

*Mikla, or Great Ireland*

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1850

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EUROPE AND AMERICA.

THE fifteenth century in Spain (the point from which the discovery of America emanated) was marked by the cessation of the Crusades, by treaties, made between the Moors and Christians of Spain and France, the Porte and Venice, of amity and commerce. Asiatic arts and luxury, Asiatic idols, and Asiatic valor, had made deep and sensible impressions upon Christendom. The schools of Cordova, the chivalry of Grenada, the galleys of Fez, the grandeur of the Soldan, exercised a moral despotism throughout Europe. What Russian power and Russian pretensions are to Europe to-day, the Ottoman empire was to the Christian Europe of Columbus' youth.

The exact sciences were, as yet, in a rude and chaotic state. Astrology, alchemy, and both magics had professors and postulants. Medicine was little better than herbal traditions, or a litany of incantations. Amulets blest by conjurers were worn, and the stars believed in by the highest intellects. It was then,—when star-gazers advised kings to peace or war, when orazen heads were fabricated by Albertus Magnus and Friar Bacon, when Aldrovandus had to dissect his own child, fearing to touch another human body,—with Fatalism enthroned in Asia, and Credulity in Europe,—it was then, that Columbus turned his piercing vision towards the West.

Domestic slavery existed very generally through Europe. The lords of the soil exacted the services, lives, and the very honor, of their serfs. The serf was chained to his district and predestined to his pro-fession. There was no freedom of will, or mind, among the populace. A few trading towns had, in-deed, wrung chartered privileges from their sovereigns, but these privileges were confined to the class of master workmen, who held in servitude the great body of the citizens and apprentices.

Chivalry had lost its charm, and was obsolete. The age of Commerce, which was felt to be approaching, was looked for exclusively in the East ; so that, even in the knowledge of its own wants, Europe was in error.

Two great facts of this century precede Columbus, and only two. The science of government was being studied carefully in Italy, France, and Spain, and the science of reasoning in the great colleges, since called universities. The fall of Constantinople, in 1453, sent the learned of the East for refuge into Italy, and new classic schools began to assume a regular existence at Rome and Florence, Bologna and Ferrara.

While these mental possessions were beginning to accumulate in Europe, in the wisdom of Providence, a New World was about to become a sharer in their diffusion.

Let us be just to the European thinkers of those days. With much that seems absurd in the "schoolmen," and much that was ephemeral, there is combined the vital principle of all human history,—Does man, under God, suffice for himself? Can he justify his own intellect?—can he self-govern his own life?—this was their great problem through all their studies. Doubtless, they did not know whither their own theories ultimately led; doubtless, they, too, attempted to set limits to faith and to science; but, with all that can be said against them, there they stand,—the ferrymen plying between ancient and modern civilization, bringing over to us the most precious products of distant times, and teaching us how to start in our new career.

The long and painful preparatory efforts of Columbus to interest the old world in his project, would seem almost to be permitted, in order to prove the inefficiency of the age he was to electrify on his return from the first voyage.

He besought Genoa and Venice for a ship or two, to find his world, and they refused him ; he petitioned the wise kings of Portugal and England, and they refused to risk a single sail in such a quest ; he sojourned long about the courts of France and Spain, appealing to the wisdom of the wise, the judgment of the learned, the ambition of the brave, and the avarice of the acquisitive ; but he argued, appealed, petitioned in vain ! No one believed in his theory, or hoped in his adventure. Nay, the wise smiled scornfully, the learned laughed in their academic sleeves, and even the brave had no stomach for battling the tempest, or for planting their banners in the wide sea-field.

Besides, was he not a common sailor ? He had, indeed, commanded some merchant ships, and had an uncle an admiral. His name, some said, was noble ; but of this there was no proof. The age that believed in the Divine right of the blood royal, and the sovereign inheritance of the blood noble, could not conceive of a mere sailor achieving a conquest, which princes and grandees could not so much as imagine, after all his arguments.

Where, then, did Columbus and his theory find believers ? Who were his first converts and first assistants ? A woman, a sailor, and a monk, are the three by whom the curtain of the Atlantic is raised, and America pointed out afar off. Before the dense curtain of that grandest scene of all human history, they stand,—the woman, the sailor, and the monk. Columbus converted the prior of La Rabida, the prior converted the queen of Castile, and so the armament did sail, after all, in quest of the New World in the West.

That is a noble group, and deserves long contemplation. The woman personifies gentleness, the monk, faith, the sailor, courage. Faith, gentleness, and courage are thus confederated to find the New World, and claim it for their own !

Columbus sailed, and, except by a very few, was soon forgotten. The prior may have prayed for him ; the queen may have sometimes asked news of him ; Paulo Toscanelli, the map-maker, in his Florentine study, may have cast his eye over the conjectural track of the two Spanish carvels, to the ideal shore of Saint Brendans, land ; but great, gross Europe sleeps, eats, and drinks, just as if no apostle of the Future was laboring through the shoreless ocean. The capture of Grenada, with its half million Moors, no doubt, seemed to all the wise heads of Europe incomparably the greatest act that century could see. The Genoese sailor and his New World are hidden, for the time, by that cloud of turbans, with its pale, disastrous crescent still visible, though eclipsed.

What a month that must have been in Europe, when Columbus returned with his plants and minerals, and his men, red and naked as the sun ! The telegraph of rumor proclaimed his success from Lisbon to Madrid, and from Madrid to Rome, Venice, Antwerp, Paris, and London. What wild tales are told and swallowed,—what a crying curiosity thrusts out its ears from every corner of Europe,— what sudden new light breaks in on the learned,—what passion for ocean adventure seizes on the brave,—what visions of mountains of gold and valleys of diamonds drive away sleep from the couches of the avaricious !

In this age of inferior “ excitements,” we can hardly imagine what Europe felt in that day ; though, if the “ sensation” can be imagined anywhere, ’tis here. It must have been something incomparably more intense than the “ California fever.” “ A New World found !” was the trumpet-blast which rung from end to end of Europe. Europe, that yesterday considered the fall of Grenada the greatest of facts, has already almost forgotten Grenada ! Europe, that began to smile at the crusade, grasps again the banner of the Cross, to plant it, not on Saint Sophias, or Mount Calvary, but to plant it on the further verge of the ocean, bordered with illimitable lands ! Europe, in the hour of Columbus’ arrival, attained her majority, began to act and think for herself, and, ceasing to be a child, to cast away the things of her childhood.

On the authentication and details of the discovery there is no need to pause. On the names of the new chivalry of the ocean we need not linger. Cabot, Cartier, Americus, Verrazzini, Hudson, Raleigh, Drake, Balboa, Cortez, Pizarro,—America knows them all. They developed the idea of the great sailor. They found the western way to India. They demonstrated the rotundity of the earth. They are the true experimental philosophers, to whom Bacon, Descartes, Linnæus, and Gassendi, were but the

amanuenses. They will be forever honored among men,—the graduates of the universe !—the alumni of the ocean !

When Columbus, ill-requited by Spain, and weary of life, felt his end approach, he desired, as his last request, that it might be engraven on his tomb, “*Here lieth Christopher Columbus, who gave to Castile and Arragon a New World.*” If this was meant as a reproach to Ferdinand, it was a magnificent reproach. If it was meant as a lasting definition of his own act, it is miserably deficient. What he actually did, is, indeed, insignificant, compared to what he was the cause of being done ; but, even from his death-bed, that clear-sighted man must have foreseen that not to Ferdinand and Isabella was his New World given ; not to Spain, nor even to Europe ; but rather that it was given to all humanity, for the remainder of time to come.

Three hundred years and more have passed over the grave of Columbus. In his cathedral tomb, at Havana, he sleeps within the circle of the greatest exploit of modern men,—the civilization of America,—which he most heroically began. All the races of Europe have contributed workmen to the work, who, amid much “*confusion of tongues,*” are rearing it heavenward, day by day, in hope and harmony, and, let us trust, with all due reverence and humility of spirit.

Columbus has been justified ; so has Spain. The shares of France, England, Holland, Sweden, and Germany, in civilizing America, have been all recorded, in the works of sympathetic and laborious historians.

And now, also, Ireland advances her claim to respect and remembrance as a contributor to this world’s work. She also has helped to reclaim the land from barrenness, and to liberate it from oppression. Her sons have made many a clearing, found many a ford, worked out many a noble plan, fighting stoutly for their new country, on land and sea, when so required. Ireland, which has furnished actors to every great act of civilization, since Dathi died at Sales, following in the track of Brennus and Alaric, was also, as we shall see, represented here, from the beginning, by able and useful men. It is of these Irish settlers in America, this book is written ; and, while looking over its brief chapters, I cannot suppress a sigh, that much greater books have been written of men who did not deserve the honor one half so well.

The following pages, dear reader, were filled up after many interruptions and under many distractions ; therefore, have mercy in your judgment of the work. I venture it into print with the hope that the whole subject may come, ere long, under the hands of a master, who can make of it a story both Europe and America would love to listen to.

*Boston, Saint Patrick’s Day, 1851.*

#### A history of the Irish Settlers in North America.

The legend of “*Great Ireland*” and of Saint Brendan—Norwegian account—Irish account—Italian and Spanish accounts.

It is uncertain whether Christopher Columbus was the first European who saw America. A general tradition of its existence was widely received before his birth, and we cannot reject, as entirely incredible, the repeated allusions to this tradition, contained in the early chronicles of the northern nations of the old world. To the Genoese belongs the glory of disenchanting the Ocean,—of bringing two hemispheres into contact separated from the beginning,—of leaving a land of refuge accessible to humanity, and of opening the history of its population, by one of the most glorious examples of patience, fortitude, and courage, ever exhibited by man. Who could wish his glory greater or less ?

The Scandinavians count three several precursors of Columbus—Ari Marson, whose voyage took place in 983 ; Biorn, a later adventurer, and Gudlief, son of Gudlang, who, towards the middle of the 11th century, followed the track of, and conversed with, Biorn, in Huitramannaland, or *Irland it Mikla*, beyond the Atlantic. The account of Ari in the Landnamabock is short, but perfectly intelligible. It says :

“ Ulf the Squinter, son of Hogni the White, occupied the whole of *Reykianess*, (south-west promontory of Iceland,) between Thorskafiord and Hafrafell. He had a wife named Biorg, the daughter of Eyvind the East-countryman. They had a son named Atili the Red, who married Thorkotu, daughter of Hergil. They had a son named Ari, who was driven by a tempest to Huitramannaland, (white man’s land,) which some call Irland it Mikla, (Great Ireland,) *which lies in the western ocean, near to Vinland the Good, west from Ireland*” by a number of days’ sail, which is uncertain, some error having crept into the original in these figures. “ Ari was not permitted to depart, but was baptized there.”

Of the second and third voyages, the same Landnamabock (compiled in the 13th century) relates : —

“ So Rafn, the Limerick merchant, first stated, who lived for a long time in Limerick, in Ireland.” Rafn was kinsman to Ari Marson, and lived at the beginning or middle of the eleventh century. “ So also Thorkel, the son of Geller, (grandson of Ari Marson,) says that certain Icelanders stated, who heard Thorfinn, Jarl of the Orkneys,”—also kinsman to Ari Marson, and born 1008, died 1064,—“ re-late that Ari had been seen and known in Huitramannaland, and that, although not suffered to depart thence, he was there held in great honor.

“ Ari had a wife named Thorgerd, daughter of Alf of Dolum. Their sons were Thorgils, Gudlief, and Illugi ; which is the family of Reykianess.” Then follows a passage which shows that Eirck the Red was connected with the family of this Ari Marson, and which it may not be amiss to repeat, as all these historical allusions afford corroboration of the authenticity of different narratives. “ Jorund was the son of Ulf the Squinter. He married Thobiorg Knarrarbring. They had a daughter, Thjodhild, whom Eirck the Red married. They had a son, Leif the Lucky, of Greenland.” It is worthy of remark, that the writer of this account was Ari the Learned, born 1067, who flourished at the end of the eleventh century, and who therefore lived within a century after Ari Marson’s departure from Ireland. He was immediately descended from Ari Marson, and would, of course, be anxious and careful to obtain the most accurate accounts of his ancestors. It is to be observed the situation of Huitramannaland is here stated, “ In the western ocean near Vinland, and west of Ireland.” It points, of necessity, to that portion of the country now known as the midland or southern States of the Union.

[1]

The *Irland it Mikla*, or Great Ireland, is frequently alluded to in the Northern Sagas. They describe the route towards it, from the North of Europe, thus :—

“ To the South of habitable Greenland there are uninhabited and wild tracts, and enormous icebergs. The country of the Skraelings lies beyond these ; Markland beyond this, and Vinland the Good beyond the last. Next to this, and something beyond it, lies Albania, that is, Huitramannaland, whither, formerly, vessels came from Ireland. There, several *Irishmen* and *Icelanders* saw and recognized Ari, the son of Mar and Kotlu, of Reykianess, concerning whom nothing had been heard for a long time, and who had been made their chief by the inhabitants of the land.”

In this vague sketch, modern antiquarians have labored hard, and not unsuccessfully, to identify the country of the Skraelings as the Esquimaux coast, Markland as Labrador, Vinland as New England, and Huitramannaland as the country “ further southward, beyond the Chesapeake Bay.” [2]

“ The Skraelinger,” says Humboldt, “ related to the Northmen settled in Vinland, that further south-ward, beyond the Chesapeake Bay, there dwelt ‘ white men, who clothed themselves in long, white garments, carried before them poles to which clothes were attached, and called with a loud voice.’ This account was interpreted, by the Christian Northmen, to indicate processions in which banners were borne accompanied by singing. In the oldest Sagas, the historical narrations of Thorfinn Karlsefne, and the Icelandic Landnammabock, these southern coasts, lying between Virginia and Florida, are designated under the name of the *Land of the White Men*. They are expressly called Great Ireland, (*Irland it Mikla*,) and it is maintained that they were peopled by the Irish. According to testimonies which extend to 1064, before Lief discovered Vinland, and probably about the year 982, Ari Marson, of the powerful Icelandic race of Ulf the Squint-eyed, was driven in a voyage from Ice-

land to the South, by storms, on the coast of the Land of the White Men, and there baptized in the Christian faith ; and, not being allowed to depart, was recognized by men from the Orkney Islands and Iceland.” [3]

The volumes in which these corroborative accounts are recorded were compiled in the North, three centuries before the birth of Columbus, and, evidently, represent the then prevailing belief in a “ Great Ireland” beyond the western sea.

The Irish Annals themselves make special mention of the same fact. They credit the first voyage westward to Saint Brandan, patron of Clonfert and Ardfert on the south-west coast. It is recorded that he flourished from the year A.D. 550 till the beginning of the following century, and that his voyages in search of the promised land, were two ; after which he returned no more. The precise point of departure,—“ the foot of Brandon Mountain,” now Tralee Bay,—is stated ; his sea store consisted of live swine, his companions of monks, and his first voyage, of course, abounded in adventures. The dates in these legends are well fixed, whatever else may be dubious ; and we do not feel at liberty to reject facts which an Usher and a Humboldt long pondered over, and, at last, set down with reverence.

The voyages of Saint Brandan were received traditions in France, the Netherlands, Spain, and Italy, soon after the Northern Chroniclers had written their memoranda concerning *Irland it Mikla*. Old metrical romances, in the French and Dutch languages, give a world of details about them,— some credible, and some absurd enough. [4] But, what is more to our purpose, Jacobus Voraginius, Provincial of the Dominicans and Bishop of Genoa, (the native city of Columbus,) gave St. Brandan’s land special prominence in the 13th century, in his “ Golden Legend,” [5] and the Italian geographers set it down, on their conjectural charts, opposite “ Europe and Africa, from the south of Ireland to the end of Guinea.” In the map made for Columbus previous to setting out on his first voyage, by Paulo Toscanelli, of Florence, the customary space was occupied by “ Saint Borondon’s, or Saint Brandan’s land.”

In the letters of Columbus to his sovereigns, it is notable that the “ singing of the birds,” and “ the greenness of the vegetation,” so much dwelt on in “ the Golden Legend,” are frequently mentioned. The phrase “ Promised Land” also occurs, in the mystical sense in which it is employed by Bishop Jacobus.

Even after the voyage of Columbus, so strong was the belief in St. Brandan’s, that various expeditions were sent to explore it, as appears from depositions taken before the Grand Inquisitor of the Canaries, Pedro Ortez de Funez, and from other Portuguese and Spanish accounts. The last of these voyages was undertaken as late as 1721, by “ Don Gaspar Dominguez, a man of probity and talent. As this was an expedition of solemn and mysterious import, he had two holy friars as apostolical chaplains. They made sail from the island of Teneriffe, toward the end of October, leaving the populace in an indescribable state of anxious curiosity. The ship, however, returned from its cruise as un-successful as all its predecessors.” [6]

Although these reports were not justified by the facts, yet it would be unwise to confound the early belief with the modern illusion, since the latter did not and could not beget the former, though they have obscured and almost hidden it from our sight.

There is quite sufficient reason to infer that the ancients believed in the existence of a Great Ireland in the West, before Columbus’ discovery ; and assuredly, if they were mistaken, we are in a fair way to see the doubtful vision of their days become a reality. The dates and details we must leave to the antiquarians, while we endeavor to show what modern emigration has done to accomplish the legend of *Irland it Mikla*.

The First Irish emigrants ,— In Barbadoes—In Pennsylvania — In New York — In Maryland — In the Carolinas — In Kentucky — Adventure of Simon Butler in Delaware.

THE half century after the voyage of Columbus was spent in exploring the harbors, rivers, and coasts of the “ New World.” Colonization followed,—the Spanish nation still leading. In 1565, the

Spaniards founded St Augustine, in Florida ; in 1562, the French had built a Fort in Carolina, and in 1608, they founded Quebec ; in 1585, Raleigh settled 180 emigrants at Roanoke ; in 1606, Jamestown was begun ; in 1629, Plymouth, and in 1634, Baltimore. These are the first authentic dates of North American settlements.

The first Irish people who found permanent homes in America, were certain Catholic patriots, banished by Oliver Cromwell to Barbadoes, in 1649. After the failure of the confederation formed in that year, 45,000 Irishmen were transported beyond the seas, some to France and Spain, and several ship-loads to Barbadoes. In this island, as in the neighboring Montserat, the Celtic language was commonly spoken in the last century, and, perhaps, it is partly attributable to this early Irish colonization, that Barbadoes became “ one of the most populous islands in the world.” At the end of the 17th century, it was reported to contain 20,000 white inhabitants.

During the last quarter of the 17th century there does not appear to have been any considerable emigration from Ireland. After the Restoration of Charles II., in 1660, the influence of the Duke of Ormund procured letters patent suspending the Navigation Laws, so as to allow Ireland comparative freedom of trade. From this, manufactures flourished, and there was no “ surplus population” left. The French Refugees, who fled from the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, in 1685, contributed their manufacturing skill still further to enrich the country, which certainly enjoyed, in the interval from the Restoration to the Revolution, unusual prosperity.

The revolution of 1688 marks a new and less prosperous era for the Mother Country. William and Mary, in the first year of their reign, were called, by both Houses of Parliament, to discourage the manufactures of Ireland which competed with those of England, which they complacently consented to do. By this invidious policy, according to Lord Fitzwilliam, “ 100, 000 operatives” were driven out of Ireland. “ Many of the Protestants,” says an historian of Irish trade, “ removed into Germany,”— “ several Papists at the same time removed into Spain.” Another cotemporaneous writer speaks of multitudes having gone to America from Ireland “ in consequence of the rack rents there.” A cotemporary account estimates that 3000 males left Ulster yearly for the colonies. [7] And we hear, at intervals, amid the confusion of this panic flight, the stern accents of Swift, upbraiding the people with their submission, and reproaching the aristocracy with their suicidal impolicy, in cultivating cattle and banishing men.

#### The tradition of Saint Brendan’s voyage to America.

THE ancient and wide-spread European tradition of Saint Brendan’s voyage is to be gathered from the various sources indicated in the first chapter ; that is, from Irish, Danish and Ecclesiastical chronicles, from the popular poems of the middle ages, and the cotemporary legends of the saints. I have thought some illustrations of the references in the text would be desirable :—

Colgan, in his *Acta Sanctorum Hibernia*, makes this mention of St. Brendan’s youthful days : “ When Brendan was a mere infant, he was placed under her care,” (he is speaking of St. Ita, Abbess of *Cluan-Credhuil*, in Limerick,) “ and remained with her five years, after which period he was led away by Bishop Ercus, in order to receive from him the more solid instruction necessary for his advancing years. Brendan retained always the greatest respect and affection for his foster mother ; and he is represented after his seven years’ voyage, as amusing St. Ita with an account of his adventures in the ocean.” *Colgan Acta S. S.*, p. 68, *Louvain*, 1637.

Unfortunately for our better information on this interesting subject, Colgan, who seems to have had the necessary Celtic materials, and who certainly had the requisite learning, did not live to finish his work. It extends only to the end of March, and the festival of St. Brendan being the 16th of May, his biography is not included in Colgan’s *Acta*. He incidentally places the birth of St. Brendan in A.D. 485, and his voyage in 545. Dr. Lanigan thinks this latter date incorrect, as St. Brendan was then in his sixtieth year. But Columbus, we know, had passed his fiftieth when he undertook his voyage.

St. Brendan, before his voyage, was Bishop or Abbot of Ardfert and Clonfert, in the present county of Kerry, where the remains of churches, bearing his name, are still visited by tourists. He is honored as the patron of the Diocese of Clonfert.

The Rev. Cæsar Otway, an Irish Episcopalian clergyman and writer of some note, reports the local tradition of the voyage, existing in the west of Ireland, as follows :

“ We are informed that Brendan, hearing of the previous voyage of his cousin, Barinthus, in the western ocean, and obtaining an account from him of the happy isles he had landed on in the far west, determined, under the strong desire of winning heathen souls to Christ, to undertake a voyage of discovery himself. And aware that, all along the western coast of Ireland, there were many traditions respecting the existence of a western land, he proceeded to the islands of Arran, and there remained for some time, holding communication with the venerable St. Enda, and obtaining from him much information on what his mind was bent. There can be little doubt that he proceeded northward along the coast of Mayo, and made inquiry, among its bays and islands, of the remnants of the Tuatha Danaan people, that once were so expert in naval affairs, and who acquired from the Milesians, or Scots, that overcame them, the character of being magicians, for their superior knowledge. At Innis-kea, then, and Innisgloria, Brendan set up his cross ; and, in after times, in his honor were erected those curious remains that still exist. Having prosecuted his inquiries with all diligence, Brendan returned to his native Kerry ; and from a bay sheltered by the lofty mountain that is now known by his name, he set sail for the Atlantic land ; and, directing his course towards the south-west, in order to meet the summer solstice, or what we would call the tropic, after a long and rough voyage, his little bark being well provisioned, he came to summer seas, where he was carried along, without the aid of sail or oar, for many a long day. This, it is to be presumed, was the great gulf-stream, and which brought his vessel to shore somewhere about the Virginian capes, or where the American coast tends eastward, and forms the New England States. Here landing, he and his companions marched steadily into the interior for fifteen days, and then came to a large river, flowing from east to west ; this, evidently, was the river Ohio. And this the holy adventurer was about to cross, when he was accosted by a person of noble presence, but whether a real or visionary man does not appear,—who told him he had gone far enough ; that further discoveries were reserved for other men, who would, in due time, come and Christianize all that pleasant land. The above, when tested by common sense, clearly shows that Brendan landed on a continent, and went a good way into the interior, met a great river running in a different direction from those he heretofore crossed ; and here, from the difficulty of transit, or want of provisions, or deterred by increasing difficulties, he turned back ; and, no doubt, in a dream, he saw some such vision which embodied his own previous thought, and satisfied him that it was expedient for him to return home. It is said he remained seven years away, and returned to set up a college of three thousand monks, at Clonfert, and he then died in the odor of sanctity.” Otway’s *Sketches in Erris and Tyrrawley*, note, pp. 98, 99. Dublin, 1845.

The *Codex Kilkeniensis* in Primate Marsh’s Library, Dublin, contains a fragment of an ancient life of St. Brendan, of which, it is possible, the missing parts may be yet recovered by the Irish archeologists.

In England, a version of the voyage was inserted by Capgrave, in his *Nova Legenda*, published in 1516. Wynkyn de Worde, the first English printer, (and a cotemporary of Christopher Columbus,) published the legend, with many adornments, of which we give a specimen :—

“ Soon after, as God would, they saw a fair island, full of flowers, herbs, and trees, whereof they thanked God of his good grace ; and anon they went on land, and when they had gone long in this, they found a full fayre well, and thereby stood a fair tree full of boughs, and on every bough sat a fayre bird, and they sat so thick on the tree, that unneath any leaf of the tree might be seen. The number of them was so great, and they sung so merrilie, that it was an heavenlike noise to hear. Whereupon St. Brandon kneeled down on his knees and wept for joy, and made his praises devoutlie to our Lord God, to know what these birds meant. And then anon one of the birds flew from the tree to St. Brandon, and he with the flickering of his wings made a full merrie noise like a fiddle, that him seemed he never heard so joyful a melodic. And then St. Brandon commanded the foule to tell him the cause why they sat so thick on the tree and sang so merrilie. And then the foule said, sometime we were angels in heaven, but when our master, Lucifer, fell down into hell for his high pride, and we fell with him for our offences, some higher and some lower, after the quality of the trespass. And because our trespasse is but little, therefore our Lord hath sent us here, out of all paine, in full great joy and mirthe, after his pleasing, here to serve him on this tree in the best manner we can. The

Sundaie is a daie of rest from all worldly occupation, and therefore that daie all we be made as white as any snow, for to praise our Lorde in the best wise we may. And then all the birds began to sing even song so merrilie, that it was an heavenlie noise to hear ; and, after supper, Saint Brandon and his fellows went to bed and slept well. And in the morn they arose by times, and then these foules began mattyns, prime, and hours, and all such service as Christian men used to sing ; and St. Brandon, with his fellows, abode there seven weeks, until Trinity Sunday was passed.”

—The “*Lyfe of Saynt Brandon*” in the *Golden Legend*. Published by Wynkyn de Worde. 1483. Fol. 357.

The voyage was a favorite theme with the early metrical romance writers, as was to be expected. It was precisely the subject for their school. “Two French versions, as well as the original Latin,” says Mr. McCarthy, “have been published at Paris,” under the following title, “*La Legende Latine de S. Brandaine’s avec une traduction en prose et en poesie Romanes. Publiés par Achille Jubinal*,” 1836. An English translation of one of the early French romances, which appeared in Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine, vol. xxxix. 3 contains the following fine lines : —

“ Right toward the port their course they hold ;  
But other dangers, all untold,  
Were there ; before the gate keep guard  
Dragons of flaming fire, dread ward !  
Right at the entrance hung a brand  
Unsheathed, turning on either hand  
With innate wisdom ; they might well  
Bear it, for ’t was invincible,—  
And iron, stone, ay, adamant,  
Against its edge had strength full scant.  
But, lo ! a fair youth came to meet them,  
And with meek courtesy did greet them,  
For he was sent by Heaven’s command  
To give them entrance to that land ;  
So sweetly he his message gave,  
And kissed each one, and bade the glaive  
Retain its place ; the dragons, too,  
He checked, and led them safely through,  
And bade them rest, now they had come  
At last unto that heavenly home ,  
For they had now, all dangers past,  
To certain glory come at last.

And now that fair youth leads them on,  
Where paradise in beauty shone ;  
And there they saw the land all full  
Of woods and rivers beautiful,  
And meadows large besprent with flowers,  
And scented shrubs in fadeless bowers,  
And trees with blossoms fair to see,  
And fruit also deliciously  
Hung from the boughs ; nor briar, nor thorn,  
Thistle, nor blighted tree forlorn  
With blackened leaf, was there,—for spring  
Held aye a year-long blossoming ;  
And never shed their leaf the trees,  
Nor failed their fruit ; and still the breeze  
Blew soft, scent-laden from the fields.  
Full were the woods of venison ;  
The rivers of good fish each one,

And others flowed with milky tide,—  
 No marvel all things fructified.  
 The earth gave honey, oozing through  
 Its pores, in sweet drops like the dew ;  
 And in the mount was golden ore,  
 And gems, and treasure wondrous store.  
 There the clear sun knew no declining,  
 Nor fog nor mist obscured his shining ;  
 No cloud across that sky did stray,  
 Taking the sun's sweet light away ;  
 Nor cutting blast, nor blighting air,  
 For bitter winds blew never there ;  
 Nor heat, nor frost, nor pain, nor grief,  
 Nor hunger, thirst,—for swift relief  
 From every ill was there ; plentie  
 Of every good, right easily,  
 Each had according to his will,  
 And aye they wandered blithely still  
 In large and pleasant pastures green,  
 O, such as earth hath never seen !  
 And glad was Brandon, for their pleasure  
 So wondrous was, that scant in measure  
 Their past toils seemed ; nor could they rest,  
 But wandered aye in joyful quest  
 Of somewhat fairer, and did go  
 Hither and thither, to and fro,  
 For very joyfulness. And now  
 They climb a mountain's lofty brow,  
 And see afar a vision rare  
 Of angels,—I may not declare  
 What there they saw, for words could ne'er  
 The meaning tell ; and melodie  
 Of that same heavenly company,  
 For joy that they beheld them there,  
 They heard, but could not bear its sweetness,  
 Unless their natures greater meetness  
 To that celestial place had borne,—  
 But they were crushed with joy. ' Return,'  
 Said they,—' we may not this sustain.'  
 Then spoke the youth in gentle strain :

' Brandon, God unto thine eyes  
 Hath granted sight of paradise ;  
 But know, it glories hath more bright  
 Than e'er have dazed thy mortal sight ;  
 One hundred thousand times more fair  
 Are these abodes ; but thou couldst ne'er  
 The view sustain, nor the ecstasy  
 Its meanest joys would yield to thee ;  
 For thou hast in the body come ;  
 But, when the Lord shall call thee home,  
 Thou, fitted then, a spirit free  
 From weakness and mortality,  
 Shalt aye remain, no fleeting guest,  
 But taking here thine endless rest.  
 And while thou still remain'st below,  
 That Heaven's high favor all may know,

Take hence these stones, to teach all eyes  
That thou hast been in paradise.’

Then Brandon worshipped God, and took  
Of paradise a farewell look. ,  
The fair youth led them to the gate ;  
They entered in the ship, and straight  
The signal’s made, the wind flows free,  
The sails are spread, and o’er the sea  
They bound ; but swift and blithe, I trow,  
Their homeward course ; for where was foe,  
Of earth or hell, ‘gainst them to rise,  
Who were returned from paradise ? “

It is mentioned among the accomplishments of a troubadour, by old Pierre St. Cloud, that he had many a tale

“ Of Arthur brave or Tristram bold,  
Of Charpel, of St. Brendan old.”

Among the more matter-of-fact Flemings, the maritime fame of St. Brendan was not less general than with their French neighbors. Mr. Longfellow assigns their *Reis van Sainte Brandaen*, or “ Journey of St. Brendan” to the twelfth century. In his “ Poetry of Europe,” (p. 372,) he gives the following account of this whimsical Dutch romance : —

“ To the same century belongs the wonderful ‘ Journey of St. Brandaen,’ (*Reis van Sainte Brandaen*,) [7] containing an account of his remarkable adventures by sea and land ; how he put to sea with his chaplain and monks, and provisions for nine years ; how, after sailing about for a whole year without sight of shore, they landed on what, like Sinbad the sailor, they supposed to be an island, but found to be a great fish ; how they all took to their heels, and were no sooner on board than the fish sank and came near swamping their ship ; how they were followed by a sea-monster, half woman, half fish, (*half wijf, half visch*,) which the saint sank with a prayer ; how they came to a country of scorix and cinders, (*drossaerden en schinkers*,) where they suffered from the extremes of heat and cold ; how they were driven by a storm into the Leverzee, (the old German *Lebermeer*,) where they saw a mast rise from the water, and heard a mysterious voice, bidding them sail eastward, to avoid the magnetic rocks, that drew to them all that passed too near ; how they steered eastward, and saw a beautiful church on a rock, wherein were seven monks, fed with food from paradise by a dove and a raven ; how they were driven by a south-west wind into the Wild Sea, in the midst of which they found a man perched on a solitary rock, who informed them he was the king of Pamphylia in Cappadocia, and, having been shipwrecked there ninety-nine years previous, had ever since been sitting alone on that solitary rock ; how they came to a fearful whirlpool, called Helleput, or Pit of Hell, where they heard the lamentations of damned souls ; how they arrived in Donkerland, a land covered with gold and jewels instead of grass, and watered by a fountain of oil and honey ; how one of the monks stole there a costly bridle, by which afterwards a devil dragged him down to hell ; how they came to a goodly castle, at the gate of which sat an old man with a gray beard, and beside him an angel with a flaming sword ; how the monks loaded their ship with gold, and a great storm rose, and St. Brandaen prayed, and a demon came with the lost monk on his shoulders, and threw him into the rigging of the ship ; how they sailed near the Burning Castle, (*Brandenden Burcht*) and heard the dialogues of devils ; how they came to the Mount of Syoen, and found there a castle whose walls were of crystal, inset with bronze lions and leopards, the dwelling of the *Walschrander*, or rebel angels ; how they journeyed further, and found a little man no bigger than one’s thumb, trying to bail out the sea ; how a mighty serpent wound himself round the ship, and, taking his tail in his mouth, held them prisoners for fourteen days ; and, finally, how they came to anchor, and St. Brandaen asked his chaplain, Noe, if he had recorded all these wonders, and the chaplain Noe answered, ‘ Thank God. the book is written,’ (*God danc, lit boec es volscreven*.) And so ends this ancient ‘ Divina Cornmedia’ of the Flemish school ; not unlike, in its general tone and coloring. ‘The ‘ Vision of Frate Alberico,’ or ‘ The Legend of Barlaam and Josaphat,’ and the rest of the ghostly legends of the middle ages, which mingled together monkhood and knight-errantry.” [8]

To conclude this summary of the published versions of the tradition, I cannot refrain from alluding to the noble poem on the same subject, in D. F. McCarthy's "Poems," (Dublin, 180 ;) a book which, if we were not such slaves of London criticism as we are, would long ago have been in every library in America. Our readers will thank us for the stanzas descriptive of the outward voyage of St.

Brendan

I.

At length the long-expected morning came,  
When from the opening arms of that wild bay,  
Beneath the hill that bears my humble name,  
Over the waves we took our untracked way :  
    Sweetly the morn lay on tarn and rill,  
Gladly the waves played in its golden light,  
    And the proud top of the majestic hill  
Shone in the azure air serene and bright.

II.

Over the sea we flew that sunny morn,  
Not without natural tears and human sighs,  
For who can leave the land where he was born,  
And where, perchance, a buried mother lies ,  
Where all the friends of riper manhood dwell,  
And where the playmates of his childhood sleep :  
Who can depart, and breathe a cold farewell,  
Nor let his eyes their honest tribute weep ?

III.

Our little bark, kissing the dimpled smiles  
On ocean's cheek, flew like a wanton bird,  
And then the land, with all its hundred isles,  
Faded away, and yet we spoke no word.  
Each silent tongue held converse with the past,  
Each moistened eye looked round the circling wave,  
And, save the spot where stood our trembling mast,  
Saw all things hid within one mighty grave.

IV.

We were alone, on the wide, watery waste  
Nought broke its bright monotony of blue,  
Save where the breeze the flying billows chased,  
Or where the clouds their purple shadows threw  
We were alone — the pilgrims of the sea —  
One boundless azure desert round us spread ;  
No hope — no trust — no strength, except in THEE,  
Father, who once the pilgrim-people led.

V.

And when the bright-faced sun resigned his throne  
Unto the Ethiop queen, who rules the night, —  
Who, with her pearly crown and starry zone,  
Fills the dark dome of heaven with silvery light, —  
As on we sailed, beneath her milder sway,  
And felt within our hearts her holier power,  
We ceased from toil, and humbly knelt to pray,  
And hailed with vesper hymns the tranquil hour

VI.

For then, indeed, the vaulted heavens appeared  
 A fitting shrine to hear their Maker's praise,  
 Such as no human architect has reared,  
 Where gems, and gold, and precious marbles blaze.  
 What earthly temple such a roof can boast ? —  
 What flickering lamp with the rich star-light vies,  
 When the round moon rests, like the sacred Host,  
 Upon the azure altar of the skies ?

VII.

We breathed aloud the Christian's filial prayer,  
 Which makes us brothers even with the Lord ;  
 " Our Father," cried we, in the midnight air,  
 " In heaven and earth be thy great name adored  
 May thy bright kingdom, where the angels are,  
 Replace this fleeting world, so dark and dim."  
 And then, with eyes fixed on some glorious star,  
 We sang the Virgin-Mother's vesper hymn !

VIII.

Hail, brightest star ! that o'er life's troubled sea  
 Shines pitying down from heaven's elysian blue !  
 Mother and maid, we fondly look to thee,  
 Fair gate of bliss, where Heaven beams brightly through.  
 Star of the morning ! guide our youthful days,  
 Shine on our infant steps in life's long race ;  
 Star of the evening ! with thy tranquil rays,  
 Gladden the aged eyes that seek thy face.

IX.

" Hail, sacred maid ! thou brighter, better Eve,  
 Take from our eyes the blinding scales of sin ;  
 Within our hearts no selfish poison leave,  
 For thou the heavenly antidote canst win.  
 sacred Mother ! 't is to thee we run  
 Poor children, from this world's oppressive strife ;  
 Ask all we need from thy immortal Son,  
 Who drank of death, that we might taste of life.

X.

" Hail, spotless Virgin ! mildest, meekest maid  
 Hail ! purest Pearl that time's great sea hath borne  
 May our white souls, in purity arrayed,  
 Shine, as if they thy vestal robes had worn ;  
 Make our hearts pure, as thou thyself art pure  
 Make safe the rugged pathway of our lives,  
 And make us pass to joys that will endure  
 When the dark term of mortal life arrives."

XI.

'T was thus, in hymns, and prayers, and holy psalms,  
 Day tracking day, and night succeeding night,

Now driven by tempests, now delayed by calms,  
Along the sea we winged our varied flight.  
O ! how we longed and pined for sight of land !  
O ! how we sighed for the green, pleasant fields !  
Compared with the cold waves, the barest strand  
The bleakest rock a crop of comfort yields.

XII.

Sometimes, indeed, when the exhausted gale,  
In search of rest, beneath the waves would flee,  
Like some poor wretch, who, when his strength doth fail,  
Sinks in the smooth and un-supporting sea,  
Then would the Brothers draw from memory's store  
Some chapter of life's misery or bliss —  
Borne trial that some saintly spirit bore —  
Or else some tale of passion, such as this.

- [1] Smith's "Northmen in New England." Boston : Hilliard & Grey. 1839.  
[2] Humboldt's "Cosmos."  
[3] Humboldt's "Cosmos," vol. i.  
[4] Usher's *Antiq. of British Churches* ; Usher's *Epistles of the Irish Saints*.  
[5] Voraigus died A.D. 1298.  
[6] Nunez, *Conquist de la Gran Canaria* ; *Viera Hist. Isl. Can.* ; Irving's *Life of Columbus*, vol. i.  
[7] "This old romance is probably of French origin," says Mr. Longfellow. We see, by the text, that it was originally Irish, but was received in one shape or another in every country of Europe, from Denmark to Italy.  
[8] *Oudvlaemsche Gedichten der XIIe XIIIe , en XIVe Eeuwen*, nitgegeven door JONKHR. PH. BLOMMAERT. Gent : 1838-41. 8vo."

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