

## Norwegians in Ireland

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Ireland may still be justly called the chief land of the ancient Celtic tribes. Long after the Britons and Caledonians had been driven out by the Romans and Anglo-Saxons, and obliged to fly to the remotest mountain districts of the west, their Irish kinsmen retained firm possession of the whole large and fertile country of Ireland. Subsequently, it is true, the Irish also were compelled to give way before the conquests of the Norwegians and English ; yet they continued to inhabit the greater part of the country in vastly superior numbers ; and even in the districts conquered by foreigners, which were mostly confined to the sea coasts, they dwelt intermingled with the new immigrants. In spite of the attempts of the English to subdue and annihilate the nationality of the Irish, they continued to preserve throughout the middle ages their ancient language and their characteristic manners and customs. With all their power the English have not even been able to root out the Roman Catholic religion, which to the present day forms the predominant church of the Irish. It is only in later times that they have succeeded in gaining a firmer footing in Ireland than they previously possessed. The English language and customs are continually making greater progress towards the west ; and the Irish, who can no longer withstand England's power, seek in great numbers like their kinsmen in Scotland, a new asylum in America. The struggle is the more severe in proportion as the Irish are more numerous than the Celtic population in Scotland and England. The last violent throes of the once powerful and mighty Irish nationality now fearfully agitate Ireland, which has been so long and so severely tried by oppression, pestilence, and famine.

One of the most active causes of the misfortunes of Ireland and the Irish is, however, the same that occasioned the ruin of the Celts in England and Scotland ; namely, that they could never sincerely unite together. They have always abandoned themselves too much to eastern indolence and quiet, regardless of the march of civilization, and neglecting to avail themselves sufficiently of the rich resources afforded by their native land. For, although it is true that there are considerable tracts of boggy land in Ireland, and that many districts are but little capable of cultivation, yet in the main Ireland is exceedingly well adapted for agriculture. The neighbourhood of the Atlantic produces mild breezes, which permit neither frost nor snow to be of long duration, and consequently promote a rare and luxuriant vegetation. In few countries do we behold so many creeping plants, and such beautiful and verdant fields and pastures, as in Ireland, which, from its green meadows, has obtained the appropriate name of “ the Emerald Isle.” The land is intersected by rivers partially navigable, abounding in fish, and its coasts are washed by a sea—which not only from its rich fisheries, but from the facilities which it affords to navigation, particular towards America—might, if properly used, become an inexhaustible source of wealth.

From time immemorial Ireland was celebrated in the Scandinavian North for its charming climate, and its fertility and beauty. The *Kongespeil* (or “ Mirror of Kings”), which was compiled in Norway about the year 1200, says that “ Ireland is almost the best of the lands we are acquainted with, although no vines grow there.” The Scandinavian Vikings and emigrants, who often contented themselves with such poor countries as Greenland and the islands in the North Atlantic Ocean, must therefore have especially turned their attention to “ the Emerald Isle,” particularly as it bordered very closely upon their colonies in England and Scotland.

But to make conquests in Ireland, and to acquire by the sword alone permanent settlements there, were no easy tasks. The remote situation of Ireland, so far towards the west in the Atlantic Ocean, was of itself no slight defence. With the exception of certain tracts, principally on the east coast, the land is full of mountains, which everywhere afford secure

retreats from an invading enemy. In our days Ireland, the second of the British Isles in point of magnitude, has a population of between six and seven millions, chiefly of ancient Irish, or Celtic origin ; and in ancient times, when the Celts were entirely independent, and absolute masters of the country, the population does not appear to have been much less numerous. Ireland, moreover, distinguished itself by adopting Christianity, together with its accompanying civilization, at a very early period, which, however, was not able to put an end to the cruel and sanguinary disputes that raged between the different tribes composing its population. Thus the proportionately few and scattered Norwegians, who could reach Ireland only by sea, and who could derive assistance only from their countrymen settled upon the coasts of England and Scotland, had to contend with a numerous, and by no means unwarlike people, inhabiting an extensive and mountainous country. To obtain assistance in the hour of need from their own Scandinavian home was, on account of the great distance, a physical impossibility. When, therefore, we consider that neither the Romans nor the Anglo-Saxons ever obtained a footing in Ireland, although they had conquered the adjacent country, England ; and when we further reflect upon the immense power exerted by the English in later times in order to subdue the Celtic population of Ireland, and the many centuries which elapsed before they even partially succeeded, we cannot help being surprised at the very considerable Scandinavian settlements which, as early as the ninth century, were formed in Ireland, and at the great influence which the Norwegians, according to the concurring evidence of the Irish and Scandinavian chronicles, must for more than three centuries have exercised in all the most important places in the country.

On his first entrance into Ireland, a Scandinavian traveller will be immediately reminded of the ancient dominion of his countrymen. It cannot possibly escape his observation what a striking part the Norwegians—or, as they are there exclusively called, the “ Danes”—play in the popular legends and traditions of Ireland. That, like the north-western districts of Scotland, it should have best preserved the popular life of ancient times with its songs and legends, must, it is true, be ascribed to its remote situation. Everywhere, even far in the interior of the country, we are shown Danish raths (mounds and entrenchments), and among others the so-called “ Danes-cast,” a long ditch and rampart in Ulster. “ Danish cooking-places” are also pointed out, consisting of small circular spaces set round with stones, and bearing traces of embers and burnings, some of which are met with scattered about on heaths and moors. In the ancient copper mines in the south of Ireland roundish stones with a dent round the middle are now and then dug up, which it is evident were used in former times in working the mines. These stones are called by the common people “ Danes’ hammers.” In like manner they generally call most of the antiquities that are dug up, either weapons or ornaments, Danish. Tales calculated to awaken terror of outrages of the Danes are connected with all these pretended Danish memorials : and the farther we travel into the remote western districts, the more terrible are the tales we hear of the distress and cruel oppressions which the inhabitants endured under their Danish conquerors. Nevertheless the Irishman has preserved, like the Englishman, the remembrance of the Danes’ contempt of death, and irresistible bravery. “That might even frighten a Dane,” says the Irishman at times, when speaking of some desperate undertaking. A kind of Superstitious fear of the redoubted Danes seems in some places to have seized the common people ; at least it is an acknowledged fact, that in several parts of the country they continue to frighten children with “ the Danes.”

Similar ideas about the Danes are to be met with even among the more enlightened portion of the people. Not long ago, it was a firm belief among many educated men in Ireland, that there were still families in Denmark, who could not forget the dominion they had formerly exercised in Ireland, and who bore a title derived from the large estates which their forefathers had once conquered and possessed there. It was likewise commonly supposed that the Danes had carried with them from Ireland a great number of manuscripts, which were said to

be preserved in one of the large collections of books in Copenhagen : as if, forsooth, it had been one of the chief aims of the bold and dangerous expeditions of the ancient Norwegians at that remote period, to carry off scientific treasures, and above all, manuscripts written in Irish, and, consequently, in a language that was for the most part entirely incomprehensible to them. In the last century in particular, and at the beginning of the present one, the Irish literati attributed to the Danes, or rather to the Norwegians, much to which, strictly speaking, they could have no valid claim.

The remarkable round towers, whose stone walls are built in so workmanlike a manner, and which are so evidently of Christian origin—being erected both as belfries, and as places of security for the clergy, and certainly against the Scandinavian Vikings and conquerors—were nevertheless proclaimed to be “ Danish towers.” The large stone rooms, or sepulchral chambers in cairns, that are found in several places in Ireland, as at New Grange, and which have so striking an agreement with the sepulchral chambers in the Scandinavian North and other countries, dating from the pre-historical, and so-called stone age, were also called “ Danish ;” although we know from the Sagas, as well as from the Irish chronicles, that the “ Danes,” or rather the Norwegian Vikings, sometimes opened these sepulchres in order to take out any treasure that might have been buried in them by the natives. In several other instances, the Irish were not disinclined at times to regard the Norwegian conquests in a somewhat too favourable light

Recently, however, they have gone to the opposite extreme. Everything possible that is bad, but nothing whatever that is good, is ascribed to the Scandinavian conquerors. In Ireland, as in Scotland and England, it is at present the commonly received opinion that the Norwegian conquerors did nothing but plunder and burn, and thus annihilated a very considerable civilization, which had prevailed in Ireland for centuries before the Norwegian expedition. The “ Danes” are, besides, accused of subverting the independence of Ireland, and of being the sole cause of her subsequently coming under the dominion of England. It is remarkable enough, however, that the Irish appear entirely to forget that the fault must be ascribed to themselves. They were so divided, and at such variance with one another, that, in spite of their vast numbers and boasted civilization, they could not unite to resist a mere handful of Scandinavians, who came from a great distance across the sea, and still less could they resist their powerful English conquerors.

This change in the opinion commonly received in Ireland concerning the Danish conquests has been effected more particularly by the late political movements. It is but little known in the Scandinavian North that, since the Repeal agitation in Ireland, the Danish conquests and the Danish name have been used as a constant and effective means of agitating against England ; yet such is actually the case.

When O’Connell stepped forward as the mouth-piece of Irish nationality, to revive the ancient independence of Ireland, and if possible to restore its Parliament, by means of a repeal of the Union, it was of course important for him to awaken in his countrymen a feeling of freedom. With this design, he looked to Ireland’s earlier history, and particularly to the period when she formed an independent kingdom. But that time was extremely remote. As early as the close of the twelfth century the English had firmly established themselves in Ireland ; and the Danes before them had, for several centuries, held dominion over the most important places in that country. Had O’Connell, therefore, wished to dwell on the time of Ireland’s real independence, he must have reverted to a period more than a thousand years ago. But he shrewdly foresaw that the vast and uneducated mass of the people, whom he chiefly wished to agitate, would not be able to follow him. He therefore chose historical events that lay nearer, and of which the remembrance still lived among the people ; and, as

his chief aim was to irritate the Irish against the “ Saxons” (or English) he laid great stress upon the glory which the Irish had acquired in former combats against that people, as well as against the “ Danes,” who had preceded them in conquering Ireland.

Nothing could have been better adapted to O’Connell’s object than the traditions and exaggerated notions about the Danes, still so widely diffused among the poorer classes in Ireland. O’Connell knew how to flatter with dexterity the vanity and self-love of the Irish, by representing how great a triumph they had achieved in former times, by driving out the Danes, and annihilating a dominion founded with so much bravery; and wisdom. If he drew no direct conclusion from this, he let it, however, be sufficiently seen, that as the Irishmen formerly able to expel their Danish conquerors, there was nothing to prevent them from chasing the hated “ Saxons” from their coasts. At one of his great meetings, held on Tara Hill, where the ancient Irish kings were crowned in the time of Ireland’s independence, he reminded his countrymen that their forefathers had, in the year 978, gained on that spot a considerable victory over the “ Danes.”

On the coast about three miles to the north-east of Dublin, is the plain of Clontarf, where, in the year 1014, a great battle was fought between the “ Danes” and the Irish. This battle, one of the most sanguinary in all the wars of the Norwegians and Irish, was gained by the latter, whose king Brian Boromha (or Brian Boru) fell just as victory declared for his army. A victory over the Danes like this must naturally always occupy a prominent place in the historical reminiscences of the Irish ; and their historians throughout the middle ages, and down to our own times have accordingly dwelt with extreme complacency on the description of the bravery of the Irish and of their king. But it did not suffice O’Connell and his followers to adhere to historical realities. They followed the chroniclers of a later period, by whom the victory of Clontarf has been delineated in far too brilliant colours. In songs, pamphlets, and speeches, the battle of Clontarf was now represented as having completely annihilated the Danish power in Ireland, and saved her independence and freedom. According to these accounts, not a single Dane or Norwegian would seem to have remained in Ireland after the battle. Brian Boromha (Boru) was extolled to the skies, as a martyr for the deliverance of his country from the yoke of the oppressors. And in the intoxication of enthusiasm thus produced, his portrait, together with a picture of the battle of Clontarf, was distributed among the people in immense quantities, and at the very lowest price. On the tickets of members of the Repeal Association, which were ornamented with the names of the most important national triumphs of the Irish, as well as with portraits of the victors, the battle of Clontarf, and Brian Boru’s portrait, stood at the top.

When at length this representation of the battle of Clontarf, as one of the most important fought by Ireland for liberty, had been so impressed upon the common people that it seemed an event which had only recently taken place—and which, at least in the lively imaginations of the Irish, might possibly enough be repeated—O’Connell gave out that he would hold a great repeal meeting on the plain of Clontarf. Everybody knew beforehand that the real meaning of O’Connell’s speech was, that just as the Irish, with Brian Boromha at their head, had formerly defeated the Danes on that very place, and thus saved Ireland’s freedom, so should they now in like manner follow O’Connell (who, besides, gave himself out for a descendant of Brian Boru[?]). and make every sacrifice to wrest back their lost independence from English, or “ Saxon,” ascendancy. The English government, however, forbade the meeting, and indicted O’Connell. But the same extravagant notions respecting the national importance of the battle of Clontarf naturally continued to be generally received ; and that not only amongst the adherents of O’Connell, or ‘ Old Irishmen,’ as they are called, but also among the members of a political party, the “ Young Irishmen,” which has arisen since, and whose aim it is to sever the connection with England by open force. In the seditious songs of both

these parties the Danes and the English generally share the same fate, as the war-cry, "The Saxon and the Dane," constantly forms the burthen of the songs. It is but very rarely that an Irish repealer (for instance, Mr. Holmes) dares to venture to express an opinion that it would probably have been no detriment to Ireland if the "Danes" had remained settled there. This, when explained, means that the Danes would never have been so dangerous to the independence of Ireland as the English have since become ; and that the Irish, united with and assisted by the Danes would certainly have had a fleet capable of resisting any attacks of their powerful English neighbours (?).

## Section II.

Irish and Scandinavian Records.—Finn Lochlannoch.—Dubh-Lochlannoch.—The Names of the Provinces.

One of the many complaints made by the Irish against the Danes, and particularly of late, is, that by destroying Irish civilization they likewise choked the vigorous germs of a national literature, which, in consequence of the early introduction of Christianity, had begun at a very early period to take root among the Irish people. The existence of a literature, particularly like the ancient Irish, in the vernacular language of the country, must of course always afford a strong proof of a certain degree of education among the people. During the late political agitation in Ireland, the old Irish literature, of which various remains are still preserved, was therefore extravagantly extolled, with the view of proving how glorious and enlightened was the age of Ireland's long-vanished independence.

Whatever opinion may be formed of the remaining relics of this ancient literature, which are mostly limited to chronicles in the form of annals, and a few old songs, it is at all events agreed that they are of very peculiar importance as regards a knowledge of the Norwegian and Danish expeditions. It is true that the Scandinavian Sagas and chronicles contain many accounts of the achievements of the Norwegians in Ireland, both in war and peace ; but the Irish records of them are still more copious. The oldest Irish chronicles relate almost as much to the battles of the Norwegians and Danes with the Irish, as to the internal state of Ireland. A singular chronicle in Irish, of the close of the eleventh century, about "the Wars of the Irish and the Northmen," was discovered a few years ago. It contains not only a complete account of every battle between the Irish and Northmen, down to that of Clontarf, but also various information respecting the settlements of the Norwegians in Ireland. their mode of warfare, weapons, &c. That this chronicle must have been composed not long after the battle of Clontarf, is proved by the fact that it is referred to as an old record in another Irish work, called "The Book of Leinster," written in the first half of the twelfth century. The above-named ancient chronicle—the publication of which, by that distinguished Irish scholar, Dr. Todd, cannot be far distant—will, in conjunction with the rest of the Irish accounts relative to the Norwegian expeditions into Ireland, afford an excellent opportunity for comparison with the narratives of our Scandinavian Sagas. Meanwhile we have already sufficient information at hand to compare the accounts of the conquerors and the conquered—a method by which the historical truth will evidently come forth more clearly than if we were obliged to adopt exclusively the one-sided statements of either party.

The Irish accounts are, however, far from being always perfectly trustworthy. They not only reflect the customary hatred and prejudices of the Christians against the heathen Northmen, but frequently bear the stamp of being derived from early poetical legends. They relate how several Irish saints, as St. Columkill, St. Berchan, St. Kieran, and St. Comgall, had long before predicted the coming of the Scandinavian heathens and their barbarous proceedings. They likewise depict how terribly the heathens devastated and plundered unhappy Ireland,

People were everywhere killed or maltreated ; churches and convents were plundered, burnt, and desecrated. Thus the heathen chief Turges' (Thorgils') wife, Odo, sat on the altar of the conventual church in Clonmacnois, and on it, as on a throne received the homage of the assembled people. At the same time the Danes everywhere endeavoured to settle themselves in the country. They launched ships even on the lakes, with which they coerced the people dwelling around their shores. In the tenth century (continues the Irish scholar Duaid Mac Firbis, in his unpublished treatise respecting " The Fomorians and Lochlanns," written about A.D. 1650 " Erinn was filled with ships (or adventurers), viz., the ships of Birn, the ships of Odvin, the ships of Griffin (or Grisin), the ships of Suatgar, the ships of Lagmann, the ships of Earbalbh, the ships of Sitric (?), the ships of Buidin, the ships of Bernin, the ships of the Crioslachs, the ships of Torberd Roe, the ships of Snimin, the ships of Suainin, the ships of Baran, the ships of Mileadh Lua, the ships of the Inghean Roe (Red Maiden). All the evils which befel Erinn until then were as nothing ; for the Galls spread themselves over all Erinn, and they built Cahirs (Caers) and Cashels (or Castles), and they showed respect to no one ; and they used to kill her Erinn's kings, and carry her queens and noble ladies over the sea into bondage.

" A fleet the like of which was never seen, came with Iomar More, grandson of Iomar, and his three sons, viz., Dubhgall, Cualladh, and Aralt ; and they took Inis Sibtoan in the harbour of Limerick, and forced submission from the Galls who had come before.

" The Galls then ordered a king on every territory, a chief on every chieftaincy, an abbot in every church, a bailiff in every town, a soldier in every house, so that not one of the men of Erinn had power over anything of his own from even the hen's clutch to the hundred milch coes. And they dared not show their kindness nor generosity to father, mother, bishop, ollave, spiritual director, those in sickness nor disease, nor to the infant one night old. If there was but one cow in the possession of any one of the men of Erinn, her broth should be given to the soldier the night that no milk could be procured from her. And an innge of gold, or silver, of Fionndruine (a carved ornament of white metal) for the king's rent every year, and the person who would not be able to pay that should go himself into bondage, or have his nose cut off."

As the Irish chronicles give in this manner embellished and exaggerated pictures, of the victories and power of the Norwegians in Ireland, so also they frequently depict the defeats of the " Danes" in colours that are too vivid. The ancient chronicle before mentioned concerning " The Wars of the Irish and the Northmen" states, for instance, that some time before the battle of Clontarf a desperate conflict took place at Glennmama, in the neighbourhood of Dublin, between the Irish king, Brian Boromha, and the Danes in Dublin ; with which latter were united the inhabitants of Leinster, who had shortly before entered " *the Danish precinct of Dublin.*" *King Brian was victorious in the battle ; " and there was not a threshing spot from Howth to Brandon in Kerry without an enslaved Dane threshing on it, nor a quern without a Danish woman grinding on it."*

Very different are the accounts given by the Scandinavian Sagas relative to the Norwegians in Ireland. It was to be expected that the Irishman, endowed with a southern vivacity, and at the same time thrown into deep anxiety by the Norwegian expeditions, should have regarded them in quite a different light from the tranquil Norwegian himself, who in the conquests in Ireland beheld only a repetition of what was occurring at the same time in so many other countries. The Scandinavian accounts are in general shorter than the Irish, and confine themselves merely to the relation of single events, Ireland is usually treated of incidentally, nay almost accidentally. According to the Sagas, we should almost be inclined to think that the dominion of the Norwegians in Ireland was much less in extent and duration

than was actually the case, so little have the writers of them thought of magnifying their countrymen's renown at the expense of historical truth. What therefore, the Sagas, and the rest of Scandinavian chronicles relate about Ireland is, for the most part, very trustworthy, and at all events agrees with the representations at that time current amongst the Irish themselves. It is quite evident that the writers of the Sagas had either been in Ireland, or at all events derive their knowledge from men who knew the country well, either through Viking expeditions or trading voyages. The accuracy with which different places in Ireland are described affords a very remarkable proof of this, the ancient seat of royalty "Teamor" or Tara, which is also celebrated for its delightful situation, is mentioned in the "Kongespeil" under the name of "Themar;" and it is added that "the people knew no finer city on the earth." In the same place it is further stated that the town and castle sunk suddenly into the earth, because a king pronounced an unjust judgment—a tradition common in Ireland to the present day.

Places in Ireland mentioned in the Sagas, but which formerly could not be traced, have recently been pointed out by the aid of the Irish records. The "Kongespeil" states, for instance, that Saint Diermitius had a church on a small island, "Misdredan" or "Inisdredan," in the lake "Logherne." This island is evidently "Inisdrekan" Lough Erne, where formerly St. Diermitius actually had a church. Subsequent transcribers of the book have clearly enough transformed Inisdrekan into Inisdredan, Misdredan, &c. The same has been the case with the celebrated King Brian Boromha's castle, which, by a mistake in copying, is called in the Sagas "Kanntaraborg" or "Kunjáttaborg," instead of "Kanncaraborg," Brian Boromha's castle, so celebrated in the Irish songs and legends, was called in Irish "Ceann-Caraidh" (pronounced Cancara), and was situated on the river Shannon, not far from Limerick. To the Irish Cancara the Norwegians, therefore, only added the Scandinavian termination "borg." Again, it is stated in the Sagas that one could sail from Reyknaes in Iceland to "Jöllduhlaup" in Ireland, in about eight days, or, according to some readings, even in a shorter time. Formerly this place was sought on lough Swilley, near Cape Malin, in the north of Ireland. But Jöllduhlaup which signifies "the course or breaking of the waves," is merely a translation into Icelandic of the Gaelic name "Corrybracau" (Coire Breacain), whereby the Gaels denote a whirlpool between the little island of Raihlin (or Raghlin) and the north-easternmost part of Ireland (the county of Antrim). That the ancient Icelanders designated this precise spot in Ireland is owing in all probability to circumstance that the island of Ratlin was in the olden times the chief station in the passage from Ireland to Scotland, and as such the rendezvous for a number of merchants and other travellers. Lastly, Snorre Sturlesön relates that in the beginning of the eleventh century a desperate naval battle was fought between the Orkney jarl Einar and the Irish king "Konofögr," in Ulfrek's, or Ulfkel's Fiord, on the coast of Ireland. The situation of this fiord, or firth, was entirely unknown until it was lately discovered that in a document issued by the English-Irish king John in the year 1210, the Firth Lough Larne, on the east coast of Ireland, about fourteen miles north of Belfast, was at that time still called "Wulvrichedorð," which agrees most accurately with the Icelandic name "Ulfreksfjorðr." By a remarkable coincidence, a skeleton dug up a little while previously just on the shores of Lough Larne, together with a pretty large iron sword, having a short guard and a large triangular pommel at end of the hilt; the form of which sword (as I shall prove) was not Irish, but pure Scandinavian, like that of the swords used towards the close of heathenism in the North. There is every probability that the skeleton and sword belong to one of the Scandinavian warriors who fell in the above-mentioned battle, and who was afterwards buried on the shore, Thus both the exhumed antiquities, and the lost but re-discovered name of the place, contribute to corroborate the credibility of Snorre Sturlesön's account.

Both the Irish and the Scandinavian records agree that Norwegians and Danes were settled in Ireland at a very early period. The Vikings are said to have ravaged coasts for the first time in the year 795 ; and in the ninth century many of them were already settled in the country. Amongst the men who, at the close of the ninth and beginning of the tenth century, first colonized Iceland, several Irishmen, or rather descendants of Norwegians settled in Ireland, are mentioned ; as, for instance, Thormod and Ketil Bufa, Haskel Hnokkan, who was descended from the Irish king Kjarval. besides others. Intermarriages between the Norwegians in Ireland and the native Irish seem to have taken place from the very first ; which explains the circumstance that many men in Iceland bore at an early period Irish names, such as Kjaran and Niel or Njäll.

The Norwegians in Ireland, like their Danish kinsmen in England, were obliged to begin by settling on the coasts ; whence, both by warlike and peaceful means, they gradually extended their dominion over the country. Besides this continually-increasing and more peaceful colonization, roving Scandinavian Vikings continued their attacks in different parts of Ireland, whereby the power of the Irish was considerably weakened. A pause took place, however, in the tenth century, both in the expeditions of the Vikings, and in the progress of the Scandinavian settlements in Ireland. It is even stated that for about forty years “ the strangers” (the Galls) were entirely driven out of the country ; but this is probably an exaggeration. This diminution of the power of the Norwegians in Ireland occurred about the same time with the decrease of the Danish power in England, and appears to have been produced by the same causes ; namely, internal commotions in the mother-country of Scandinavia, which prevented the sending of such ample assistance as previously to the colonists in the British Islands.

Subsequently, however, the Norwegian dominion in Ireland became doubly powerful ; and the Irish were so far from being able to expel the strangers, that, notwithstanding the numerical inferiority of the latter, they were often masters in the country. It was evidently Norwegians rather than Danes who settled in Ireland, although not a few of the latter were mixed with them. In later times all the Northmen in Ireland are included under the common name of “ Danes.” But the best and oldest Irish chronicles distinguish, as it has been previously remarked, between the light-haired “ Finn-Lochlannoch,” or “ Fionn Lochlannaigh” (the Norwegians), and the dark-haired “ Dubh-Lochlannoch,” or “ Dubh-Lochlannaigh” (the Danes) ; or, what is the same, between Dubgall (“ Dubh- Ghoill”) and Finngall (“ Fionn Ghoill”). The above- mentioned chronicle of “ the Wars of the Irish and the Northmen,” which draws a clear distinction between the Norwegians and Danes, expressly says that the Danes were only one of those tribes that made expeditions of conquest to Ireland. We even learn from the Irish chronicles that the Norwegians and Danes often fought between themselves for the dominion in Ireland. For instance, it is stated in the Irish annals in the year 845 : “ the Dubhgalls (the Danes) came this year to Dublin, sabred the Finngalls (the Norwegians), destroyed their fortresses, and carried away many prisoners and much booty with them. Similar intestine disputes are mentioned in other places of the annals ; yet, as might be expected, the Danes appear still more frequently as fighting in alliance with the Norwegians. On the flat shores in the middle of the eastern coast of Ireland, between Dublin and Drogheda, which are called Finngall, or “ the strangers’ land” (from ‘ finne,’ a land, and “ gall,” a stranger), and which in ancient times were colonized chiefly by Norwegians, is a small town called Baldoyle. In old documents this town is named “ Balidubgail,” the Dubhgalls’ or Danes’ town (“ bal,” a town). We have thus an existing proof that the Danes also were once actually settled in Ireland. The Dubhgalls are likewise said to have settled in the districts nearest to the south and west of Dublin.

For the rest, among the names of places in Ireland which remind us of the Norwegian dominion, we must in particular specify the names of three of Ireland's four provinces, viz., Ulster (in Irish "Uladh"), Leinster (Irish, "Laighin"), and Munster (Irish, "Mumha," or "Mumhain"): in all of which is added to the original Irish forms the Scandinavian or Norwegian ending *staðr*, *ster*. It might even be a question whether the name "Ireland" did not originally derive this form from the Northmen. On this head we have, at all events, a choice only between the Northmen and the Anglo-Saxons, for to the present day the Irish themselves still call the country Eirinn or Eiri, The termination *land* is entirely unknown in their language.

That the Northmen, and especially the Norwegians, should have been able to give to the three most important provinces of Ireland the names which they still bear, sufficiently indicates that they must have been settled there in no inconsiderable numbers, or that they must at all events long have ruled these districts, which is also confirmed by the statements of the Irish chronicles. But in general we shall seek in vain among the names of places in Ireland for traces of such an extensive Scandinavian colonization as existed in the North of England. All circumstances clearly show that the Northmen in Ireland were proportionately less settled in the rural districts than in the towns. In consequence of the remote situation of Ireland, its extent, and the magnitude of its population, they were exposed in the rural districts, when at some distance from the coast, to much more danger than in the towns, where they could better assemble their forces behind ramparts and ditches. It is a very striking circumstance that the chief strength of the Norwegians lay precisely in those towns which have since continued to be the greatest and most important in Ireland. The Norwegian dominion in Ireland had quite a peculiar character, having been divided into several small and scattered kingdoms, each comprised in a town, or even only part of a town, with at most an inconsiderable adjacent tract of land. That such kingdoms should subsist for several centuries, and even long after the Danish dominion had ceased in England, is certainly one of the most remarkable and, with regard to the civilization of the Northmen, most pregnant facts in the history of the Scandinavian emigrants.

### Section III.

Norwegian Kings.—Limerick.—Cork, —Waterford.—Reginald's Tower. —Dublin.—  
Thengmotha.— Oxmantown.

According to trustworthy historical evidence, the Norwegians and the Danes, or the Ostmen, as they were called in Ireland (from having come originally from the east), principally fixed their abodes in Dublin, Waterford, and Limerick, where, as early as the ninth century, they had founded peculiar Scandinavian kingdoms. They were also settled in considerable numbers in Wexford, Cork, and several Irish cities, so that they had possessed themselves, by degrees, of the best-situated places in the east, south, and west of Ireland, both for navigation and for intercourse with the rich countries of the interior.

The central point, however, of the real Norwegian power was the present capital, Dublin. This considerable city, which is said to contain at present more than three hundred thousand inhabitants, lies on both sides of the river Liffey, near the spot where it discharges itself into the Irish Channel. It is surrounded by a charming and fertile country. Anciently, however, and especially before the arrival of the Norwegians in Ireland, it seems to have been comparatively insignificant, both as regards extent and population. Yet even at that time it was, probably by means of its fortunate situation, and its connection with the neighbouring countries, the most important place in Ireland, which, at that early period, did not possess any very large towns. But as Dublin and its vicinity was at all events one of the most attractive

points on the east coast of Ireland, some of the first Scandinavian kingdoms were founded there. About the middle of the ninth century a celebrated Norwegian Viking, Olaf the White, is said to have taken Dublin, and made himself king of the city and district. After the death of Olaf in a battle, two sons of King Harald Haarfager (Fair-hair), of Norway, arrived there, namely, Thorgils, called by the Irish Turges, and Frode ; who, by means of the sword, likewise won for themselves thrones in Dublin. Subsequently to them, again, as the Irish chronicles relate, there landed three brothers. Olaf, Sigtryg, and Ivor, who became kings in Dublin, Waterford. and Limerick. From that time Norwegian kings reigned in those places, with but few interruptions, for full three centuries.

There would certainly be some cause to doubt of so extensive a Norwegian dominion in a country so remote as Ireland, as well as of the actual existence of so striking a number of Scandinavian, and especially Norwegian, kings of cities, if the names of a great number of them were not preserved : and that, too, not so much in the chronicles of the Norwegians themselves, as in those of the conquered Irish, who had no reason to exaggerate in this respect. Several of the Norwegian kings mentioned in the Irish chronicles are besides, mentioned in contemporary Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian records : whence it becomes doubly probable that the remainder of the Norwegian kings mentioned by the Irish actually reigned in the places indicated.

As the Irish chronicles thus not only give the detailed accounts respecting the Norwegian kings in Ireland, but also the least partial ones in favour of the Norwegians, I have annexed a list of kings compiled by an Irish author from Irish records. We may see from this, though it is scarcely complete, that the Scandinavian names of the kings (such as Olaf, Ivar, Eistein. Sigtryg, Godfred or Gudröd (?). Ragnvald, Torfin, Ottar, Broder, Eskil, Rörik, Harald, and Magnus) appear in general clear and distinct through the somewhat altered Irish forms, whilst a few names, such as Gluniarand (which in Irish signifies Iron-Knee), Eachmargach, Maelnambo, and Gilale, seem to be mere Irish translations, or at all events purely Irish transformations, of Scandinavian forms.

Norwegian or Scandinavian Kings in Ireland  
(From Lindsay, "*The Coinage of Ireland*" Cork, 1839.)

A.—Kings of Dublin.

Anlaf, 853.  
Ifer (Ivar), 870.  
Oslinus (Eistein), 872.  
Godfred (Gudröd), 875.  
Sihtric (Sigtryg), 893.  
Sihtric, 896.  
Regnald (Ragnvald), 919.  
Godfred, 920.  
Anlaf, 934.  
Blacar (Blake), 941.  
Godfied. 948.  
Anlaf, 962.  
Godfred, 960.  
Anlaf, 962.  
Regnald.  
Gluniarand, 981.  
Sihtric (deposed), 989.

Ifar, 993.  
Sihtrie (again), 994.  
Anlaf, 1029.  
Sihtric, 1034.  
Anlaf, 1031.  
Ifar, 1050.  
Eachmargsch, 1054.  
Maelnambo, 1064.  
Godred Crovan, 1066 (?).  
Godfred Merenaeh, 1076.  
Gilalve, 1094.  
Torfin, 1109  
Regnald, 1125.  
Godfred, 1147.  
Oierterus (Ottar), 1147.  
Broder, 1149.  
Askel. 1159.  
Roderick, 1171 till about 1200.

#### B—Kings of Waterford.

Sihtric 853  
Ifar 953  
Regnald 1000  
Sihtric, 1020.  
Regnald, 1023.  
Commaunus, 1036

#### C—Kings of Limerick.

Ifer, 853, King of Dublin in the year 870.  
Ifer, 940.  
Olfen, 942.  
Harold O'fmr.  
Magnui, 968.

An Account of the Danes and Norwegians in England, Scotland, and Ireland (1852)

Author: Jens Jakob Asmussen , Worsaae

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Notes: Appendices: I. Document of Edward I., of the year 1283, concerning the Ostmen in Waterford and Ireland.--II. Coinage of the Norwegians in Dublin.

Source : Internet Archive

<http://www.archive.org/details/anaccountdanesa00worsgoog>

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