunger, when there appeared among them a youth, bearing a cross, who told them to adore this emblem of salvation. They obeyed, and were rescued, but to this day, they preserve for this sacred sign the most profound veneration.

As Father Le Clerque composed his book at the end of the seventeenth century, it may be objected to on the ground that the Aborigines, with whom he was so much astonished in finding them Christians, almost, had perhaps been evangelized by the first Europeans who landed in the country in the sixteenth century, but we reply that those Europeans had been just as much astonished themselves, by the numerous vestiges of Christianity that they had met.

In 1534, A.D., seeing Jacques Cartier plant a cross upon the coast, the Aborigines had indicated to him by signs, which he found similarly placed in their territory, that they were no strangers to Christianity. At the time of Jean Alphonse, 1541, A. D., their language contained many Latin words which he gives in his manuscripts of 1542.

In the year 1502, A.D., Champlain found on the shores of the Bay of Fundy, a wooden cross, covered with moss and almost rotten. On going further inland, he found that the Aborigines, not only made the sign of the cross occasionally, but had it engraved upon their skins, marked upon their clothes, and erected in their cabins. Lescarbot, in his “ History of New France” does not hesitate to write “ that these people have sprung from some race of men, who have been instructed in the faith of our God.”

It is easy to multiply examples, but have we not shown enough to prove, that, tradition, is in accord with history, in demonstrating, without the shadow of a doubt, the existence in America, of a colony founded by the Irish people, several centuries before Columbus left the European shores.

As I have already written more upon this subject than I originally intended, I will now conclude by calling the attention of all my thinking countrymen and women to the period when our people were the standard bearers of a civilization that was peculiarly their own ; that this was at a period when the present Anglo-Italo-Judaic civilization was almost unknown ; that either consciously or unconsciously we have neglected our own ideals, and have been the mainstay of these foreign ones, thereby degrading ourselves, and in a corresponding degree, elevating those, who, when in position have ruthlessly sacrificed us, and compelled us to carry the cross of their civilization instead of our own, producing the conditions as they exist to-day, our ignorance of the glory and humanity of our ancestors, while we display an immense knowledge of a barbarous European civilization which is, and was ever antagonistic to the manners, customs, and welfare of our Celtic Race.

The Irish in America one thousand years before Columbus (1906)

Author : Mulroy, Martin John, 1865- [from old catalog]

Publisher : Boston, Mass., Angel guardian press

Language : English

Digitizing sponsor : Sloan Foundation

Book contributor : The Library of Congress

Collection : library_of_congress; americana

Source : Internet Archive

<http://www.archive.org/details/irishinamericaon00mulr>

Edited and uploaded to www.augty.org

December 12 2011