

The Early Peoples of Erin.

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Keating, in the preface of his History of Ireland, complains of the manner in which the ancient Irish have been misrepresented by foreign historians. Strabo, for instance, declared that the Irish were cannibals. Solinus asserted that there were no bees in Ireland—a falsehood rebutted by another foreigner, Camden, who stated that the multitude of bees is so great that they are to be found not only in hives, but also in the hollow places of the trees and ground. Pomponius Mela represented the Irish as “ignorant of every virtue.” “That ignorant and malicious writer,” Giraldus Cambrensis, stated that the kingdom paid tribute to King Arthur in A.D. 519, and added insult to injury by describing the Irish as an inhospitable race (*gens inhospita*), whereas Stanihurst testifies to their hospitality in the sentence: “The Irish are truly the most hospitable men, and you cannot please them better than by visiting them frequently and without invitation.” Stanihurst himself receives the vials of Keating’s wrath for his statement that “the meanest scullion that lives in the English province would not give his daughter in marriage to the most noble prince of the Irish”: and for his uncomplimentary remarks to the Irish language, which he regretted was not expelled with the Irish natives from Fingall, Stanihurst was altogether ignorant of the mellifluous language, and, therefore, was unqualified, in Keating’s opinion, to express his views on the subject. Stanihurst went still further, and although, as Keating remarks, he had no notion of music, harmony, or distinction of sound, had the audacity to pronounce the Irish “an unmusical nation.” Keating wonders that this second Midas, on whose head Apollo, the God of song, would undoubtedly have fixed the ears of an ass, had not consulted Giraldus Cambrensis, that “inexhaustible fund of falsehood,” as he elsewhere describes him, who states in his History: “I find the diligence of that nation praiseworthy in the use of musical instruments, with which they are better provided than any other nation.” This testimony to the musical talent of the Ireland of the twelfth century is corroborated by the resemblance that has been discovered between the Irish melodies and the Norse, which must have been familiar to Ireland for some centuries at the time of Giraldus, and by the fame of the ancient Irish harpers. The present writer has heard people say that the Irish peasantry of the present age have no ear for music, and that part singing, which comes naturally to their Welsh brethren, is only learnt with great difficulty by the Celt on this side of the Channel. Be that as it may, there are few nations as susceptible to the charm of sweet sounds, or as subject to the sway of melody; while the Welsh Giraldus praised the Irish melodies of his age for their sweetness, swiftness, and “*Concordia discors.*” Then Spenser provokes Keating’s wrath by his audacious attempt to trace the pedigrees of the Irish gentry, and to assert that the MacMahons, who were lineally descended from Colla da Chrioch, son of Eochaidh Doimlén, son of Cairbre Lifeachair, Monarch of Ireland, were of English extraction, and descended from the house of Fitz Urse. Many, too, are the deficiencies of Meredith Hanmer, Doctor of Divinity, and the defects of his *Chronicle*, which commences with laudable precision “three hundred yeeres after the flood.” For had he not the hardihood to challenge S. Patrick’s right to be called the Apostle of Ireland, and to mention his predecessors Colmán, Declán, Ailbe, Ibar, and Ciarán, and to ascribe the discovery of S. Patrick’s Purgatory to another Patrick, an abbot who lived in A.D. 850. But, worst of all, he ventured to deny the Irish origin of our island Hercules, Fionn MacCumhail, and to give him a Danish (Keating wrongly says “British”) pedigree.

In a word, all these writers and others, Barclay and Moryson among them, were, according to Keating, utterly devoid of the qualifications required by an historian, and whether “from malice or ignorance” were unfit to essay the task. They seemed to follow the example of the beetle which selects the nastiest thing, rather than that of the bee which chooses the sweetest

places to alight upon. They wilfully pass over all that was commendable and noble in Irish life and customs, and “ dwell upon the manners of the lower and baser sort of people.” Those of us who have read the histories of which Keating complains can not but feel that he had just cause of complaint ; and that the worst types of Celtic life were described, while the best were overlooked, simply because the writers were “ beetles” not “ bees.”

But here it to be observed that if the history of Ireland has been drowned by the cold water of its foes, it has been no less buried under the dry dust of its friends, for there can be nothing less stimulating to the eager student than the Irish annals, say those of the Four Masters. Here a veritable mine of information lies buried beneath a pile of ancient dust, which, like the gravel dust of Europe, contain many treasures for those who can afford the time and means to dig and delve through layers of waste and worthless heaps before they strike the vein of ore.

On the other hand, no one could describe Keating as dull. There are many entertaining pages in his work, and even if one takes exception to the length and doubtfulness of the pedigrees and legends he records, one cannot but admire his ingenuity. Is it not refreshing to a tired imagination to be informed that hundreds of years before the Deluge, Ireland was visited by three daughters of Cain, with Seth, the son of Adam or MacAdam, the ancestor, doubtless, of the MacAdams, who gave their name to Cadamstown ? For, as the ancient poet sang :

The three fair daughters of the cursed Cain,
With Seth, the son of Adam, first beheld
The Isle of Banba.

These distinguished dames, one of whom, Banba, gave her name to the island, were followed in remote ages by three strangers, Caffo, Laighne, and Luasat, precisely “ twelve months before the Flood.” But these unhappy “ men of strength and fit for war,” who were driven here by a storm, were unfortunately drowned in the Deluge at a place called Tuath Inbhir. But, according to “ some records of the kingdom,” which Keating mentions “ out of respect,” the first really historic personage who visited the island was Ceasar, the daughter of Bith, a niece of Noah, but whom the patriarch refused to receive into the Ark. She and some of her companions, whose names have been preserved in the Psalter of Cashel, with due consideration for future historians, landed in Connacht. There Bith, Ceasar’s husband, died on Sliabh Beatha, now Slieve Beagh, on the borders of Tyrone, where his cairn is shown at Carnmór, near Clones, and Ceasar herself died of grief at Carn Ceasra in Connacht “ six days before the rising of the Flood.” Camden had, therefore, some ground for his assertion that “ the island was not without reason called the ancient Ogygia by Plutarch, for they begin their histories from the most remote memory of antiquity, so that the antiquities of other nations are modern compared with theirs.”

Noah’s descendants in the order Japhet, Ham, and Shem seem to have been represented by the ancient inhabitants of Eire. Parthalón, a Scythian, with his comrades were of the posterity of Japhet, according to Dr. Meredith Hanmer and Keating. Parthalon, however, who happened to be a parricide, “ a boy who killed his father,” was followed by the furies from Greece, and he, with all his followers, died of a plague, within the space of a week, at Benn-Eadair, or the Hill of Howth, having possessed the plain of Sean-mhagh-Ealta Edair (Shan-va-alta-edar), or the old plain of the flocks of Edar, which was also called Maghnealta, or Moynalty, the plain of flocks, which lay between Howth and the Dublin Mountains, or may be the old name of Clontarf, as Professor Murphy suggests, the flocks being the sea-birds. On the Dublin hills near Tallaght there may be to-day sepulchral remains of Partholanus and his band ; for Tallaght was known to the Four Masters as Taimhleacht-mhuintire-Pharthalóin, or the plague-grave of Parthalon’s people. In the time of Partholanus, according to Hanmer,

“ many of the cursed seed of Cham (Ham) arrived on this island with their captain Oceanus, the sonne of Cham, called of some Mena, of Moses Mitzraim.” These were of great stature and strength, and after a time engaged in battle with the sons of Japhet, who annihilated them, but, neglecting the burial of the dead, died themselves of the plague which left its name to Tallaght. This was the end of Partholanus, and the country was desolate once more, “ excepting a few silly soules scattered in remote places.”

Then Nemedius, of Japhet’s line, came with his three sons, and partitioned Ireland between them, and in his time, descendants of Shem appeared in the shape of “ vagabond Africans.” These were quite celebrated people in their way. They rejoiced in the name of Fomhoraigh, which Keating explains as sea-robbers, but which is anglicised into Fomorians. Piracy was their occupation, as it was of the Vikings of a later and more prosaic age. These sea-robbers seemed to have been great builders. Keating tells us that they built two royal seats, one called Cinneich at Ioubhniallain, and the other, Rath Ciombhaoith in Seimhne, for the Nemedians, who rewarded their architects by slaying them, and with Irish irony giving them a burial in *terra firma* at Doire Lighe, or the stone by the oak tree.

It would be of great advantage to us if we could locate these places. There are, however, many localities of the name Cinneich, the head or the hill of the horse, which may appear in Kinnetty as well as in Kineagh, in the south as well as in the north of Ireland. Ioubhniallain may stand for Uibh-Niallain (uibh, abl. case of Ua, grandson, generally written O), and would correspond, therefore, with Hy Niallain, an ancient tribe, who occupied the baronies of O’Neilland in Armagh. The other place, Raith Ciombhaoith, may well be called after Cimbaoth, one of the famous trio of kings, who agreed to reign for seven years in alternate succession, and who had the good or bad fortune to marry Macha of the golden hair, daughter of Aedh-ruadh, the first of the three Kings, and foundress of Ard-macha or Armagh, and to escape, as far as we can tell, from the servitude to which that determined dame consigned the sons of Dithorba, the third monarch, of whom Tigernach writes. But this may be too venture-some an anticipation. It is, however, quite possible that Ptolemy, the geographer of the second century, refers to the place. For he mentions Isamnion Akron, or the Point of Seimhne (now Island Magee ?), in which district the Rath of Cimbaoth was built. Nor is it improbable that one of these “ royal seats” was further south. For we are informed by Keating that the first battle which Nemedius fought with the Fomorians after their coming was at Sliabh Bladhma, or the Slieve Bloom Mountains, in which district was the ancient Kinnetty, mentioned in the Felire of Aengus, which resembles Kinneich, as well as O’Neill’s town and O’Neill’s well. Accordingly, it is highly probable that Nemedius, if he ever existed, established himself in two royal seats, from one of which he could control the north, and from the other, the south, west, and east of the country. The necessity of this is apparent when we notice how ubiquitous the Fomorians were, the first battle they fought being in the midlands at Sliabh Bladhma, the next in Connacht, the third in Dalriada in Antrim, and the fourth in Leinster. But at last these terrible sea-rovers, who had originally established themselves in an island off the Donegal coast, known as Tory Isle, not, however, from its political aspect, but from its torach, or tower-like, appearance, overwhelmed Nemedius and his people, and gave their name to the Giant’s Causeway, which is called in Irish Clochan-na- bhFomharach (Clohan a vowragh) or the stepping-stones of the Fomorians.

After the Fomorians came other invaders, the Firbolgs and Tuatha-de-Danann. One division of the former people landed at Inver Domnainn, the river mouth of the Domnann or Fir-domnainn, men of the deep pits, now called Muldowney, which means the whirlpool of the Domnann. and is probably the treacherous channel formed by the sea at Malahide. It is also interesting to note that one of these Firbolg princesses, Eadar, the wife of Gann, one of their five commanders, gave her name to the promontory now called Howth Head (Howth = Head in Danish, cf German *Haupt*), but which was then styled Benn Eadair, the point of Edar. Ptolemy, the geographer of the second century, mentions a place, Edrou Heremos, or desert of

Eder, opposite Eblana, ancient Dublin, which preserves the name of this lady. It is also said to be taken from a Tuatha-De-Danann chief, Eadar, son of Edgaeth. The Firbolgs, according to Keating, were the exiled Nemedians, who had sailed to Greece to escape the tyranny of the Fomorians, and there grew and multiplied until the Grecians rose to oppress them. They then set sail, and safely landed on the Irish shore.

The Firbolgs were divided into three tribes. Their first king was Slainge, and their last was Eochaidh, and for fifty-six years they reigned. Eochaidh, the sixth and last of these, was a good and wise monarch, who sought to restrain the violence of his subjects by making good laws. In his days “ peace and plenty cheered the labouring swain.” For we read that, “ in his time the weather was temperate and healthy, the produce of the earth was not damaged by any immoderate rains, and plenty and prosperity prevailed throughout the whole island.” How pleasant must have been the climate of Éire in those days, and how sadly it has altered for the worse ! This king is said to have wedded Tailte, daughter of Magmór, the king of Spain, in whose honour the assembly of Tailtean was instituted by Lewy of the long hand, one of the Tuatha-de- Danann kings. Tailte is said to be buried at Tailte (gen. Tailtenn), now Teltown, in Meath. As for Eochaidh himself, he perished in battle with the three sons of Neimhidh, son of Badhraoi, at Magh Tuiridh, the plain of the tower, to be identified doubtless with Moytura, not far from the interesting village of Cong, which, with the ruins of its noble abbey, stands on the cumhga or isthmus connecting Loughs Corrib and Mask in Galway. Badhraoi is a strange name, and may be connected with the old Irish *Badh-ruadh*, or God of Wind, who corresponded with the Gallic deity *Vintios*, and if so would be an instance of the manner in which pagan pantheons were filled with deified mortals. A short while previous to his death Eochaidh had been routed by the Tuatha-de-Danann under their king, Nuadha of the silver hand (*Airgiod lamh*). These people are said to have possessed wonderful skill in magical arts, by which they impressed the natives whom they subjugated, and by whom they were practically deified after they in their turn were vanquished by the fierce Milesians. A poem in the Book of Invasions describes by “ what charms, what conjuration, what mighty magic” they won the land. One of their powers was to “ raise a slaughter’d army from the earth, and make them breathe and fight again.” Our chief interest in these cryptic people is centred in the four curious articles which they are said to have brought with them from Denmark, namely the Lia Fail, or stone of destiny, because a very ancient prophecy foretold that, at whatever place the stone should be preserved a person of the Scythian or Scottic race would have the sovereignty ; the sword of Lug (*Luighaidh*) the Long-handed, the spear of the same warrior, and the cauldron or girdle (*coire*) of their deity *Daghda*. These settlers occupied the land for “ a hundred and ninety-seven years,” as an ancient poem, preserved in the Psalter of Cashel, states with remarkable precision. Their divinities were many and various, male and female. Keating mentions *Badhbha*, *Macha*, and *Moriogan*, and states that the three Danann princes, *Macuill*, *Maceacht*, and *Mac Greine*, who divided the land between them, were so called from the objects of their worship, *Macuill* adoring a log of hazel wood (*cuill*), *Maceacht* a ploughshare (*ceacht*), and *MacGreine* the sun (*grian*). It is more than likely, however, that these patronymics were given for other reasons. In a manuscript of the Seabright Collection, used by General Vallancey, if we can depend upon him, a list of the inferior Tuatha-de-Danann deities is given. One of these is *Eochaid il-dathach*. *i.e.*, *Dagh-da*. *Il-dathach* signifies “ many-coloured.” *Daghda* was one of the Danann kings. The point to which attention is here directed is the name *Eochaid*, which means horseman, and to which we shall return. Suffice it to say here that *Eochaidh*, or horseman, was the name borne by the last of the Firbolg kings, by princes of the Tuatha-de-Danann, and also by the kings of the Milesians.

The Milesians came to Ireland, according to the “ faithful Cormac MacCuillenan in his Psalter of Cashel” (so Keating), about 1,300 years before the birth of Christ ; but, according to that “ idle writer” and “ inexhaustible fund of falsehood,” *Giraldus Cambrensis*, during the reign of *Gorgundus*, who lived not much more than 350 years before Christ. This is a differ-

ence of nearly 1,000 years, a comparatively short term considering the obscure ages of which we are treating.

The Milesians, or Goidels or Celts, came ostensibly to avenge the death of a distant relation, one Ith, commander of the Gadelians, “ who was inhumanly slain in defiance of the established laws of nature and of nations” by the three reigning princes of the Tuatha-de-Danann. Ith is said to have discovered the island with an ancient telescope from the pharos of Brigantia, or more probably to have become acquainted with it in his piratical raids, or through the political relations between the ancient Spaniards and Irish, which had been cemented on more than one occasion by marriage. At all events, Ith, “ the son of Breogan, son of Bratna,” “ son of Magog, son of Japhet, son of Noah, son of Lamech” (Psalter of Cashel), and uncle of Milesius, encountered the three sons of Cearmad, son of Daghdha, kings of the Tuatha-de-Danann, who were quarrelling over some family jewels at a place called Oileach Neid, on the borders of Ulster, and in a charitable, we had almost said Christian, but that would have been a slight anachronism, spirit preached to them an eloquent sermon of peace and goodwill, and induced them to shake hands and be friends. Well had it been for Ith if he had not undertaken the role of peacemaker, for the three brothers united their forces against him, and slew him, for all his courage and eloquence, as he was returning to his ship, with a conscience void of offence and a small escort, in Magh Itha. Then Lughaidh, the son of Ith, carried back the dead body of Ith to Spain. The Book of Conquests states that Tor Breógain, the tower of Brigantia, was the place. After having exposed the slain hero’s body on the sea shore, in the sympathetic presence of the family of Milesius and the sons of Breógain, the son related the story of his father’s “ taking-off.” The Milesian warriors, standing round the speaker in a grim circle, moved by the sight of their sweet comrade’s wounds, “ poor, poor dumb mouths,” and by the son’s “ power of speech,” felt “ the dint of pity.” Tears trickled down their iron cheeks ; and they expressed their feelings after the manner of their forefather, and vowed to sacrifice the blood of the sons of Cearmad “ to the manes of their great-uncle” just as the Gauls of Caesar’s time “ sacrificed human beings as victims.” Their Celtic blood was up, the mischief was afoot. One sympathises, however, with the interesting Tuatha-de-Danann princes wrangling over heirlooms, and losing their kingdom and their beautiful and virtuous princesses, Fodhla and Banba, and Eire, who fell in battle with the Goidil.

The Milesians were a wandering race, who eventually found a resting place in our little island. They are said to have been of Scythian blood and Japhet’s noble line. They had, it is said, some intercourse with Moses, but no Irish chronicler gives them a Semitic origin, which fact tells somewhat against the British-Israel theory. From Magog, the son of Japhet, was descended the Scythian ruler, Feinius or Fursa, whose son, Niul, is said to have married Pharaoh’s daughter, the beautiful Scota. Their son, Gadelus, is the reputed ancestor of the Goidels or Gaels. According to the royal records of Tara, he was attacked and bitten, when a babe, by a serpent, but was healed by the wand of Moses, who is said to have foretold that the countries where Gadelus, or any of his race should live, would not be invested with any reptile or venomous beast. This is said to be the reason why the serpent was a favourite device of the Milesians, appearing on their banners and in their scroll work. The learning of Feinius, or Fursa and Niul, his son, was marvellous for their age. Niul, we are told in all seriousness, “ erected schools and seminaries, and taught the sciences and the universal languages to the youth of Egypt.” Unfortunately for his people, Niul sympathised so greatly with the down-trodden Hebrews, that he drew upon his own race the vengeance of another Pharaoh. They, under the guidance of Sru, and not Gadelas, as Hector Boetius and “ such pretenders to history” relate, sailed away in four ships to the Isle of Crete, to escape the might of Egypt. From Crete they removed to Scythia, thence to Gothland, thence to Spain, back again to Egypt, back again to Gothland, back again to Spain, and, finally, these unsettled, but unconquerable colonists, after wanderings to which those of “ much-enduring” Ulysses and

“ pious” Æneas were child’s play, came to Ireland, where they pitched their tents for aye. This is the record in the chronicles of Ireland, and, as Keating says—although all may not assent—unless we depend upon their authority, it is impossible to arrive at any certainty regarding the antiquities and the religious and political state of the kingdom. It has been the custom to regard the Celts as a branch of the great Aryan race, which had its original home in the northern hills of India. But some philologists, Prof. Anwyl among them, arguing from the resemblance of Celtic forms of speech to the Latin, hold that there must have been some common centre of Aryan-Celtic speech in Europe, from which the Indo-European languages could have radiated eastwards and westwards, towards India, Persia, Armenia, on the one side, and Greece, Gaul, and Britain, Italy and Ireland on the other. This centre is supposed to have been the Danube valley of the modern Carinthia. But while the Aryan race impressed its language, social customs, and military ideas upon the peoples it conquered, right, left, and centre, it was not always successful in making the conquered races accept their religious views—whatever they may have been—or in preventing their retention of myths, legends, and national folk-lore. This is, probably, the reason why so many incongruous ideas are found in the Celtic religions.

The Milesians derive their name from Milesius, or Gallamh grandson of Breógan (Bryan ?), from whom the Brigantes of Spain, according to Keating, were descended. Milesius was like Moses in this, that he never set foot upon the promised land, dying before the expedition set forth to avenge the death of his uncle, Ith. However, his widow, Scota, an Egyptian princess, and his eight sons, Donn, Ir, Aireach Feabhruadh, Arranan, Colpa, Heber, Heremon, and Amergin took part in the invasion which the uncles of Milesius organised. That expedition was disastrous to many of these ; for Scota perished, with five of her sons, before the country was eventually divided between Heber and Heremon. The grave of the heroic Scota, who fell at Slieve Mis, in Kerry, is said to be seen between Slieve Mis and the sea, and is by the Finglas stream in Glenscoheen, or Scota’s grave. Bladh, a son of Breógan, was slain on the hills which are now called the Slieve Bloom (Sliabh Bladhma), an interesting connection with the modern King’s County. Other Milesian warriors, Fuad and Cuailgne, gave their names respectively to the mountains of Slieve Fuad, the highest of the Fews Range in Armagh and the Cooley Mountains (Sliabh Cuailgne) near Dundalk. The brave Tuatha-de-Danann princes, whose magic proved ineffectual against the Gael, were slain, and their forces scattered at the decisive battle of Tailltenn. Then Heremon and Heber, sons of Milesius, the former in the north, and the latter in the south, reigned peacefully over their provinces, until the wife of Heber, coveting the three vales of Erin, sowed strife between the brothers, who, finally settled their dispute on the plains of Geisiol—the modern Geashill—in Leinster, where valiant Heber fell. Heremon then succeeded to the throne, and he was followed by his three sons, after whom the sons of Heber Fionn seized the throne, which became a bone of contention between the descendants of Heremon and those of Heber Fionn, and passed now into the hands of one party, and anon into the hands of the other.

Geisioll, or Geashill, in the King’s County, is in the ancient territory of Offaly. We read in Keating (p. 154) that Eithrial, King of Ireland, grandson of Heremon, in 2766 A.M., cut down a great wood, called Magh Geisile, at Iobh Failge, which is the same plain of Geashill in Offaly ; and another at Magh Rath at Iobh Eachach. Is it possible to identify this latter place with the locality now known as Thomastown, but formerly as Rath, some three miles from Kinnetty ? Iobh Eachach may stand for the O’Eachach, the descendants of the Eochaidh, who gave his name to the latter place.

The Race of the Horseman and an Ancient Relic.

The Introductory Chapter dealt lightly with the general history of the early peoples of Éire. In this we shall deal more particularly with the midlands of Ireland, the country around Kinnetty, and shall select the kings of the name Eochaidh, who were connected with the

district. Prof Connellan gives an interesting note on the name Eochaidh in his translation of the Four Masters (p. 41): “Eochaidh, pronounced Eochy or Eohy, anglicised Achy, and latinized Eachadius, Accadius, and Achaius, a name of many kings and chiefs, is derived from Each or Eoch, a steed, and therefore signifies a horseman or knight.” O’Flaherty in his *Ogygia* gives the name as Echod or Etac. Donovan in the Book of Rights interprets Eochaidh as eques or horseman. O’Reilly in his Irish Dictionary gives eochaidh, Eochaidh, a man’s name, with genitive eathach. In Colgan’s Life of S. Nennius the same genitive is given. This being aspirated would be pronounced Eathach, and is probably the latter portion of the name Kinnetty. We shall now see that quite a number of kings of the name Eochaid were connected in some way with the districts around Kinnetty.

The first of these was Eochaidh Eadgothach (2866 A.M.), or as O’Halloran explains it, Eochaidh “of many colours.” If that be correct it would be this Eochaidh and not his predecessor Tighernmhas who established the law of colours by which the colour of one’s coat or dress was regulated, a slave being allowed but one colour, a soldier two, an officer three, a gentleman who could entertain, four, a nobleman five, the bards, historians and royal family six. Another derivation of the name would connect it with singeing. This would recall the fact that it was an Eochaidh who is alleged to have introduced the custom of driving horses and cattle between the fires of Beal or the sun, on the day of Beltaine (la-beal-tine), which, according to Cormac’s Glossary, means the two fires which used to be made by the lawgivers or Druids with long incantations, when they drove the cattle between them to guard against the diseases of each year. This day is said to have been the first day of summer, the first of May. O’Donovan’s Almanac (Celtic Society) for May, 1848, gives “May-Day, 1, Monday, La Bealltaine, SS. Philip and James, S. Mochœmius, Abbot of Terryglass. There is a Bell hill in Clareen, near Kinnetty, where S. Kiaran is said to have rung his bell, but which is more likely to be connected with the ancient fires of Beal-taine kindled originally in honour of the Sun-god, but kept burning to the glory of the true God by S. Kiaran, who, according to Colgan, “arranged that the paschal fire kindled in his monastery should not be extinguished.” Mr. Cooke, a writer of 1850, stated that “this fire still continues to be ignited with sparks from flint on every Easter Saturday.” The next Eochaidh was Eochaidh Faobharghlas, because of his green flashing brand. He is said to have been an early ancestor of the O’Carrolls, princes of Ely, in the present King’s County, being descended from Heber Fionn. He was a great destroyer of woods, having cut down seven forests, one known as Magh Smearthuín—with which compare the Irish word Sméaróit, a burning coal—which Keating locates in I’ve Failge (Offaly) also in the King’s County. The next Eochaidh, called Mumho, was grandson of the last named, and, according to Keating, began to reign A.M. 2954 (B.C. 1050). He is said to have wrested the throne from Fiachadh Labhrúine, whom he defeated at Bealgadain, a place which may be identified with the present Ballygaddy, often known as the “Three Sisters,” where three roads meet between Birr and Leap Castle. He is also said to have fought a battle at Claire, Clara or Moyclare, near Ferbane in the same county. The Four Masters tell us that this Eochaidh was “of Munster.” It is probably after him that Munster or Mumhanster is called. In those days the district of Ormonde which embraces the southern portion of King’s County belonged to Munster, being as its name implies East Mumha or Munster. There are two places near Kinnetty which may be connected with this king, Munnu or Money near Frankford, in the district of Fearcall, and Lismoney, a hill near Knock-na-man, which is derived from Lios or lis, a fortified residence, and may mean the fort of Mumha or Mumho. This is as probable as the other explanation, the fort of the brake (Muine), which, suggested the name of Moneyguynen — the rabbit’s brake — now the residence of Mr. Assheton Biddulph, the Master of the King’s County Hunt. It is said that a prince of the name Eochaidh lived at a place called Raheenevil (or the fort of the burning coal, eabhall) near Frankford, Birr. The next Eochaidh was celebrated as Ollamh Fodhla, or learned doctor. The Four Masters and the Book of Clonmacnoise give Eochaidh as the name of this Ollamh Fodhla, the Irish Confucius. This Eochaidh wore a girdle and is said to have loosed it when about to speak at the assemblies. He made good laws, such as (1) Let no man slay his fellow ; (2) Let

not man take of the belongings of another man's property ; (3) Let not the lips utter what the mind knoweth to be false ; (4) Man be merciful ; (5) Let man do ever as he would be done by. When his son Fionn was going to Munster our Irish lawgiver said to him : " When mirth and joy prevail, gravity and wisdom are out of time. In Muma all is sport and dance and song and music and the chase and drink. Whilst thou abidest be as Muma in all but the last." Even in these early days Munster was famous for the hard drinking and fearless riding of its sons. The son of this learned monarch was Eochaidh, king of Uladh (Ulidia = Ulster) and also Ard-ri or High King. He was specially skilful in the management and breeding of horses. The next Eochaidh was called Uairceas, from the small skiffs which he caused to be made, *uairceas* being the Irish for boat. This boat was doubtless similar to the corach or coracle used in the western portions of the country. This monarch was twentieth in descent from Eochaidh Faobharghlas, the ancestor of the O'Carrolls of Ely, and was slain by Eochaidh, called Fiadhmuine the hunter, " because he took great pleasure in the chasing of deer and other wild beasts, which he frequently hunted in the woody and wild parts of the country ;" *Fiad* means deer and *muine* signifies brake. This hunter of the line of Heremon was slain by Luighaidh Lamhdhearg or Lewy of the Red Hand, of the line of Heber Fionn and son of Eochaidh Uaircheas, the boat-builder. He was succeeded by other Eochaidhs, the most important of whom was Eochaidh Foltleahan or the Broad Locks, who began his reign 254 B.C., and seems to have met his end in the district of Ely O'Carroll, of which princely line he was also ancestor. For he was slain by Fergus Fortamhaill (vigorous), a valiant and strong-bodied prince, who may have left his name to the Fortal cross roads between Kilcolman and Kinnetty. The next Eochaidh was Feidhlioch, who commenced to reign about B.C., 64, and who was the father of the celebrated Queen Maev (Meidhbh) or Mab of Connacht. The king and his counsellors determined that a royal seat should be made in Connacht, and Tinne, one of the princes of Connacht, having offered a site for the palace was rewarded with the hand of the princess. The ditch and rath were made, and a poet describes how the Rath Eochaidh became known as the Rath Cruachan, after Cruachan Crodhearg, the mother of the illustrious Mab. Rath Crochan is doubly interesting to us because of S. Patrick's visit to its fountain, where he had the interview with the daughters of the Ard-ri of Ireland, Ethne the Fair and Fedelm the Red. In the sepulchre of the kings close by this fortress Dathi, the brave Irish prince, who is said on good authority to have assisted the Romans in the Gallic campaign of 428 A.D., is buried according to the Irish poem of Torna-Éices

Under thee is the King of the men of Fail (Ireland),
Dathi son of Fiachra, the Good.
Croghan, you have hidden him from the Galls, from the Goidels.
Under thee is Dungalach the swift, who led the king (Dathi) beyond the seas.

This Eochaidh was a great prince, he restored the laws and encouraged the sciences.

The next Eochaidh (A.M. 3952. Keating ; *Ogygia* A.M. 3934, B.C. 70) was called *Aireamh* (*grave*) from having introduced the custom of burying the dead in graves, considering it neither decent nor secure to raise cairns of stones over their bodies. He was slain by Siodhmall (a fairy of the hill). The next Eochaidh was called Ainchean, a depraved person who caused the unhappy death of two fair princesses, the daughters of King Tuathal, and in consequence brought the terrible tax called Boroimhe Laighean, or tribute of Leinster upon his kingdom. The story is fully given in Keating's history. Suffice it to say : —

Two princesses, the daughters of Tuathal,
The fair Dairine and the lovely Fithir
Fell by the deed of Eochaidh Ainchean,

S. Moling in after years obtained a remission of the taxes from Fianachta, by a verbal quibble, requesting a respite until a certain Monday but employing an idiom which meant Doomsday.

We now come to three celebrated kings, Cathaoir Mór, Conaire and Oilioll Olum. From Cathaoir Mór, the father of twenty sons, are descended the O'Connors of Offaly, the O'Dempseys of Clanmalire, and O'Dunnes through his eldest son, Ros of the Rings (Failge), all of whom are leading King's County clans. Conary had three sons by Sarah, daughter of Conn of the Hundred Battles, called the three Cairbres, Cairbre Rioghfhada, Cairbre Baschaoín and Cairbre Muisg. From the eldest of these, Carbery Riada, called Reuda by Bede (Ecc. Hist, i, i.), sprang the Dalriada colony of Scotland : —

The noble tribe of the Dalriads
Descended from the illustrious Conaire.

There were two districts of his name, one in Argyle, the other in Antrim, to be distinguished from the Dalaradia or the Pictish colony in the same territory. From that ancient Irish colony *Airer-Gaedhil*, Arrer gale or Argyle, the “land of the stranger” came the Stuart line of kings, from which our king is descended. Sadhbh, the other daughter of Conn, was wedded to Oilioll Olum, from whose second son, Cormac Cas the valiant Dalgcais (more generally known as the Dalcassian tribe), the O'Bryans, the MacMahons and MacNamaras claim descent; and from whose blind son Cian, the O'Carrolls of Ely sprang. Their brother Eochaidh with seven other brothers was slain in the battle of Magh Muchruime. Conn of the hundred battles had a famous brother Eochaidh Fionn who helped to reinstate Cuchorb, King of Leinster, in his kingdom, and routed the Munstermen in Leix and Ossory. The Mumonians or Munstermen seems to have held possession of Ossory and Leix at the time, but Eochaidh beat them at all points. One of the battles was fought at Athtrodain, now known as Athy, on the river Barrow. The Leinstermen followed up their advantage, and almost annihilated their foe. In gratitude for his services Cuchorb made Eochaidh lord of the seven Fothortuaths, while his general, Laoigseach (Leeshagh) was rewarded with the district of the Queen's County, known as Laeighis (Leesh) and anglicised into Leix, the ancient territory of the O'Moores. About A.D. 250 we find an Eochaidh Kinmarc King of Munster. Marcán in Irish means a little horse ; marcách means horseman, while kin may represent cean, head, or kinel, tribe. The chief horseman or the tribe of the horseman would be a suitable name for an equestrian hero. Another Eochaidh worthy of note was king of Ireland from A.D. 358 to 365. He was known as Eochaidh Muigmedón or Moyvane, or the midland plain, and was the father of the celebrated Niall of the Nine Hostages, and ancestor of the Southern Hy Nialls, the princes of Meath and the O'Molloys of Fearcall, an ancient portion of King's County, coterminous with the parish of Eglis, and also of the Sliocht Geoilén, or tribe of Cullen, which gave its name to Drumcullen, one of the most ancient ecclesiastical localities in Ireland, just outside the village of Kinnetty. Eochaidh, son of Eana Cinsalach, king of Leinster, slew the great Niall, who raided Scotland, and is also said to have harried the Loire district of France, There was an Eochaidh in the sixth century styled Muinreamhair, or fat neck, also called Andoid, or the swift. The annals of Tigernach for the year 553 A.D. give the note : — “The death of Eochaidh, the son of king Conla, of Ulster, from whom the O'Eachi of Ulster sprang.” Keating mentions an Eochaidh of Ulster, first king of the Dalnaruidhe. Under A.D. 550 Keating gives us Eochaidh, son of Daniel, as king of Ireland, whose cousin, Fiachadh, engaged in the bloody battle of Folla and Forthola against the inhabitants of the districts of Ely and Ossory, and obtained a complete victory, slaying numbers of the enemy. Forthola may be identified with Fortal in the neighbourhood of Kinnetty and in the district of Ely O'Carroll. Another Eochaidh, son of the Aongus, baptized by S. Patrick, reigned peaceably at Cashel. In O'Dugan's poem on “the kings of the race of Eibhear,” there is this mention of him : —

Noble Aongus his son Eochaidh rightly called,
He thirty years succeeded ;
Who patient being and prudently stoute,

His life near Cashel ended.

In the translation of the Book of Rights (p. 226, Celtic Society's Edition), there is an account of S. Patrick raising a Danish chieftain of Dublin, one Eochaidh Balldhearg, or the Red. The record of this curious revival begins —

The day at which Atheliath arrived
Patrick of Macha of great revenues,
On the same day cruel death had taken off
The only son of valorous Ailpin,
They brought to the descendant of the deacon
The only son of the king of the Galls, the fierce Eochaidh,
To the Apostle it was a reproach —
“ If thou shouldst bring a soul unto him,
cleric pure and powerful,
I will submit to thee at Coill Cheanainn
And the Galls of the green lands shall submit to thee.
They went round him thrice right-hand-wise
So that he rose up into life
The comely hero, the noble Eochaidh.

We have thus seen that Eochaidh was a favourite name of the pagan Irish princes, many of whom such as Eochaid Faobharghlas, the ancestor of the O'Carrolls ; Eochaidh Broadlocks, who was slain at Fortal ; Eochaid Munho, who may have given his name to Lismoney and defeated his predecessor at Ballygaddy near Kinnetty ; Eochaidh Muigmedon or Moyvane, who was the ancestor of the O'Molloys ; Eochaid Fat Neck, from whom the O'Eachi sprang, and Eochaidh, the son of Aongus, who resided at Cashel, had various connexions with the midland districts of Ireland, especially the vicinity of Kinnetty. This would point us to a solution of the name Kinnetty.

Dr. O'Donovan, in a note to a passage on the Four Masters, says :—“ Kinitty (*cean eitigh*) *i.e.*, the head of Etech, so called according to a note in the Felire of Aengus at the 7th April, from Etech, an ancient Irish heroine, whose head was interred there.” There appears to be some confusion here. Etech was associated with the neighbouring parish of Ettagh, and may have some connexion with Kinnetty. But the tradition may point to the burial of some ancient relic in the place. It has been said that *Eathach* is the genitive of *Eochaidh*, horseman, and taking into account the number of Eochaidhs connected with Kinnetty, we may infer that they have given the locality its name. This inference is strengthened by a find of a small equestrian statue which was unearthed from an ancient rath on the Castle Bernard estate known as “ the Moate.” This discovery was made in 1850, and is described by Mr. T. L. Cooke, of Birr. Some of the labourers informed him that they were engaged in some work on this rath when they came across several large stones weatherbeaten as if they had been exposed to the air before their interment. These were two or three feet below the surface, and when all the stones were laid bare, they presented the form of a cross, which was not unknown to the pagan world. Where the arms of the cross intersected the shaft this statue of a male horse, without legs, measuring seventeen inches from head to tail, was found. The bridle of the horse serves also as a bit, like those described by Gerald of Wales. The saddle has a high cantle and pommel, the saddle cloths are well padded, and have invected edges. There is a stirrup for the right foot to give the rider support when striking, but none on the mounting side. The Irish used both saddle and bridle in ancient times, although this custom with other good customs dropped after the decline and fall of Ireland in mediaeval times. For we read in the Book of Rights (A.D. 800, p. 208) —

A hundred cows to the brave Ui-Censealaigh,
A hundred steeds by which power is added to the territory,
Ten ships, ten bridles, ten saddles.

The rider is an interesting figure, thick-set, bull-necked, clean-shaven, with large and truculent features, clad in a large overcoat, of which there is no opening in front, and the folds of which are gathered in by a large girdle. A long, heavy sword, unlike the short Irish weapon, is visible underneath. A light-fitting cap covers his head. It was the custom of the Irish kings to wear a mantle over their sword when riding. In O'Connor's description of the meeting of Oilioll of Uladh and Oilioll the Ard-rí (B.C. 594) we are told that the Ard-rí dismounted, opened the clasp of his mantle, and laid it on the ground. He also loosed the belt of the sword and placed it on the mantle, saying—"These are of peace, let them be hung up in the tent of the king." The other king when he saw the Ard-rí standing on the ground also came down from his horse, loosed the clasps of his mantle; threw it from him, and the sheath of his sword he flung away.

A remarkable thing about this horseman is the small cavity beneath his hands, which was clearly intended for some object now missing, which might possibly have been a model of the Lia Fail, to judge from the depth, clear cut and conical form of the cell. In Cormac's Glossary there are two lines ascribed to Guaire, king of Connaught, on the subject of Marcan, a horseman —

In precious stones are hidden great wonders as in
The stone of Marcan, son of Hugh, son of Marcene.

One of the Eochaidhs was also called Kenmarc, or Chief of the Horse. Another Eochaidh surnamed Gunnat, as an Irish manuscript cited by Dr. Petrie informs us, removed the Stone of the Hostages from Temur and carried it to Cruachan. He also describes the Lia Fail as an idol stone. Was this little horseman an idol or a statue? It is strange enough that this horseman has representations of the three magic things the Tuatha-de-Danann brought to Ireland, the sword of Lug, the girdle (coire = girdle as well as cauldron) of Daghdha, "which would not fly away from him like a hidden stag," and the receptacle for the Lia Fail, It is no less strange that the whole vicinity of the Slieve Bloom is associated with the horse. Mr. Seward, in his *Topographia Hibernica*, described a large pyramid on these mountains known as Copall-ban, or white horse. The present writer has not been able to verify this statement; but he has been informed on good authority that there is the shape of a horse visible on the hills between Mountrath and Clonaslee, not, however, as prominent a land mark as the White Horse of Berkshire and its stumpy thorn bush around which the armies of Alfred and the Danes met with a shock. There is a well in Drumcullen known as the Horse Well (tobar-each). The Irish set great store on their horses. In the *Leabhar-na-h-Uidhri* we find one Midir of Bringleigh, which may be the same as Brig-Eile or Ely-O'Carroll challenging an Eochaidh to a game of chess, saying: "I shall have for thee fifty dark grey steeds if thou win the game." There were clans in the north and south called after Eochaidh, even the Hy-Eachach of the townland of Armagh in Down, the Hy-Eachaid of Kinelmeaky, Cork. There were also Kienachta in Londonderry, and Kienachta in Cork. The tribe of the Horseman would be a suitable name for an Irish tuath or district. This in Irish would be Kin-Eathach (cine-eathach). The image of the horseman also suggests as a possible derivation caon-eathach, image of horseman, pronounced Kinetta. Either of these derivations would agree with the pronunciation of the natives, Kinnetty. Could this horseman have been an idol? We find many idols and idolatrous customs connected with horses in the ancient world. Herodotus (iv. 71) relates a curious custom of the Scythians, who honoured a dead king's memory by impaling fifty of his servants on fifty slaughtered steeds on the mountain side. The Roman Castor and his brother were mounted on white steeds. The Northern Woden was represented as riding on a white horse. This is possibly the reason why the white horse was placed on the arms of Hanover. The horse was worshipped by the ancient Arabs. The god Irru of Ceylon, corresponding with the sun, is mounted on a white horse, which was also one of the sacred emblems of ancient Gaul. In the Museum at Mayence is a bas relief of Epona, the goddess of horses, on horseback; and

a bronze image of a horse was found at Neuvy-en-Sullias, and is now in the Orleans Museum. The Celts of Ireland may have had a god Eochaidh corresponding with Epona of the Galli, who had many animal totems such as the boar (moch), the bear (artos), the bull (tarvos) and the ass (mullo). It is quite possible that idolatry or the worship of images — although none have actually been found—was practised by the early inhabitants of Ireland. Crom Cruadh was one of the most celebrated of these images. He was set up in the plain of Magh Slecht in Breffny, was worshipped by Tigernmhas, but was smitten by the crozier of S. Patrick, according to the *Vita Tertia*. Keating informs us of the three De Danann princes, Macuill, Maceacht, and Mac Greine, who worshipped respectively a log of wood (cuill), a ploughshare (ceacht), and the sun (grian), and also relates that Cormac Mac Art refused to worship “ a log of wood fashioned by the workman’s hand.” Some peculiar things have been found and in strange places, which may be representations of the Celtic Goddess Ana or Earth Mother, who, “ with her progeny of spirits, springs, rivers, mountains, forests, trees, and corn, appears to have supplied most of the grouped and individualised gods of the Celtic pantheon.” (Prof. Anwyl, *Celtic Religion*, p. 28), Cormac’s Glossary describes her as the mother of the Hibernian gods, because “ she fed the gods well.” There are two hills in Kerry which may be called after Ana, Da-chich-Danainne ; also a hill called Chichawn in the Slieve Bloom. Grottesque representations of the female have been found in the walls of the old church of Seirkieran, and also in the castle of Ballyfinboy near Finnoe. The late Mr. Cooke stated that he had in his possession an image called by the peasantry “ the witch,” which originally stood in Cloghan in the King’s County, the old name of which was Cloghan-na-gcaora, the stone of the sheep, which represented an Hermaphrodite, one of the breasts being like the sun and the other a crescent like the moon. This image may have given its name to the neighbouring town of Ferbane, which may be composed of fear (man) and bean (woman). It is said that the Druids worshipped the Sun-god Apollo under the form of an Hermaphrodite. He was worshipped by the Celts under various forms, one of his names being Borvo, “ the boiler,” the god of hot springs, whence the name Bourbon. Another title was the Grannos, or Sun, as in Aquae Granni, the old name of Aix-la-Chapelle. Grian means sun in Irish. Now the customary offering to the sun was a horse among the ancient Persians. Xenophon gave a horse to the priest to be sacrificed to the sun, and Pausanias states that the Lacedæmonians sacrificed a horse on Mount Taygetus to the sun. It is said that the Irish, too, burnt a horse’s head in the bonfires of the first of May, and that the peasantry about Croghan Hill in the King’s County, distinctly visible from the Kinnetty mountains, were in the habit of sliding down the hill seated on a horse. We have also some indications that the sun was worshipped in the district around Kinnetty. Knock-na-man, the hill that was above the village, means the hill of the women. Mann also means God. Some kind of worship was doubtless offered within the remarkable circle on its summit. Clonbela, in the neighbouring parish of Drumcullen, means the meadow of Belus or the sun (cluan-beal). We have Bell-hill in Seirkieran, where the fires of Beltaine, on the first of May, were kindled. We have, in *Glen-dissaun*, a glen between Forelacka Hill and Glen Regan, which, probably means the Glen of the shrubs, but in which there may be a reminiscence of the fires of Samhain (Sowan) of the first of November. And Coola-crease, near Cadamstown, may mean the retired place of the sun (crios). While it has been plausibly suggested that Lacaroe, the *red hill side* near Cadamstown, was the ancient Tlachtga which the Abbé Macgeoghegan stated was in the neighbouring parish, Clonlisk, and which was the site of the inauguration of the fires of Bealtinne. Lacaroe lies also on the ancient borders of Munster, which embraced Ormonde, and Meath which almost touches it. And we read (Keating, p. 233) that Tuathal erected the royal seat of Tlachtga “ in the tract he divided from Munster and added to Meath.” However, this is only conjecture ; for Tlachtga is believed by others to be the Hill of Ward near Athboy, but the fact remains that there is some connexion between the Celtic pantheon and these ancient hills. Lacaroe is in the parish of Letter luna, which may be connected with *luan* the moon, letter meaning hill-side. There are certain stone piles on the top of the different hills, such as those on Ard-na-h-Éireann and Botheraphuca, the road of the Sprite. The latter of these is called in Irish “ Fear-brogac” (Far breague), which means a coarse man and is known as the

Hardy man. This may be identified with Mercury, who was worshipped in Gaul under the form of Jovantucaros or lover of youth. It is possible that this equestrian image may have been originally an idol, although such idols have rarely if ever been found, representing some local Celtic or pre-Celtic divinity (for we find that the Milesians often assimilated cults they cared not to or could not obliterate), attached to the gens of the Kin-Eatach or tribe of the Horseman, just as the Gallic Essus was the patronymic God of the Essui. The early Christian settlers may have buried this image and its temple, and ascribed the origin of the name to the interment of the head of Etech, a Christian saint. Be this as it may, the visitor who makes his way through the Slieve Bloom must be awe-struck at times by the great sense of solitude and by the vastness and silence in which he moves, and which suggest the Presence of the Invisible at every step. For ought that can be proved to the contrary, this district is the cradle of the Irish people, the ancient home of the mysterious Tuatha-De-Danann, be they people or be they fairies. The latter indeed would have had many a suitable *Sidhe* or abode in the ancient mounds and knolls and magic circles of these rolling hills, in which the race of Eochaidh the Horseman once held dominion.

Note. — In the *Four Masters* Kinnetty is spelt in different ways. *e.g.* 850, Cind Eitig (gen.) ; 884, Cinn Ettic (gen. case) ; 903 ; Cindeittig (gen.) ; 1213, Cinneitig (gen.) ; 1397, Chinn Eitig (gen. not our Kinnetty). Cf. *Cind Fine*, or children of the family. The form given for year 884, Cinn Ettic, is most in harmony with the spelling and derivation suggested in these pages.

Also as regards the hardening of the aspirated consonants in Leinster place-names, cf. “Stoneybatter” and “Boosterstown” (formerly “Butterstown”) near Dublin. “Batter” or “butter” is the Irish bóthar, pronounced boher, as in Boheraphuca. A prosthetic *n* is sometimes found, *e.g.*, the old name of Lough Neagh is spelt in the Book of Leinster both *LochnEthach* and *Loch-Echach*, the lake of Eochaidh or Eochy. The former supports the suggested explanation of Kinnetty.

The midland septs and the Pale : an account of the early septs and later settlers of the King's county and of life in the English Pale (1908)

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