

## Gaehlic Schools & Scholars

By The

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Cormac Mac Cullinan.

This is, perhaps, the most fitting place to give an account of the life and writings of the celebrated Cormac Mac Cullinan, the Bishop-king of Cashel. It is as a Gaehlic scholar he is best known to posterity, although his high position, his valour, his piety, as well as his tragical end, have all combined to render his career singularly interesting to his fellow countrymen.

Cormac was born so early as the year A.D. 835, at the very time when almost all Ireland was writhing under the oppression of the Danes. He was sprung from the chief royal family of Desmond, that is, the Eoghanaehts of Cashel. It is well known that the entire province of Munster was divided between two sons of Ollioll Olum—Eoghan, the elder taking Desmond, and Cormac Cas the younger getting Thomond for his principality, with alternate right for both brothers to the sovereignty of the entire province. The Eugenian line, however, contrived to keep the sovereignty of the province for the most part in their family ; and, as these kings lived generally at Cashel, the royal family of South Munster came to be called the Eoghanachts of Cashel.

No mention of Cormac is made in our Annals until he was called to the throne of Cashel by his fellow tribesmen, A.D. 900, when he had attained the mature age of sixty-five. The Four Masters, however, tell us that Sneidgius, the wise man of Disert-Diarmada, was his tutor ; the latter died A.D. 885 (*recte* 888), as we find it in the more accurate *Chronicon Scotorum*. Disert-Diarmada, now called Castle-Dermott, is a place of ancient fame in the south of the County Kildare. It took its old name from a hermitage founded there by St. Diarmaid, other-wise called Ainle, because he was a ‘ fresh-complexioned youngling,’ as the Gloss on Ængus tells us, when he retired to the hermitage that has borne his name ever since. The ancient round tower still standing, as well as the old stone cross, and the broken shaft of a second cross, show that the old abbey, on whose site the Protestant Church now stands, was a place of great ecclesiastical importance. The Crouched Friars were established there by Walter de Riddlesford, and Thomas, Lord of Offaley, founded a convent for Franciscans in the same place. It was called Castle-Dermott from the castle erected by de Riddlesford in the reign of King John. It was a place of much strength, surrounded by walls, and defended by this strong castle ; and hence we find that two Parliaments of the Pale were held here—one in the reign of Edward IV., and the other in A.D. 1499. Its chief glory, however, will always be that it was there Cormac Mac Cullinan was educated, and there he was buried. It gave him knowledge, and when his brief and stormy reign was over, it gave him the rest of the grave.

It seems that during the ninth century at least, the abbots of Disert-Diarmada enjoyed quasi-episcopal jurisdiction. Some of them were certainly bishops ; and no doubt, had a territory which owned their spiritual sway. In A.D. 842 we are told that “ Cumsudh, son of Derero and Maenach, son of Sadchadach, who were both bishops and anchorites, died in one night at Disert-Diarmada.” A.D. 895 died Muirghaes, Bishop and Abbot of Disert-Diarmada ; and again in A.D. 1038, we hear of the death of a ‘ distinguished bishop’ of Disert-Diarmada.

The learning of Cormac Mac Cullinan was, no doubt, acquired within the walls of this ancient monastic school. Sneidgius, the sage (*egnai*) of Disert-Diarmada, was his tutor, and from the acquirements of the pupil, it is not difficult to infer the learning of the master. We have now no means, however, of knowing how long Cormac remained at Disert-Diarmada.

He was certainly a bishop before he became King of Cashel, but it is difficult to say what See he was placed over, or whether he ever had charge of any See at all. We do not read in any of our Annalists that he was Bishop of Cashel before he became King of Munster ; indeed it is very doubtful if he were ever Bishop of Cashel at all. There is no reference made to a Bishop of Cashel before this period, so far as we know, in any of our ancient authorities. It was the seat of the temporal royalty, but it had not yet become the seat of spiritual authority. The Four Masters say that Cormac was King and Bishop, but they do not say he was Bishop of Cashel. The *Annals of Ulster* call him King of Cashel, but do not call him ‘ bishop ’ at all. The *Chronicon Scotorum* describes him as “ King of Cashel, a most excellent scribe, a bishop, and an anchorite ; ” but makes no reference to his See. Keating is, so far as we know, the first who calls Cormac, not Bishop, but Archbishop of Cashel. In fact down to the year A.D. 1101. Cashel was simply a royal dun, which gave its name to the kingdom of South Munster. There was up to that time no church or monastery at Cashel, of which we have any information. But in that year a remarkable event took place, thus recorded by the Four Masters : “ A meeting of Leath Mogha was held at Caiseal by Muirheartach O’Brian with the chiefs of the laity, and O’Dunan, noble bishop and chief senior with the chief’s of the clergy ; and on this occasion Muirheartach O’Brian made a grant, such as no king had ever made before, namely, he granted Caiseal of the kings to the religious, without any claim of laymen or clergymen upon it, but the religious of Ireland in general.” Here we find at the beginning of the twelfth century, that for the first time in its history, Cashel was given up for religious purposes, and ceased to be the royal residence of the southern kings. We find down to that time frequent mention in our Annals of the kings and royal heirs of Cashel, but of no Bishop of Cashel. Thenceforward, however, we hear of the Archbishops, but not of the kings or tanists of Cashel. The thing appears to have been brought about in the following way.

In consequence of the temporal sovereignty of Cashel, the prelates of Emly, in whose diocese it was situated, began to claim metropolitan jurisdiction over all Munster, especially when the O’Brian family began to claim the sovereignty of Ireland during the eleventh century. Hence we find that Domhnall Ua Heni is called in the *Chronicon Scotorum* [1] ‘ Archbishop of the men of Munster ’ (Anno 1094). Celsus, the Primate, was anxious to oblige the King of Munster, and, moreover, O’Dunan, successor of O’Henri (from A.D. 1094-1118), was the personal friend and admirer of Celsus. Hence St. Bernard tells us that Celsus consented to establish *de novo* a second metropolitan See in Ireland, subject, however, to the primatial See of Armagh. O’Dunan was the first who *de jure*, if it can be so called, enjoyed the metropolitan dignity in the South of Ireland ; and we know that St. Malachy was anxious to obtain the pall for the new See of Cashel, as well as for his own primatial See of Armagh. And it was doubtless to provide a sufficient endowment and a becoming See for the new metropolitan that the king made over his own royal fortress, and a part of his mensal estates for that purpose.

King Murtoth O’Brian was succeeded in the year A.D. 1119 by Cormac Mac Carthy, a pious and munificent prince. He did not reside at Cashel, for it was now church property ; and it is highly probable the ‘ noble senior and chief bishop of Munster ’ had already established his episcopal palace on the famous Rock. He was not yet, however, formally recognised as archbishop, for he was present at the Synod of Fiadh Mic Ænghusa, which, according to the Four Masters, was held in A.D. 1111, and he is there simply described as ‘ noble senior of Erin, ’ and as *Bishop* of Munster. or as others have it, Bishop of Cashel. He was the first prelate who bore that title *de jure*, and he was a man who in every respect seems to have been worthy of the eminent dignity to which he was now elevated. He died at Clonard in the year A.D. 1117, according to the Four Masters, who describe him as “ the head of the clergy in Ireland (in merit) and lord of the alms deeds of the West of Europe.”

If, as the Four Master say, his death took place in A.D. 1117, it was just two years before the death of his friend Murtoth O’Brian, “ King of Munster and of Ireland,” the munificent prince who gave over Cashel for religious purposes. Cormac, his successor, was not to be outdone in generosity, so we find that in A.D. 1127 he began to build the beautiful church on the Rock of Cashel, which has ever since been known as Cormac’s Chapel. It is sometimes ascribed to Cormac Mac Cullinan, but Petrie conclusively shows that it was begun about A.D. 1127 by Cormac Mac Carthy, and consecrated seven years later in A.D. 1134, as all our annalists declare.

It is a singular fact, too, that Cormac Mac Carthy, shortly after the chapel on the Rock was begun, was driven from his throne by Turlough O’Conor, and was compelled to take refuge at Lismore, and

there also “took the staff-bachall”—or crozier [2]—and was honoured with the counsels and friendship of St. Malachy. Hence he is called a bishop-king by a contemporary writer, Maelbrihte, in his copy of the Gospel now preserved in the British Museum. The Four Masters also referring to his murder in A.D. 1138, describe him as Lord of Desmond, and Bishop-king of Ireland; and add, that he was treacherously slain by Turlough, son of Diarmaid O’Brian, a grandson of the previous king. Our own opinion therefore is, that O’Dunan, the noble senior, was the first Bishop of Cashel, that it was Murtough O’Brian gave him his See-lands, and that it was Cormac Mac Carthy, himself a King-bishop, who built the beautiful chapel on the Rock, rather, however, as an episcopal oratory, than as a cathedral properly so called.

Now to return to Cormac Mac Cullinan. He became King of Munster in the year A.D. 900, when, as the *Annals of Ulster* tell us, there was a ‘change of kings’ at Cashel, viz. : Cormac Mac Cullinan in the place of Cennggain, that is Finnguin—the former term was, it seems, a nick-name of the previous king, who became unpopular and was deposed by the tribesmen. Next year he was murdered, but it was by his own kinsmen.

There is no doubt that Cormac was, as we have said, a bishop at this period. He was not Bishop of Emly, for the See was then filled. Neither was he Bishop of Lismore, as some writers have asserted, for his namesake, the Bishop of Lismore, lived until A.D. 1119. It is not necessary, indeed, to assume that he had any See. Hitherto he seems to have been a man of studious habits, as he certainly was a man of great learning. Being a member of the royal family of Munster, it would, so to speak, be the right thing to make him a bishop; but, in all probability, he spent most of his time in retirement at Disert-Diarmada, and was no doubt reluctantly called to the throne, as next in blood, by the revolution which deposed his predecessor.

All our annalists agree in representing Cormac as both a pious and learned prince; but we cannot call him either a great king or a great saint. That he was a just man according to the ordinary standard, he gave proof soon after his accession to the throne of Munster. The old rule of alternate succession between the Eugenic and Dalcassian lines had, as the learned Cormac was well aware, been scandalously violated. He resolved, so far as he could, that justice should be done when his reign would come to an end. Calling around him the chiefs both of Desmond and Thomond, he reminded them of the ancient rule of alternate succession, and confessing that the Eugenic line hitherto had enjoyed more than they were entitled to of the sovereign power, he besought the princes of his own house to consent to the succession of a Dalcassian prince to the throne of Munster. The princes of Desmond listened in respectful silence, and pretended to assent to the proposed arrangement, but afterwards declined to carry it out.

The seven years’ reign of Cormac was full of stirring events. The first or second year of his reign was marked by “the expulsion of the Gentiles from Ireland, *i.e.*, from the fortress of Ath-Cliath,” as the *Annals of Ulster* express it. They had, for some years, been losing ground on the eastern coasts, but at this period met with such a crushing disaster from Cearbhall, King of Leinster, that all the foreigners fled from Dublin, half-dead with terror, having left most of their ships behind them. It was the beginning of the ‘forty years’ rest,’ which poor Ireland then enjoyed from their perpetual incursions. No doubt colonies of Danes still remained in the great sea-port towns, which they had built; but they were too much broken down by defeat to risk any new enterprises, and gladly confined themselves within their walls, spending their time rather in trade and commerce than, as hitherto, in war and rapine.

No sooner, however, did the native princes once more breathe freely, than they turned their arms against each other. Flann Sionna, son of Maelsechnaill, was then King of Ireland. He had already reigned more than twenty years as Ard-ri; and what is more wonderful still, he was destined to reign sixteen years more, and, strangest of all, to die in his bed. He was a restless and ambitious prince, and seems to have inherited all the ancestral jealousy of the South of Ireland. In A.D. 904 he made a wanton raid into Ossory. Next year he led a hosting against Munster, and in conjunction with Cearbhall, King of Leinster, he plundered all the Golden Vale, from Gowran to Limerick. The men of Munster were now fairly roused, and even the Bishop-king was put upon his mettle. He levied a great army, and marched north-wards to meet the troops of Flann and his allies in a fair fight. The rival hosts met on the same field of Magh Lena, which had witnessed the great battle between Conn the Hundred Fighter, and Eoghan Mor. Once more it was North and South arrayed against each other in

fratricidal strife, whilst Danish colonies still held all the ports of the kingdom. Of old the North was victorious at Magh Lena ; but now fortune favoured the men of Munster. Flann and his allies were completely defeated, and driven off the field. Not content with this victory, the King-bishop crossed the Shannon, and marching into the very heart of Connaught defeated and plundered the Connacians, who were allies of Flann. The hostages of the western provinces were carried off in triumph, and the fleets of Munster sailing up from Killaloe plundered the islands of Lough Ree.

So far no blame can be thrown on the King-bishop. He had merely defended his own territories, and chastised the insolence of an aggressive foe. But the victors were now-grown wanton from success, and resolved to carry their triumphant aims into Leinster, as they had already done into Connaught. The pretext for this wanton invasion was the recovery of the old Borrumean tribute, which, it was alleged, the Leinster men had not paid for 200 years, and which the chiefs of Munster were now determined to exact. Cormac was himself entirely opposed to this unjust war. He felt, no doubt, that this alleged non-payment of the tribute was merely a pretext for a war of conquest. But his subjects were full of confidence from previous success ; and, moreover, he was urged on to battle by his evil genius, Flaithbeartach, abbot of Inniscathy, a member of the royal house of Munster, and subsequently King of Cashel.

This restless ecclesiastic was the real author of all the evils that followed. He seems to have been a headstrong and impetuous man, fond of strife and prodigal of blood.

Cormac's greatest fault was weakly yielding against his own better judgment to the counsels of this evil adviser, who urged him to prosecute a war which Cormac in his own conscience believed to be unjust. The Leinster King had sent an embassy to Cormac offering to submit the questions at issue to the decision of a friendly conference—mean-time asking a cessation from arms, and offering to give as a hostage the abbot of Cormac's own monastery of Disert- Diarmada. Cormac was willing to accept these terms ; but the abbot of Inniscathy spurned them and declared he would alone fight the Leinster men. " Then," said Cormac, " I will not desert you, but I feel the issue of this battle will be fatal to me and mine." Thereupon he made his will, leaving rich gifts in gold and vestments to many churches, and desiring that his body should be buried, if possible, at Cloyne ; if not, in Disert-Diarmada, where he was educated, and had spent so many quiet and happy years before he was called to bear the burden of a crown.

The battle was fought at Ballaghmoon, close to the ancient Campus Albus, where the great Synod was held in A.D. 630 with reference to the Paschal question. On this historic field the old quarrel of North against South was once more to be fought out. Flann, the King of Erin, and Cathal, son of Conor, King of Connaught, came to aid the King of Leinster with all their forces. On the other side were, besides Cormac and his chiefs, Ceallach, King of Ossory who, like Cormac himself, had suffered much from Flann's previous incursions, and other sub-ordinate kings. From the first the tide of battle turned against the South. The gallant chieftains of Leath-Mogha would not desert their king, but they had no stomach for the fight. Ceallach of Ossory fled ingloriously from the field, and it is said that one Munster prince, a friend of the king, turned his horse's head from the foe, crying out bitterly, " It is a battle brought on by clerics—let the clerics fight it out." Cormac's horse, it is said, slipped in the blood pools, and fell upon his rider, who was thereupon seized and beheaded by a soldier of the North, on a stone which is still shown at Ballaghmoon. The nobles of the South fell thick around him, and the White Field was made red with the blood of the men of Munster. Amongst the slain were several abbots and other ecclesiastics who had followed the King-bishop to the field , but Flaherty, abbot of Inniscathy, the author of all the mischief, succeeded in effecting his escape.

The head of Cormac, after the battle, was carried by some soldiers to King Flann, but he rebuked them for their brutality, and ordered the body of his fallen foe to be sought for on the field of battle, and buried with the head at Disert-Diarmada, which was not far from the fatal field. [2]

#### IV. — Writings of Cormac Mac Cullinan.

Cormac Mac Cullinan is described by the Four Masters " as a king, a bishop, an anchorite, a scribe, and profoundly learned in the Scotie tongue." The *Martyrology of Donegal* adds that although he had been married to the celebrated Gormlaith, daughter of Flann, his conqueror, he had always lived a perfect virgin, sleeping covered only with his thin tunic, and frequently immersed in cold water whilst

chanting his psalter. We, however, are more concerned with the king's writings than with his penances. Enough of his works still remain to prove the truth of the Masters' statement, that he was profoundly versed in the Scotie tongue, and we may add, not only in the language, but in the laws, the literature, the history, and the antiquities of his native country.

Cormac's *Glossary* is a work that is now well known to Irish scholars, thanks to the diligent labour of John O'Donovan and of Dr. Whitley Stokes, by whom it was translated and published in 1868. The book is now a rare and dear one, but invaluable for a student of the Celtic language and literature. It contains quotations from Latin authors, from Irish chronicles, and from the poems of our native bards and ollaves. There are also numerous references to the laws, romances, druidism, and mythology of ancient Erin. From another point of view the work is interesting, not so much for its philological learning, as because it shows the extent and variety of the scholarship, cultivated in our Irish Schools during the ninth century. As O'Curry says—"The author (of the Glossary) traces a great many of the words, either by derivation from, or comparison with, the Hebrew, the Greek, the Latin, the British, and (as he calls it) the Northmantic language, and it contains at least one Pictish word—Cartait—almost the only word of the Pictish language that we possess." [3] There is no work in any living European language that gives such evident proof of high culture in the ninth century as this most interesting monument of Celtic learning.

A second great work that has been usually attributed to Cormac is the *Psalter of Caiseal*. O'Donovan in his learned Introduction to the *Book of Rights* explains, we think, very satisfactorily the conflicting statements that have been made by Irish, scholars with reference to this famous compilation. Colgan and Keating, two eminent authorities, both ascribe to Cormac Mac Cullinan the composition of that noble work, "which," says Colgan, "has always been held in the highest estimation." On the other hand, Connell Macgeoghegan, the translator of the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, ascribes it to Brian Boru, and that, too, in the most formal language. Stranger still, Colgan himself, in another passage attributes the famous Chronicle called the *Psalter of Caiseal* to St. Benignus, the favourite disciple of St. Patrick; but he cautiously adds that Benignus began its composition—inchoavit et composuit—which can be well reconciled with what he says of Cormac Mac Cullinan's share in the work. In a word, Benignus began it, and made it suitable to his own time; Cormac enlarged and perfected it, making all the necessary changes in point of language and matter, which the lapse of 350 years imperatively demanded; and finally, in the time of King Brian Boru it may, as Macgeoghegan asserts, have been still further corrected and enlarged to suit the needs of the time, and then formally approved of by that monarch, as well as by his bishops and his nobles.

St. Benignus, though born in Meath, was of Munster origin. St. Patrick sent him to preach especially in those districts which he did not himself visit. Hence Benignus, we are told, went through Kerry and Corcomroe in his missionary labours; but particularly devoted himself to South-western Connaught, and built his chief church at Kilbannon, near Tuam. He also specially blessed that province, the natives of which still affectionately revere the memory of the gentle saint with the sweet voice and winning gracious ways.

Now, when the Munstermen heard of the preference and the blessings which Benignus gave to Galway, they were jealous, and complained that he slighted his own kindred. So to please them, Benignus went down to Caiseal, and remained there from Shrovetide to Easter, composing in his own sweet numbers a learned book, which would immortalise the province of his kinsmen, and be useful, moreover, both to her princes and to her people.

Such was the beginning of the *Psalter of Caiseal*, the great Domesday Book of the South, written in verse, and recording the sub-divisions of the kingdom, the rights and privileges of its various sub-kings, the gifts they were entitled to receive from the King of Caiseal, the boundaries of their territories, and so forth. A portion of this primitive *Psalter of Caiseal* appears to have been embodied in the existing work, the authorship of which, although not in its present form, has been rightly attributed to the same St. Benignus.

Cormac Mac Cullinan in his own day undertook to re-edit this *Psalter of Caiseal*, and no man was better qualified for the purpose, both by his office and by his learning. In the accomplishing of his task he was assisted by his secretary, Selbach, the Sage, a Munster poet, whom Colgan describes as a man of singular piety and learning, [4] and also by Ængus, another sage, of whom nothing else is

known. Several poems have been likewise attributed to Cormac, but their authenticity is very doubtful.

Colgan, Keating, and Sir James Ware all speak of the *Psalter of Caiseal* as extant in their own time ; but it has since unhappily disappeared, although a very considerable fragment is contained in a MS. now in the Bodleian Library of Oxford. That MS. was, O'Donovan tells us, transcribed in A.D. 1453 for Mac Richard Butler, by Shane O'Cleary, doubtless a member of the famous antiquarian family of that name. It contains several ancient poems and other treatises which undoubtedly formed part of the *Psalter of Caiseal* as compiled by King Cormac.

Besides his share in the composition of the *Psalter of Caiseal*, Selbach, Cormac's learned secretary, is also said to have been the author of a work well known to Irish scholars as the *Naoimh-Senchus*, or poetical history of the saints of Erin. It is one of the authorities which Michael O'Clery constantly quotes in the *Martyrology of Donegal* ; and Colgan expressly attributes its authorship to Selbach the Sage, or, as he calls him in Latin, Selvacius, and he frequently cites that work under his name. [5] The *Naoimh-Senchus* has also, but with less probability, been attributed to Ængus Ceile De, of whom we have already spoken.

There is an excellent copy of this ancient poem in the Book of Leacan ; [6] there was another copy in the Buigundian Library of Brussels, which is, we believe, now in the Franciscan Convent, Merchants' Quay, Dublin.

*Gaedhlic Scholars of the Sixth and Seventh Centuries.*

“ I'd rather turn one simple verse  
True to the Gaelic ear,  
Than classic odes I might rehearse  
With Senates list'ning near.”

—*M'Gee.*

BESIDES Cennfaeladh and Corraac Mac Cullinan, there were from the sixth to the seventh century at least twelve or thirteen other Gaedhlic writers, whose names cannot be passed over without some notice in a work like this. Our account of these writers, however, must necessarily be very brief, for in many cases little or nothing is known of the history of their lives, and to a great extent their writings are still unpublished. O'Curry [7] and O'Reilly [8] are the two principal authorities in this part of our subject.

The first on O'Curry's list is Amergin Mac Awley (Araalgaidh), the author of the celebrated work known as the *Dinnsenchus*. This ancient and highly interesting topographical poem was, it is said, compiled at Tara, so early as the year A.D. 550, that is, during the reign of Diarmaid Mac Cearbhaill, but it has certainly received some additions from later hands.

Amergin himself is described as chief poet of that monarch ; but according to O'Reilly, he must not be confounded with another Amergin Mac Awley, who flourished towards the end of the seventh century, and was the author of some law tracts, copies of which are still extant in the library of Trinity College. The *Dinnsenchus* has been recently published in *fac simile* by Professor Atkinson of Trinity College. The work is specially interesting and valuable on account of the incidental historical references, which it contains, and the topographical information which it supplies. The stories themselves, though in many instances far-fetched and improbable, are not without their value in illustrating the habits and thoughts of our Celtic ancestors. Copies of this ancient tract are found in the *Book of Leinster*, the *Book of Ballymote*, and there is also an imperfect copy in the *Book of Leacan*, which shows the value that was set upon it by our ancient scholars. The published *fac simile* copy is taken from the *Book of Leinster*.

Of Dalian Forgaill, who flourished towards the end of the sixth century, we have already spoken in connection with the Columbian Schools. Besides the *Amhra Cholumchille*, which is still extant, Dalian also composed an *Amhra*, or Elegy, on the death of St. Senan, or Senanus, of Scatterry Island, in the estuary of the Shannon. He was recognised during his life as chief poet of all Erin, and he ap-

pears to have been on terms of friendly intimacy with Columcille. His death is said to have taken place in A.D. 598, shortly after that of Columcille himself.

Senchan Torpeist, then a young poet of known talents, was called upon to pronounce the usual bardic elegy on the death of the Chief Poet of Erin, and acquitted himself so creditably that he was unanimously chosen to take the vacant chair of Dalian Forgaill. [9] He was not insensible to the responsibilities of his high office ; and hence, according to the account in the *Book of Leinster*, shortly after his acceptance of the post of chief poet, he called a meeting of all the Files of Erin in order that they might take measures to recover the lost work known as the *Cuilmenn*, and which, it appears, contained the only complete copy of the celebrated historical tale known as the *Tain bo Chuailgne*. How it was recovered is told in prose by O'Curry, and by Ferguson [10] in a poem of marvellous imaginative power, which might have been fitly pronounced, if written in Gaedhlic, by Senchan himself. Senchan flourished during the first half of the seventh century, and though his travelling school was a large one, he appears to have always found a welcome in the court of the King Guaire the Hospitable, who dwelt at Durlus, near Gort, in the county Galway. O'Reilly says that one of Senchan's poems, in which he celebrates the victories of Fergus Mac Roy, is still extant in the *Book of Leacan*.

#### *Gaedhlic Scholars of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries.*

The ninth was more remarkable than the eighth century for Gaedhlic scholars of distinction. Of these one of the most celebrated was Maelmura of Fathan, called also Maelmura of Othan, for it is the same name when the letter *F* is aspirated and omitted as silent in the pronunciation. Maelmura merely means servant of Mura, the patron saint of Fathan. The parish of Fahan, which takes its name from St. Mura's ancient monastery near the village, is situated on the eastern shore of Lough Swilly, under the shadow of Slieve Snaght, the loftiest mountain of Inishowen. The death of Maelmura is noticed by the Four Masters, A.D. 884, and he is described as " a truly intelligent poet, and erudite historian in the Scotie language." The Masters also quote a *rann*, which declares that—

“ There trod not the charming earth, there never flourished at affluent Tara,  
The great and fertile Erin never produced a man like the mild fine Maelmura ;  
There sipped not death without sorrow, there mixed not a nobler face with the dead ;  
The habitable earth did not close over a historian more illustrious.”

These testimonies are extracted from the *Leabhar Gabhala* of the O'Clerys, and sufficiently show the estimation in which Maelmura was held by our ancient Celtic scholars.

There is a poem published in the *Irish Nennius* [11] which is attributed to Maelmura, and which really appears to be a composition of very considerable merit. The language is very striking, and the Gaedhlic original has a stately rhythm, as well as much vigour both of thought and language. It contains 335 lines, and purports to give poetical account of the origin of the Gaedhil, " men of high renown in stiff battles, whom the mighty stream of Ocean wafted hither to Erin." These epithets are quite Homeric, and are not lavished with the prodigality too common to our Irish bards, but employed with discriminating intelligence to lend a poetic vigour to the historical narration. There is another poem of Maelmura quoted by O'Reilly in praise of Tuathal Techtmar, whom he describes with similar vigour as a flowing ocean, in strength a lion, a wily serpent, and a wounding warrior.

In another poem he gives a catalogue of all the monarchs, of Erin from this Tuathal to Flann Sionna, the reigning king in his own time. It is highly probable that Maelmura was educated at the monastic School of Fahan, which from its foundation by St. Mura seems to have been a very celebrated establishment. The founder's Book and Bell were long treasured as precious relics in Inishowen.

Flann Mac Lonan was another celebrated historical poet, who nourished during the latter half of the ninth century. He appears to have been a native of South Connaught, and held the high office of Chief Poet of Erin during the earlier years of the reign of Flann Sionna. He is described as Flann O'Guaire in the *Annals of Ulster* ; and the Genealogies of the Hy-Fiachrach represent him as ninth in descent from Guaire Aidhne, the celebrated king of the Southern Hy-Fiachrach, who flourished during the first half of the seventh century. It was from the same stock that the O'Clerys derived their descent, so that a love of poetry and history seems to have been hereditary in that tribe. It is evident also from the writings of Flann that he was patronised by Lorcan, king of Thomond, the grandfather of

Brian Boru, and also by his son, Cinnedigh, the father of the hero of Clontarf. This King-poet, as he is called, met with an untimely end. He was assassinated by the Ui Fothaith at Loch-Dachaech in Desmond. Loch-Dachaech, the Lake of the two Blind Men, appears to be a part of the estuary of Waterford Harbour ; [12] but what motive can have instigated the sons of Corrbuidhe to murder the harm-less poet does not appear. He is described by the Four Masters as the Virgil of the race of Scota—the Milesian Irish—Chief Poet of the Gaedhil, and the best poet that was in Ireland in his time. The *Annals of Ulster* give the true date of his death at A.D. 895, where they record how “ Flann, son of Lonan O’Guairé, was slain by the Desi of Munster.”

Copies of three poems written by Flann still remain in manuscript. The first is a poem of eighty-eight verses, celebrating a great victory, which Lorcan of Kincora gained over Flann Sionna, the King of Erin. The second also, containing forty-eight verses, celebrates the warlike exploits of the same hero, and the third describes his royal residence of Kincora so rich in wealth, and harvest stores, and so beautifully situated on the Shannon just where Lough Derg contracts its waters to force a passage through the hills of Ara to the sea.

The two most distinguished poet-historians of the tenth century were Cinaeth O’Hartigan and Eochaidh O’Flints. Cinaeth is described by Tighernach as the chief of the learned men of Leath Cuinn. He was also Chief Poet of Erin, and was the son of Cernach the Haughty, [13] who was grandson of Aedh Slaine, High King of Tara. Sprung from the royal race of the Southern Hy-Niall, it was only natural that Cinaeth should devote his talents to celebrate the ancient glories of the then deserted Tara, and of the heroes and heroines who once thronged its waste and silent halls. These poems are preserved in the *Dinnsenchus*, and are especially valuable for the information they contain with reference to Tara and the reign of Cormac Mac Art. He also gives an account of the origin of Aicill, and of the Book which takes its name from the hill, and has been published in the third volume of the Brehon Law series.

Eochaid O’Flinn was a still more celebrated poet-historian, and it is quite evident from the care that was taken to preserve his numerous compositions that his works were very highly valued by all our ancient Celtic scholars. We find copies of his poems in the collections at all the great schools, and preserved by our greatest scholars. They are to be found in the *Dinnsenchus*, the *Book of Invasions*, the *Book of Leacan*, the *Book of Ballymote*, the *Book of Glendaloch*, as well as in several other compilations and manuscripts. One of the most important of these is a chronological poem contained both in the *Book of Leinster* and the *Book of Leacan*, in which the writer gives a list of the Ulster Kings from Cimbaoth to Fergus Fogha. Tighernach recognises the historical authority of this poem, which he follows in his own great work, and which, so far as it goes, seems to have been his chief source of information both for his facts and his dates, at least as regards the kings of Emania. [14] In another poem he gives an interesting account of the invasion of Ireland by Partholanus, which has been copied into the *Book of Invasions* by the O’Clerys.

Keating, too, borrows largely from the poems of O’Flinn, of which a very full list may be seen in O’Reilly’s *Writers* [15] but which it is unnecessary for us to reproduce here. We must not suppose that O’Flinn and his contemporaries drew largely on their imagination for the contents of those poems. They did nothing of the kind. They simply put in form the bardic traditions that were handed down in writing with the greatest care from time immemorial. If they had dared to invent anything new to their learned contemporaries, they would at once have been dismissed from the office of Chroniclers of Erin, and would besides have been severely punished. It is evident, too, that they had earlier documents which they made use of in the composition of their own poems, but which were all unfortunately lost during the Danish invasions. There was, however, always a regular succession of these poets whose duty it was to get by rote the historical traditions of their predecessors, which were thus preserved for posterity.

#### *Gaedhlic Scholars of the Eleventh Century.*

Mac Liag, Secretary of Brian Boru, held that office during the reign of Brian in the kingdom of Thomond, and his extant work—*The Wars of the Gaedhill with the Gaill*—shows how thoroughly and conscientiously he discharged his official duties. It was one of the very earliest compositions of this character written in prose ; but when he wishes to be particularly eloquent and impressive, and rise to the dignity of some great theme, he has recourse to poetry. To record the events of his own time in

Thomond was not, however, his only duty and his only task, although it was undoubtedly his primary work, for the vigorous and warlike Brian kept his hands as a contemporary chronicler pretty full of work. His 'Lament' for Brian after the battle of Clontarf is one of the most beautiful and pathetic poems to be found in any language. Even Clarence Mangan could not reproduce all the touching pathos of the original.

“ Oh, where, Kincora ! is Brian the Great ?  
And where is the beauty that once was thine ?  
Oh, where are the princes and nobles that sate  
At the feast in thy halls and drank the red wine ?

“ They are gone, those heroes of royal birth,  
Who plundered no churches, and broke no trust,  
'Tis weary for me to be living on earth.  
When they, oh, Kincora, lie low in the dust.

“ I am Mac Liag, and my home is on the Lake :  
Thither often to that palace whose beauty is fled,  
Came Brian to ask me, and I went for his sake,  
Oh, my grief that I should live and Brian be dead.”

Neither Colgan, Keating, nor the Four Masters expressly name Mac Liag as the author of the *Wars of the Gaedhill with the Gaill*. [16] Dr. Todd, the editor of that work in the Rolls Series, declares that Dr. O'Connor had no sufficient authority to justify him in attributing the work to Mac Liag, and declines to do so himself, although he admits that the work was originally compiled by one, who was either an eye-witness of the battle of Clontarf, or who had certainly derived his information from those who were eye-witnesses. Our own opinion is that although there is no direct evidence to prove that the book was written by Mac Liag, the circumstantial evidence, to which we cannot now refer at length is entirely in favour of that supposition.

This work is exceedingly valuable as the trustworthy record of a contemporary writer during one of the most important epochs of Irish history, and its careful perusal will be found to throw much light on the history of that period. The author is much too fond of indulging in high-flown descriptions, and of unduly multiplying bombastic compounds. But, on the other hand, notwithstanding this wordiness, he frequently writes in a spirit of genuine eloquence, as for instance when he describes the Danish oppression in Ireland, and “ the excess of their thirst and hunger for the brave, fruitful, nobly inhabited, cataractful rivers and bays, and for the pure, smooth-plained, sweet-grassy land of Erin.” He tells how, if there were but one milk-giving cow in the house, she durst not be milked for an infant of one night, nor for a sick person, but must be kept for the steward, or bailiff, or soldier of the foreigners. And however long he might be absent from the house, his share or his supply durst not be lessened ; “ although there was in the house but one cow, it must be killed for the meal of one night, if the means of a supply could not otherwise be procured.” [17]

But the good sword of King Brian soon changed all that.

“ He conquered, exterminated, enslaved, and bondaged thorn, so that there was not a winnowing sheet from Benn Edair to Tech Duinn in Western Erin, that had not a foreigner in bondage on it, nor was there a quern without a foreign woman. So that no son of a soldier, or of an officer of the Gaedhil, deigned to put his hand to a flail, or any other labour on earth ; nor did a woman deign to put her hands to the grinding of a quern, or to knead a cake, or to wash her clothes, but had a foreign man or a foreign woman to work for them.” [18]

This is no doubt a highly-coloured description, but it is graphic in its details, and gives us valuable information as to the state of social life at that period.

Equally graphic and interesting is the sketch which Mac Liag gives of the great achievements of Brian Boru. He tells how after Brian's royal visitation throughout Erin, all his enemies were brought into subjection, and the country enjoyed a period of profound peace and much-needed repose. He enforced the law with a strong hand, and repressed trespass, robbery, and murder. ‘ He hanged, killed and destroyed’ all thieves, robbers, and plunderers throughout Erin. He banished or enslaved the foreigners throughout the length and breadth of the land—their stewards and collectors, their swords-

men and their mercenaries, their tall and comely youths, and their fair and graceful maidens became the bond-servants of the victors. It was then that Erin enjoyed such peace and security that a lone woman journeyed from Tory Island in the north to Cliodhna's loud-voiced wave in the south of Erin, carrying a golden ring on the top of the wand ; yet no man ventured to rob, or to insult her. This blessed period of justice and peace, so rare in Erin, has been celebrated both by ancient and by modern bards. [19]

Nor was Brian less enlightened and munificent in cultivating the arts of peace. He erected many noble churches and church towers in Erin, as at Killaloe, Iniscaltra, and Tuam Greine, where the remains of the buildings erected by Brian are still to be seen. He constructed several bridges, causeways, and high roads. He strengthened all the royal fortresses of Munster both in the islands and on the mainland. He sent professors and masters to teach wisdom and knowledge, also to buy books in foreign countries, and bring them home from beyond the great sea. This was all the more necessary as the writings and the books in every church and sanctuary of Erin where they were, were all burned or thrown into the lakes and rivers by the plundering Danes. It was Brian himself, who from his own resources gave the means of purchasing this new supply of books beyond the seas.

Such was Brian Boru, a hero in peace and in war, the sword and shield of his country, during whose glorious reign Ireland reached the zenith of her power and prosperity. Mac Liag died shortly after his royal master in A.D. 1016.

Cuan O'Lochain was another very celebrated scholar who flourished during the first quarter of the eleventh century, His writings, his talents as a statesman, and his tragic end have all contributed to his celebrity. The family which derived its descent from Cormac Gaileng, son of Tadhg, grandson of Ollioll Olum, was at first settled in the territory of Ely ; but afterwards removed to Gailenga Mor, on the borders of Meath and Longford. This territory took its name from Cormac Gaileng, and retains it to the present day in the name of the barony of Morgallion, which is merely another form of Gailenga Mor. It appears that the O'Lochains were chiefs of this district, and that the poet's family was held in high esteem in Meath.

After the death of King Malachy II. (Maelseachlainn), in the year A.D. 1022, an interregnum of twenty years intervened, during which there was no recognised High King of Erin. A joint government was established during the interregnum ; and it is said the regency was administered by Cuan O'Lochain, the Chief Poet of Erin, and Corcran the Cleric ; or, as it is quaintly put in Macgeoghegan's *Annals of Clonmacnoise* —“A.D 1022 — After the death of King Moylesleaghlyn, this kingdom was without a king for twenty years, during which time the realm was governed by two learned men, the one called Cwan O'Lochan, a well-learned temporall man, and chiefe poet of Ireland ; the other, Corcran Cleireagh, a devout and holy man, that was chief anchorite of all Ireland, whose most abiding was at Lismore. The land was governed like a free state, and not like a monarchie by them.” It is curious that we find no reference to this interregnum in any of our Annals, and hence the truth of Macgeoghegan's statement has been questioned by certain writers. But O'Curry shows [20] that the same statement is made in the Book of Leinster, an almost contemporaneous record, although it is there stated, probably by a mistake of the scribe, that this joint government continued for forty or fifty instead of for twenty years.

It was the form of government, however, not the two governors themselves, which continued for twenty years, for the poet-regent was soon slain by the men of Teffia on the borders of his native territory in the County Longford. The sword of justice, which the great Brian had wielded so well, was broken at Clontarf and buried in the hero's grave. Once more outrage and lawlessness with the evil spirit of discord spread throughout the land. We know not the motive or circumstances of this great crime perpetrated by the men of Teffia, but Providence itself avenged the poet's death. According to one authority [21] God manifestly wrought a poet's power upon the parties who killed him, for they were put to a cruel death, and their bodies putrified until the wolves and vultures devoured them—a fitting end for the wretches who violated the sacred person of the poet. Macgeoghegan says that he was killed by one of the land of Teffia, and he most probably had heard the living local tradition ; “ after committing which evil fact, there grew an evil scent and odour of the party that killed him, so that he was easily known amongst the rest of the land. His associate Corcran lived yett, and survived him for a long time after”—that is until A.D. 1040. [21]

O'Curry gives a very full account of six historical poems of which Cuan O'Lochain was the author. One of them to which we have already referred [22] gives an exceedingly interesting account of Cormac Mac Art, and of his great palace at Tara, which the poet describes with great fidelity and minuteness. It has been printed in Petrie's *Antiquities of Tara Hill*. Another highly interesting poem of O'Lochain gives an account of the 'prohibitions' and 'prerogatives' of the High King of Tara, and the provincial sub-kings. This poem may be seen in the *Book of Rights*, edited by O'Donovan. Some of the prohibitions certainly savour of a pagan and superstitious origin, as, for instance, when the High King is forbidden to alight on the plain of Bregia on a Wednesday, or to traverse Cuillenn after sunset, or to launch a ship on the Monday after May-day. But his privileges are innocent enough—to have the salmon of the Boyne, which was a royal river ; to eat the fruit of Man, and the deer of Luibnech ; to get the bilberries of Bri-Leith, and the cresses of the river Brosnach ; to drink of the spring water of Tlachtga, and hunt the hares of Naas. Cuan's legendary poems on the Shannon are also highly interesting, but we cannot refer to them further at present.

Errard Mac Coisé was chief poet to King Malachy II., who died in A.D. 1022, and hence he was a contemporary both of Mac Liag and Cuan O'Lochain. Both Mac Liag and Mac Coisé were natives of Hy-Many, in the County Galway, and appear to have been rivals in genius, but intimate friends and associates in social intercourse. One of Mac Coisé's most interesting works is a poetic dialogue between the two poets, which reveals their friendship, their talents, and their common love for the history and antiquities of Erin. He appears to have died the year after his royal master in A.D. 1023.

Flann of the Monastery, is, perhaps, the most justly celebrated of all those poet-historians of ancient Erin. O'Reilly calls him "Abbot of the Monastery of Bute," and gives a list of fourteen considerable historical poems still extant in manuscript, of which he is the reputed author. It does not appear, however, that Flann was either an abbot or a monk in holy orders, although he certainly sojourned and taught at Monasterboice, in the County Louth, just as his contemporary, Conn-na-m-Bocht, did at Clonmacnoise. The death of Flann is marked in the *Chronicon Scotorum* at A.D. 1054 ; and he is described as Ferlegind, or professor of the monastery, and "the last sage of the Gaedhil both in reading and history." In the Annals of Ulster he is called Chief-lector of Monasterboice and historical sage—*sai senchusa*—of Erin, under date of A.D. 1056, which is the true date. The Four Masters also describe him as a lector of the monastery of Buite, and the 'paragon'—*sai eagna*—of the Gaedhil in literature, in history, in poetry and in science. There is no doubt that here we have a complete list of the subjects taught in what may be called the schools of general literature in ancient Erin. In the *Book of Aicill*, [23] as we have already seen, it is expressly stated that Cennfaeladh attended three schools in Tuaim Dreacain, a School of Literature (*leigind*), a School of Law (*feinechais*), and a School of Poetry (*filidechta*) ; these schools were held in different houses, and taught by three different professors. Cennfaeladh was a soldier, and, therefore, a layman, and hence there is no reference here to a School of Divinity, of the Canons, or of the Scriptures. In the subjects taught by Flann at Monasterboice we find no reference to the *feinechas* or Brehon Laws, because there does not appear to have been a School of Law in the Monastery of Buite. But there was clearly a School of General Literature, and a School of Poetry, and although Flann is described as chief professor in the former school, he is also said to have been—and his writings prove that he was—an accomplished poet. As Ferlegind, it is clear that his duty was to teach classics, including in that term the vernacular Gaedhlic tongue ; for it is described as one of the four principal languages of the world. These are Gaedhlic, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. We have already furnished abundant proofs of the cultivation both of Latin and Greek in our Irish schools ; and they tried their hand at Hebrew also, but we cannot say much for their success in studying that difficult language, which was then almost entirely unknown in the Western Empire.

It is quite evident, too, that great attention was paid in these schools to the careful and systematic cultivation of the Gaedhlic tongue. This would be essential not only for the successful study of the classical languages, but also for success in the Schools of Poetry and of Law, on both of which so much attention was bestowed.

We have abundant evidence on this point. Besides those scholars already referred to as Ferlegind, in A.D. 937 is recorded by the Four Masters the death of "Finnachta, son of Ceallach, Comarb of Doire, bishop and doctor in the Bearla Feine." This is the second bishop of Derry referred to in our Annals, and it will be observed that he is not described as bishop of Derry, but as comarb of Derry, *i.e.*, of Columcille, who happened, on account of his merit, to be raised to the episcopal rank, although

his official title is abbot of Doire-Columcille. It is evident that he must have been a man of great learning, especially in native literature, as he is described as a *saoi*, or doctor, in the *bearla-feine*. O'Donovan thinks that by this is understood the ancient technical dialect of the Brehon Code, and Thady O'Roddy translates the expression as "the law or lawyers' dialect." Zeuss [24] with more probability regards it as the ancient written tongue of the Men of Erin, which, in process of time, became corrupted, and varied into different dialects. The ancient tongue of the Men of Erin was, as the evidence of the glosses in existing MSS. proves, a language which, in the words of Zeuss, [25] was a language regulated by fixed rules and determinate inflections. It was the language of the bards and scholars up to the ninth century, but the ravages of the Danes, and the breaking up of the ancient monarchy caused various dialects to spring up, and destroyed the fixity and purity of the ancient tongue of the Feine. There were, however, still many scholars who gloried in cultivating the pure and ancient language of Erin—the language of its Bards, its Brehons, and its Sages—and these men came to be regarded in course of time as recognised authorities on the ancient tongue, and hence were called *saoi*, or sages, in language. Such was Finnachta, abbot of Derry, and successor of Columcille; and such also was Flann, of whom we have just been speaking.

It is clear, however, that Flann cultivated the study both of our native and general history with marked success, so that he came to be recognised as one of our highest authorities both by his contemporaries and by his successors. O'Curry [26] gives a very full and interesting account of Flann's most important work—the historical *Synchronisms*. We need not discuss the subject here beyond observing that this treatise by itself furnishes a clear proof of the wide range of historical studies cultivated in the schools of ancient Erin. The work is, in fact, as O'Curry observes, an abridgment of universal history, and certainly goes to show that the author was not only an accomplished Gaedhlic scholar, but also that he must have been familiar with the principal Greek and Latin historians, both pagan and Christian.

Of Flann's personal history little is known. He was of Munster extraction, but seems to have been a native of Eastern Bregia, where his great ancestor Tadhg, son of Cian, son of Ollioll Olum, had established himself as early as the third century of the Christian era. We need not enter into any details regarding his historical poems. [27] Although highly interesting these subjects will never become popular, until the study of our ancient Gaedhlic tongue shall be more generally cultivated both in our schools and in our homes. Most of these poems are preserved in the *Book of Leinster*, and several of them are to be found in the other great Gaedhlic repositories of our ancient literature. It would be difficult, says O'Curry, to over-estimate the historical value of some of those poems. "They are precisely the documents that supply life and the reality of details to the blank dryness of our skeleton pedigrees. Many a name lying dead in our genealogical tracts, and which has found its way into our condensed chronicles and annals, will be found in these poems, connected with the death, or associated with the brilliant deeds, of some hero whose story we should not willingly lose; while, on the other hand, many an obscure historical allusion will be illustrated, and many an historical spot, as yet unknown to the topographer, will be identified, when a proper investigation of these and other great historical poems preserved in the *Book of Leinster* shall be undertaken as a part of the serious study of the history and antiquities of our country. [28]

Flann's monastery and school were founded about the beginning of the sixth century by St. Buite or Boetius, who, like Flann himself was sprung from the race of Ollioll Olum, and is said to have died on the same day (December 7, A.D. 521) on which St. Columba was born. He travelled much in Italy, Germany, and Britain and then returned to found a monastery which was to be the place of his resurrection, in his native district. Though founded so early in the fertile plains of Louth, we do not find that St. Buite's monastery produced any distinguished scholars down to the period of Flann himself, whose learning has made it so celebrated. That it was, however, always a place of considerable wealth and influence is sufficiently proved by the highly interesting remains which still exist at Monasterboice. These include a portion of the walls of two very ancient oratories, a round tower, and two sculptured High Crosses, one of which, locally known as St. Boyne's Cross, is considered to be one of the very finest of its class in Ireland.

Of Gilla Coemhain, whose latest poem was written in A.D. 1072, it is unnecessary to speak at length. Like Flann and Mac Liag, he was a historical poet and a cultured Gaedhlic scholar. A Chronological Poem composed by Gilla Coemhain, in A.D. 1072, has recently been published with a trans-

lation by Dr. Whitley Stokes [29] The reader will readily perceive that the author of this poem was a writer of considerable culture and of very general information.

#### IV. — Discipline of the Lay Colleges

The discipline in our ancient schools was neither so elaborate nor so minute as in modern seminaries ; still in many respects it was perhaps more satisfactory. In the monastic schools the great principle of obedience was the fundamental rule, the observance of which from a sense of religious duty rendered the observance of all other rules easy and even pleasant

But in the lay professional schools, of which we have ;il ready spoken, the law took formal cognisance of the relations between the professor and his pupils. It established 'he general principles which were to guide these relations, and severely punished any grievous infraction of these principles

In the *Senchus Mor* [30] we find the following important passage :— “ The social connection that is considered between the foster-pupil, and the literary foster-father is, that the latter is to instruct him without reserve, and to prepare him for his decree, and to chastise him without severity ; to feed and to clothe him whilst he is learning his lawful profession, unless he obtains it (food and clothing) from another person—and such has been the custom from the school of Fenius Forsaidh onwards. On the other hand, the foster-pupil is to assist his tutor in poverty, and to support him in his old age and (to give him) the honour price of the degree for which he is being prepared, and all the gains of his art whilst he is learning it, and the first earning of his art after leaving the house of his tutor ; and moreover, the literary foster-father has power of judgment, and proof, and witness, upon his foster-pupil, as the father has upon his son, and the Church upon the tenant of the Church lands.”

The principles enumerated in this passage are eminently just in themselves ; they were well suited to the circumstances of the times, and admirably calculated to put down a mercenary spirit, and foster the growth of tender affection between the pupils and their master. As we have already shown, the professional schools were to a great extent peripatetic ; and when actually on their rounds the pupils were to be fed, and lodged, and taught by the master. He was bound to communicate all his knowledge and all his art, both theoretical and practical, to his pupils without reserve ; and thus prepare them for their professional degree or formal admission to the ranks of the Bards, Brehons, Chroniclers, or Readers, as the case might happen to be. He might chastise the pupil for misconduct, but in so doing the teacher was not to be unduly severe, so as to cause injury to the mind or body of his scholar. He was also to supply him with food, clothing, and lodging, except provision were otherwise made for these purposes. The law even prescribes the quality of the food to which the pupil is entitled as a matter of right. No professor in ancient Erin could keep a Do-the-Boys Hall with impunity. The teacher was a literary foster-father, and as such, he was bound by the laws of fosterage to supply wholesome food in abundance to his pupils according to the rank of their parents. “ What are their victuals ? Stirabout (*lithé*) is given to them all, but the flavouring was to be different,” It was salt butter for the sons of inferior grades ; fresh butter for the sons of chieftains ; honey for the sons of kings. The stirabout of oat-meal might be made on water, or on butter-milk, or on new milk, and given to the different classes in like manner.

On the other hand the teacher, or professor, was amply provided for. That provision of the law which compelled the foster pupils to assist their tutors in poverty, and maintain them in old age, was an admirable institution, calculated to preserve the most kindly feelings between both all through their lives. Then the honour price of the degree, and the first fees earned after obtaining it, were no doubt considerable, in order to enable the professor to maintain his pupils at home, whenever they were not at free quarters during their learned excursions and other official visits.

filled. Here he made a similar mental reflection, and, vowing that never again would he neglect his daily task, he returned to his master and grew up to be a very learned and a very holy man.

We have not in the foregoing pages by any means exhausted the list of our ancient Schools and Scholars. But we have sought to notice all the more frequented schools, and the most celebrated scholars of ancient Erin, who flourished in their native land. It would require a separate volume to do justice to the history of the Irish monks, who bore the name and fame of Scotia to so many foreign countries, in which the memory of their virtues and their learning is still fondly cherished. In these pages, however, we have said enough to vindicate the right of ancient Erin to that glorious title, by

which since the twelfth century she has been known to the scholars of all Europe—INSULA SANCTORUM ET DOCTORUM [31]—The Island of Saints and Scholars.

- [1] *Annals of Innisfallen*, anno 1127.
- [2] Keating.
- [3] See *Lectures on MS. Materials*.
- [4] *Acta SS.*, page 5.
- [5] See *Acta SS.*, page 5, n. x.
- [6] Fol. 58, b. a.
- [7] *Manuscript Materials*, Lecture iii., page 63, and *Manners and Customs*, Vol. ii., pages 90-178.
- [8] *Irish Writers*, page xlvii. to page lxxxv.
- [9] See O'Curry, page 29.
- [10] The "Tain-Quest" in the *Lays of the Western Gael*.
- [11] Page 221.
- [12] O'Donovan's *Four Masters*, A.D. 891—note.
- [13] *Annals of Ulster*, A.D. 974 and 663
- [14] See O'Curry's *Lectures*, p. 521.
- [15] See O'Reilly, page lxiv.
- [16] Its Irish title is *Cogadh Gaedhil re Gallaibh*.
- [17] See page 51.
- [18] See page 117.
- [19] It was this narrative that inspired Moore's beautiful lyric—"Rich and Rare."
- [20] *Manners and Customs*, Vol. ii., page 138.
- [21] *The Annals of Lough Cé*, A.D. 1024.
- [22] *Annals of Ulster and Four Masters*.
- [23] Chapter II., page 21.
- [23] *Brehon Laws*, Vol. iii., p. 89.
- [24] *Grammatica*, p. xxxiv.
- [25] "Lingua formis suis, et regulis certis, circumscripta."
- [26] See O'Curry's *Lectures—Manners and Customs* Vol. ii., p. 154,
- [27] *Lectures*, Vol. i., p. 53
- [28] *Lectures—Manners and Customs—Vol. ii.*, page 157.
- [29] *Tripartite*, Rolls Series, Vol. ii., page 530.
- [30] Vol. ii., page 349.
- [31] The earliest authority we know for the first part of this title is the ancient author of St. Alban's Life : — "In hac insula tot viri eximiae sanctitatis fuerunt quod *Insula Sanctorum* nomine appropriato dicebatur." The corresponding Irish form was *Inis na Naomh*. Marianus Scotus. in his *Chroniele*, also calls it by the same title—*Insula Sanctorum*—under date of the year 696, but which is really A.D. 589. See Reeves' notes in the *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, vol. vii., p. 228.

*Insula sanctorum et doctorum* : or, Ireland's ancient schools and scholars (1912)

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