

A region of Irish History

Pre-Christian Ireland.

By

Canon U. J. Bourke, P.P., M.R.I.A.,

Examiner in Keltic and in Irish History, Royal University Of Ireland.

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Outside the region of history, so-called, and, as a result of comparative philology and comparative ethnology, it is now certain that the substance of the story contained in ancient Irish manuscripts is true. Ancient Irish writers erred in the manner and in many of the details connected with what they have related ; that the ancient Milesian forefathers of the Irish people came from the East that is true ; that they had journeyed by sea, and journeyed by land that is true ; that there were several migrations from the east that is equally true ; that all the early inhabitants spoke a generic Keltic speech that also is true ; and that they brought with them the manners, the social and national customs special to the East is likewise true. The manuscript records tell all this. The statement is confirmed by those modern sciences that deal in comparing languages and races of men. The light derived from the luminous sources of comparative philology and ethnology presents the records of the ancient Gael of Ireland in a favorable view, showing that the leading tracts are in substance correct, and are like writings of a kindred kind regarding Rome, Greece or Egypt.

Accordingly it is not a matter of surprise that there were two classes of readers of ancient Irish history quite opposed in their estimate of its value ; one class regarded the early Irish records as mere romances or myths ; the other gave credence to everything recorded in Eire's story, and believed, for instance in the wanderings of the forefathers of the Milesian invaders, just as firmly as they believed in the wanderings of the Hebrew people under Moses in their passage during forty years from Egypt to the Promised Land.

The following view of the history, or story of the earliest inhabitants of Ireland is presented to the consideration of Irish students at home and abroad. It is derived from a three-fold source, (a) from the record contained in Irish Annals ; (b) from the monumental remains that still abide in the Isle of Destiny, correcting that record by the light, which extrinsic evidence from other nations and other lands furnishes ; (c) lastly, from the facts which modern investigators supply.

A NEW DYNASTY ; HEBER AND HEREMON ; DIVISION OF IRELAND ; NEW POSSESSION ; A FALLING OUT ; BATTLE OF GEASHILL ; DEATH OF HEREMON ; NAMES OF PLACES TELL TO THIS DAY OF THE MILESIAN DYNASTY.

Q. 1. What was the result of the successful battles which the conquering Milesians had gained ? How and where did the conquerors settle down ?

A. Heremon and Heber Finn assumed the joint sovereignty of Ireland, and divided the country between them. Heremon took as his share the northern portion of the island—making the Boyne, and the Bron, and the Shannon from Lough Ree south-westward, the bound-

ary of his division ; the southern half, from the Boyne and the Shannon to Tonn Cliodna, became the possession of Heber Finn ; Amergin, the third surviving son of Milesius, poet and physician of the Spanish Brigantian race, was constituted chief bard and philosopher of the nation. His descendants were to be, in a measure, like the tribe of Levi amongst the Jews. On this point O'Curry states : " Heber Finn and Heremon divided the island into two parts between them, the former taking all the southern part from the Boyne and the Shannon to Cape Clear, and the latter taking all the parts lying to the north of these rivers."

Dr. Keating is in favour of a second view recorded by ancient Irish annalists regarding the division of the island, made by Heber Finn and Heremon directly after the conquest of the Danann tribes. He is of opinion, that Heber Finn took the territory south of the Shannon, allotting to Lughaidh, son of Ith, his father's cousin german—he who had brought his father's body home to Spain from the shores of the river Foyle—the district known ever since as Corca Lughaidh.

Corca Lughaidh, or Luis' district lies at the extreme end of the present County Cork, and embraces the two baronies of West Carbery and East Carbery—extending from Bantry Bay on the west, to the old Head of Kinsale in the east. Historians have taken note of the fact that the descendants of Lughaidh—so devoted to his father—continued to hold a distinguished position, with their hereditary possessions, and an honoured name longest of all the other descendants of the race of Breoghan.

While retaining the sovereignty, Heremon gave the province of Leinster to the chieftain of the Firbolg clans, Crimthán Sciath-Beul, for the faithful services which he and his people had rendered during the late invasion, and probably for having invited the Milesians to come and conquer the country—wresting the chief authority from so feeble and so faithless a power as had been the Danann Dynasty. To Heber, the son of Ir, he assigned a large amount of territory in Ulster ; while he reserved to himself the principal patrimony of Connacht and the rest of the northern province.

Whatever arrangement may have been made at the early part of their joint reign did not continue long—only a year ; and when Heremon became sole ruler of the island, he gave the Belgic or Firbolg King the sceptre of Leinster. The student will note that there were two chieftains known by the name Heber ; one the brother of Heremon—Heber Finn, the other his nephew the son of Ir, who had been drowned at the Skellig Rocks, south of Valencia off the coast of Kerry. It is true then to say, speaking generally, that natives of Munster are descended from Heber Finn ; natives of Ulster and Connacht, from Heremon ; at the same time, many of the Ulster clans claim descent from Heber, son of Ir. To the east and west of the Shannon are many clans of Belgic descent, or of the Danann or Nemedian tribes. To this very day, one who cares to study the facial forms of the various races can readily read in the features, in the crania, in the stature, and in the figure of the peasant inhabitants, those that are of Belgic origin, those who are Danann or Milesian.

Each of the brothers, Heber Finn and Heremon, made a selection of the surviving Milesian chiefs, who had commanded ships, or headed battalions in the field. Heremon's friends built " duns" or fortified castles. Amergin built a dun, and fortified it, at Tochar—Invir mhoir, or Abhain nihoir now known as the Causeway at Arklow, County Wicklow. Another leader erected a dun, which became known after his name as Dun Sobharké. There was a third built in the little island of Dalkey by Sedga, one of the chieftains, and known in Irish Story as Dun Deilginnis—the fortification on the " thorny" island contracted in process of time into the present Dalkey (*i*, or *innis* = island, *dealg*, of thorns). In the Mourne Mountains another was erected—known as *Cathair an Nair*, the town of Nar, named after one of the sons of

Breoghan, and uncle to Milesius. This citadel was built under the direction of Gostenn, one of the forty captains who had set sail from northern Spain. Finally, by Suirghi, a castle, Dun Edair, was erected on the hill of Howth—a hill known at that time as Benn Edair. Heremon himself selected the banks of the Nore (Eoir) in Ossory, as the site of his royal residence at Airged Ross. The Rath called Rath-Beathaigh is now known as Rath-Beagh, County Kilkenny. On the other hand, those five chieftains who followed the fortunes of Heber, namely, Caicher, Mantan, Un, Ughi, Fulman also erected duns : Caicher built Dun-Inn in the west of Ireland ; Un, a “ rath” near the town of Galway, which to this day is known as *Rahoon, i.e., Rath.-Uin, Un’s rath.*

Q. 2. How long did the Milesian monarchs Heremon and Heber, as joint sovereigns, live in peace, and what was the immediate cause of their deadly strife?

A. Heremon and Heber continued not longer than one year in brotherly, or even in friendly relations. Like the founders of the kingdom that grew up on the banks of the Tiber, they were jealous each of the share of authority which the other possessed.

The ostensible reason for falling out was that Tea, wife of Heremon, was not content with all the splendid hills north of the Shannon and Boyne ; she desired to get possession of (1) Druim Clasach in Hy Mani, from Loughrea to Ballinasloe, perhaps the hill of Aughrim *i.e.,* correctly “ Eac-Druim,” steed-mound ; (2) Druim Bethaigh, in Maen Magh, near Loughrea, extending to Skarif at the Shannon ; (3) Druim Finghin in Munster. It divides the Decies within Druim, from the Decies *without* ; it extends from Castle-Lyons County Cork, to the Bay of Dungarvan.

Apparently to satisfy the wishes of his wife Tea, and to gain these hills, Heremon determined to resume fighting.

The name “ Heremon,” means the superior man, or the conquering man ; *Her* or *Er*, high, superior, and *mon*, gen. case of *mo*, a person. “ Heber” means one having possessions ; *Ber* or *Bar* or *Bur*, growing, acquiring, and *aodh* (*pr. æ*), fire, reddish (man).

Q. 3. Tell all that is on record regarding the battle of Geashill, in which Heremon was victorious.

A. The brothers Heremon and Heber determined to decide by the sword which of the two should be sole sovereign, or Ardrigh. They summoned their counsellors ; the wise men and the leading advisers of each chieftain gave their views, not on the merits of the case, or the probable success of the issues, but, like the young counsellors of Roboam, they gave such advice as pleased their lord and master, and that which they perceived was the view and the bent of their respective chieftains. Advisers of this class are always in force around proud and selfish commanders who are guided by passion, prejudice, and lust of power. “ To arms!” was the cry raised by each party. Those invaders who only a few years before had passed through the land as conquerors, like brothers, united as one man, were now ranged in hostile camps. Heber and his four sons marched their forces to meet those of Heremon. Heremon, on the other side, with his four sons, prepared his followers to meet their foes.

The encounter came off in the barony and parish known to this day by the name Geashill, as it were the land of mighty deeds (for *geasa* means feats imposed, and *Aill* wonderful), situate in the eastern portion of the King’s County, The precise district was a place known in ancient times as *bri-damh*, or ox-mount (*bri* mount, and *damh*, ox), and on a “ tocher,” that is, a highway between two level districts—“ tocher-eider-da-maigh.” The “ tocher,” or cause-

way, is still, philologically speaking, traceable in the name, “Baile-an-tocher,” or, in modern spelling, Ballytogher, a village in the same district ; and the plains (two) are represented today by the baronies of Warrenstown and Cootestown, which some thousand years ago were known as *Tuath da Maigh*, and Englished by the term “Tethmoy.” The actual fighting must, therefore, have happened in the district between Geashill and Philipstown on the west, and Edenderry on the east, on the left bank of the Boyne, near its rise in King’s County.

The Esker Riada passes through what is still called Moleana (Magh Leana), between Tullamore and Durrow, about a mile to the north of the former, and through the townlands of Bracklin and Tullaghbeg.

The following note of Dr. O’Donovan is taken from the *Four Masters* : —

“This was the year (3501 A.M.) in which Heremon and Heber assumed the joint sovereignty of Ireland, and they divided it into two between them. Towards the end of the year a contest arose between Heremon and Heber on account of the three most noble Druims (or hills)—Druim Clasaigh, in the country of Maini ; Druim Beith, in Maonmaigh ; and Druim Finghin, in Munster. A battle was fought between them in consequence, on the banks of the ‘Bri-damh,’ at Tocher-idir-da-Maigh. It is it that was called the battle of Geashill.” (See also ‘Ogygia,’ Vol. II., Chaps. 17 and 34.)

In this battle Heber and his people were slain ; O’Donovan says :

“Heremon killed his brother on the borders of Bri-damh, at Geashill, in Hy Falgia (Offaly), a part of Leinster, where the brothers fought with the greatest intrepidity.”

After the death of Heber, Heremon made a fresh division of the territory of Ireland. He divided it into four provinces, or kingdoms ; he gave Ulster to Heber, son of Ir, his brother ; Munster to the four sons of Heber Finn, his nephews ; Connacht to Un, who, as has been stated, settled near Galway, at Rath-Uin ; and Leinster to the Belgic Prince, Crimhthan Sciath-Beul.

Amergin fell in battle by Heremon’s sword, in Bregia, in Meath.

Heremon reigned fifteen years, and died in his own palace at Rath-Beathaigh, now Rath-beagh, over the Eoir river (Nore), at Argat-Ros.

The Firbolg people and the Danann tribes, and perhaps the Nemedians, too, were a power in the land. The Belgians had a king of their own, selected and established by Heremon over the province of Leinster. They were a powerful party also in the west and north-west of Connacht. The Tuatha De Danann were in possession of the high places, and the Fomorians and Nemedians were holding commercial and social relations with the masses of the people throughout the land.

Q. 4. Are footprints of the early Milesian leaders still to be found in the names of places in Ireland ?

A. Yes, and these names confirm more strongly still the historic fact that there was such a people, and that what has been recorded of them is true at least substantially.

The names Chanaan, Chus, Shem, Madai, Gomer ; Alexandria, Cæsarea, Ptolemais, America, Columbia, Van Dieman’s Land, are proof that at one time Chanaan, and Alexander,

and Cæsarea, and Columbus lived ; so also the names Inver “ Colpa,” and Teach “ Doinn,” and Sliabh “ Fuaid,” County Armagh, and Glean “ Scotin,” and Giean “ False,” show that Milesian leaders, men and women like Colpa, and Donn, and Fuad, and Scotui, and Fais, lived and nourished for a tune in this country. There is a long list of names of places called after Milesian heroes—Inver Skeine ; Inver Colpa, Sliabh Ebhleon (in Tipperary north) ; Sliabh Bladhma (now Sliabh Bloom) Magh Muirtheimne, Sliabh Cuailgne, in County Louth ; Sleamhna Ita, Ros Nair, in King’s County ; Sliabhtha Cuaileann, Rath-Uin, Loch Conn. The foregoing names suffice.

THE FAMILIES DESCENDED FROM HEBER FIONN ; FROM HEREMON ; AND FROM IR, OR HEBER SON OF IR ; THE LEADING PRINCELY MILESIAF FAMILIES OF IRELAND TRACE THEIR DESCENT FROM THOSE THREE PRINCELY HOUSES — OF HEBER FIONN, HEREMON, AND IR ; LENGTH OF TIME DOES NOT DESTROY CERTAINTY OF CONNECTION ; THE CHIEF MONARCHS UP TO THE TIME OF CONOR MAC NESSA ; A KINGLY GOVERNMENT EXISTED IN EIRE FOR OVER TWO THOUSAND YEARS, “ Éire ard, inis na Righ,” NOBLE EIRE, ISLAND OF KINGS,

Q. 1. Besides the names of places those footprints of the early Milesian landing on the soil of Ireland are there other links that bind still more closely the living present with the remote past in connection with the colony of Kelts from Spain ?

A. Yes ; the names of the princely and historically noble families, ready at hand to be found in each of the four provinces — in Ulster, in Connacht, in Leinster, and Munster.

It has been already shewn that Heremon gave possessions in the two Munsters to the sons of his brother, Heber Fionn. It is natural, therefore, that the princely families descended from Heber should be found in Munster and not in Ulster or Connacht. And so it is. The MacCarthys and O’Briens trace their origin to Heber Fionn, and not to Heremon nor to Ir.

Before the time of Mogha Nuadhat (second century) the house of Heber gave twenty-eight monarchs to Ireland ; but in the third century of the Christian period, the Royal house of Munster was saved from extinction by a marriage alliance between Oilial Olom, descended of Heber, and Saba, daughter of Con of the Hundred Fights, descended of the line of Heremon.

Of this marriage were born three sons, Eogan Mór, Cormac Cás, and Teige. From the first of these patriarchal princes, Eogan Mór, the MacCarthy family has descended ; from the second, Cormac Cás, the O’Briens, the O’Kennedys, MacMahons, and the MacConnamaras (now written MacNamara). The O’Haras, O’Garas, the O’Carrolls of Eily also are descended from Oilial Olom through Kian, the youngest son, and are ranked amongst the princely families.

Q. 2. Name some of those living in the other provinces who claim descent, and rightly too, from Heremon, the leading conqueror of the Milesian race.

A. From Heremon are sprung the leading families of Connacht, of Ulster, and of Leinster. The O’Conor Don, and all the blood relations of that regal family ; the MacDermotts, the O’Rourkes, the O’Kellys of Hy-Mani, in the county of Galway. Then there are the O’Murphys of the Hy-Briain line ; O’Maddens, and those connected by blood with the progenitors of the O’Kelly family ; the O’Flahertys of Iar-Connacht, the O’Malloys of the west ; the O’Douds, or Douda, or Duddy of Ballina, Tirawley, and Tir-fiachra.

In Ulster we have the O’Neills, the northern and southern branches, and all who claim descent from Niall of the Nine Hostages ; the O’Donnells, therefore, and the O’Kanes, the

O’Gallaghers, O’Boyles, O’Doghertys, the Malachlins, MacGeoghagans, MacAuleys, O’Molloys, Foxes, MacDonnells, O’Reillys, O’Fallons, O’Loughlins, O’Malones, the MacGuires, MacDowdels. In south Leinster the MacMurragh or Kavanaghs, the O’Byrnes, O’Tooles, the Fitzpatricks of Ossory, O’Murphys of Leinster, claim descent from Heremon. There must have been, therefore, some being known by that name from whom all these families claim to be descended. He was no imaginary person from whom so many families for over three thousand years have sprung. So many could not have erred in looking up to him as their common progenitor, even as the Jews look back to Abraham as their father. The records containing the narration were public. They were kept with the greatest care, and had for object some of the highest interests of the entire nation and people. Even if one family might possibly have erred, the mistake would in time have been made right by the others. The family records of each princely clan were every third year publicly revised at Tara, and collated with other well-known public records. All are agreed that those named are descended from Heremon, and not from Heber Fionn, nor from Ir, or from Ir’s son, Heber. (See ‘Curry’s lectures.)

Q. 3. To the son of Ir, Heremon allotted possessions in Ulster ; what families claim descent from him?

A. Amongst the remarkable monarchs in the long line of Ard-righs, or sovereigns of Ireland, is Ruadh-raidh (*pr.* Roory). Like Ollamh Fodla, he was descended from Ir. He flourished as supreme king of Ireland about the second century before the Christian era. From Ruadhraidh sprung in the fifth generation Conal Karnach, a hero who lived in the days of Meav, Queen of Connacht. Conal was famed amongst the most eminent military knights of that remarkable period. He was known as being one of the “*Clan Ruadhraidh*,” *i.e.*, one of the descendants of *Ardrigh Ruadhraidh*, who were then called and known by that title, and the only surviving branch of the stock of Ir. Conal had two sons—the progenitors of princely families from Ulster. The names of these two were Irial Glunmhór (large-knee), and Laisach Lanmór (large-spear). From the former came the Dal-Ardian race of whom MacGennis *i.e.*, MacAonguis was the chief family. From the latter are descended the “*O’Mores*” of Laoighis or Leix in Queen’s county. Now there was another remarkable personage at the period when Conal Karnach lived, who had been king and a knight of the Red or Royal branch. He is known as Fergus MacRoigh, ex-king of Ulster. In his early years he was monarch of the province of Ulster. By the cunning of Nessa, the mother of the youthful king Conor, Fergus was deprived of his kingdom. He lived however for many years afterwards in Ulster. His name is connected with the heroic deeds of the knights of the Red or Royal branch who flourished in Emania. After the treachery of King Conor, and his treatment of Deirdre—as is told in the third tale of the Three Sorrowful Stories of ancient Eire—Fergus accompanied by a great number of military came to Connacht and offered his services to Queen Meav. This is the heroic period, so to speak, in Irish History. It corresponds with that in which Antony and Augustus flourished at Rome. Queen Meav at Cruachan, county Roscommon, bore to Fergus, three sons at one birth. These were named Kiar, Corc, and Conmac. They, too, and their descendants were known as “*Clan Ruadhraidh*.” From those three are descended—from Kiar, the O’Connor Kerry, a princely family ; from Corc, the O’Connors of Corcomroe, and the O’Loughlins of Burren ; from Conmac, the third son and youngest, a great number of princely families have been descended. Conmac had possessions in the west, in Conmac-ne-mara, or Conmac-by-the-sea, now known (by omitting mac) as Connemara. His descendants lived there in the barony afterwards known as Ballinahinch. Conmac had lands in the barony of Dunmore, and some of his descendants lived there. St. Jarlath, first Bishop of Tuam, was of that race. The descendants of Conmac lived also in a place known afterwards as the barony of Kilmaine. There, too, Conmac’s descendants flourished in the second, third, and fourth centuries. The whole of the south of county Leitrim was possessed by the children of

Conmac ; and from them are descended the princely house of Reynolds, or Rannall or MacRannall, called in Irish “ muintir eoluis” or the people of knowledge. Lastly Conmac’s sons settled in Longford. That portion of the diocese of Ardagh, situate in county Longford was known in the early Irish Church by the name of “ Conmacné,” up to the ninth century. The heads of the race in that district are the O’Ferralls and the O’Quins. These are princely families descended from Ir, brother of Heremon. Conmac-ne means descendants of Conmac. *Né* in old Irish signifies people, offspring, heroes. *Né* is plural of *naidh*, or *nai*, a hero.

Q. 4. How many Ard-righs or supreme kings reigned in Eire from the time of Heremon up to the first year of the Christian era ?

A. Historians differ on this particular point. They differ also in the chronology which they respectively adopt. The writers of the “ Annals” known as those “ of the Four Masters,” follow the chronology of the Septuagint. Although considerable difference exists, nevertheless in substance the record of the supreme kings is the same in all. One can safely say there flourished one hundred kings from Heremon inclusive to Crimhthan Naidh-Nair, in the twelfth year of whose reign Christ our Lord was born, or in the reign of Conaire the Great, according to others.

TOTAL NUMBER OF KINGS UP TO THE COMING OF ST. PATRICK.

O’Flaherty in his “ Ogygia,” part iii., chapter 89, writes thus of the pagan kings of Ireland :

“ We have given the heathen kings of Ireland to the number of one hundred and thirty-six (136), besides ten others whom some writers insert in the catalogue of Irish kings, though they did not attain to the monarchy of the island. . . .”

HOW THEY WERE DESCENDED.

But the 136 were absolutely kings, of whom nine were of Firbolgic descent ; and nine, Danann. Heremon and his posterity as kings amounted to sixty of the remaining one hundred and eighteen. Of these sixty, thirty-seven were lineally descended from him down to Niall ; seven others left no issue. There were eight kings from Leinster; three from Ulster, one named Colla Uais of the Orgillians ; one from Connacht, Dathy. Twenty-nine of the posterity of Heber Fionn (Munster) ; twenty-four of the line of Ir (Ulster) : Macha, a queen in her own right ; three of the family of Lughad, the son of Ith ; and one elevated from the ranks of the plebeians, Carbry Cinn-chait.

HOW THEY REIGNED.

Some of these kings reigned in turn one year each. For instance, the three sons of Heremon who succeeded to the throne on their father’s death, assumed the power of Ardrigh, each in turn for one year. This system was very defective.

HOW THEY DIED.

Of these 136, one hundred perished by the sword ; seventeen died a natural death ; six were taken away by plague ; three were killed by lightning ; and ten departed this life, called away by accidents of different kinds. One set himself up like Jeroboam to establish idolatry in the island, Tighearnmas ; one died in the most excruciating tortures ; another was crucified : another expired without any visible cause or mark ; one was drowned ; another burned to death ; one died of grief ; another was killed by his horse ; another was choked by the bone of

a fish ; and finally, another was poisoned. The ancient annals are particularly accurate in recording the leading events connected with the history of each of these Ardrighs.

Q. 5. How many of these were in any degree remarkable above the ordinary run of supreme pagan kings up to the Christian period ?

A. Not more than a dozen. Each supreme monarch lived like a prince just as his predecessor had done at Tara ; or in the palace of Emania during the period that it flourished, or in the northern palace of Aileach near Derry. It is pitiable to read the records how the ancient Irish kings, like the kings of the Heptarchy in England, or the emperors of Rome, perished one hundred of them, by the sword. Those remarkable above the rest are (1) Tighearnmas ; (2), Enna Airgetheach ; (8), Ollamh Fodhla ; (4), Siorna ; (5), Kimbaeth, who first built the palace of Emania ; (6), Hugony Mór ; (7), Labhraidh (or Lowry) Loingseach ; (8), Ruadhraidh Mór, descended from Ir ; (9), Eochaidh Feidleach (Meav was his daughter) ; (10), Fergus MacRoigh ; (11), Conor Mac Nessa ; (12), Conaire Mór.

Tighearnmas is a name that implies power, command, or sovereignty, from *Tighearna*, Lord, and *mos*, manner. He lived, it is said, eighty years, in the second century after the death of Heremon. Discoveries in gold were made in Wicklow, and vessels in gold were fashioned during his time.

He was victorious in battle against all his enemies. He conquered the Firbolg people who arose against him. He chastised the Fomorians or pirates who had attacked the sea-board. He overcame all the enemies of his sovereign power.

He it was who formally introduced idol worship. It is not known whether or not the ancient Irish regarded the sun itself as a god, or merely the symbol of a god-like power, and therefore whether they gave supreme adoration to the sun, like the Persian fire-worshippers, or merely respected it as a sign of divine agency which sustains all things. It is stated that there were no idols in Eire up to the days of Tighearnmas. At all events, it is certain, as far as can be known, that there were no human sacrifices ever offered in Eire.

Tighearnmas lost his life at a sacrifice offered in the plains of Magh-sleacht (field of worship) in Breffni, in the County Cavan, to his idol, Crom Cruach. (The meaning of *Crom* is bent, crooked ; and *Cruach*, a “ lumpy figure,” a term applied to this day to a mountain, or to a stack, or corn-rick.)

The first Sunday in August is to this day called by the peasant people “ Domhnach Crom Duibh” the Sunday of Black Crom probably because at that season the idol received special honors from the pagan progenitors of the Irish people. (See Life of St. Patrick by Canon O’Hanlon.)

(2). Enna Airgetheach, that is Enna the silverman. He it was who ordered the making of silver spears.

(3). Ollamh Fodla is named here in third place. His real name was *Eachaidh*, a common name amongst the Irish kings, and like *Marcus*, from Marc, a horse, signifies “ horseman ;” from *each* or *each*, a horse. He was called Ollamh on account of his learning, and Fodla which is an ancient name of Ireland—that is, he was, at the time, “ the learned man of Ireland.” It was he who built at Tara the great hall for the learned men of that period. The hall was known by the name Mur Ollamhan or the “ stone-house of the Ollamhs.” He it was who instituted the triennial parliament at Tara. The meetings were held at Samhain time, that is,

“ the close of good weather.” Now, the name of November in Irish Gaelic is *Mina Samhna*. *Samhain* is derived from *Samh*, pleasant, fine, and *fuin*, end—that is end of good weather. *Ollamh Fodhla* appointed rulers and governors over districts and towns. He is one of the most renowned amongst the ancient monarchs of Eire.

(4). *Sirna*—Another Irish *Ardrigh* is said to have lived one hundred and fifty years, one hundred of which he ruled prosperously as chief king. *Sir* in Gaelic means continuous, or always, and new, a hero.

(5). We come now to *Kimbaeth*, of whom *Tighearnach*, Abbot of *Clonmacnoise* in the eleventh century (1088 A.D.) writes, “ that all the records of the Scots up to the time of *Kimbaeth* are uncertain.” It is to be noted that *Tighearnach* does not state that the coming of the Milesians to Ireland, or any of the events of a public kind, connected with the race is uncertain, but the records were, in his opinion, uncertain, or not as certain before that period as they were at a subsequent period.

King *Kimbaeth* was the first who dwelt in the palace of *Emania* which he had built and embellished.

(6). The next on the list of remarkable *Ard-righthé* or chief kings is *Hugony Mór*, or the Great, called by that title on account of the deeds ascribed to him, namely, that he gained sway by his military prowess over much of Western Europe ; that he commanded his fleets, such as they were in those days, and led them through the Mediterranean, that he made successful incursions into the islands and effected a landing in Sicily. He was great in the numerous progeny of whom he was parent and progenitor. He had twenty-two sons and three daughters. He determined to make each independent and to lower the power of the sub-kings. Accordingly, he divided each of the five provinces into five parts, or the whole island into twenty-five portions—assigning one for each of his children. He thus satisfied their desire for power and the exaction of dues usually paid to chieftains. He prevailed on the subordinate kings, and on the people, to swear by the sun and moon and by the elements, that they would never disturb any of his posterity in this settled sovereignty, which, he thought, he had now firmly established. This arrangement continued for three centuries. The monarch himself was slain after a reign of forty years.

(7). His great grandson, *Labhraidh Loingseach*, was another remarkable sovereign. To avoid being murdered in his tender years, he was, when a child, sent to his relatives in Gallia or France. When he grew to be a man he was invited home. He returned by the largest boat that could then be made. Hence he was called by the name “ *Loingseach*,” or the “ *Shipman*,” *long* means ship in Gaelic, “ *Maen*” was his real name. The term “ *Labraidh*,” means “ *speaks*,” or “ *talks*,”—and he was styled so because he talked either like a foreigner, or like a seaman.

(8). *Ruadhraidh Mor*, or *Rory the Great*, from *ruadh*, red, and *righ*, king,— was a remarkable *Ardrigh*. Like all monarchs styled *great* in those days, he fought many battles in Ireland and out of it, and won them. It is stated by some writers, that *Ruadhraidh* aided the African King *Masinissa* in his wars against the Romans. He is remarkable for the length of years he reigned as sovereign—seventy years according to some authorities. This *Ardrigh* is especially remarkable in his descent and in his posterity. He was descended not from the line of Heber or Heremon, but from *Ir*,—and the leading saints and sovereigns of Ireland in the Christian period have been of the line of *Ruadhraidh*. His descendants were known by the name *clanna Ruadhraidh*, or the children of *Rory*. This sovereign had four sons of whom three reigned as kings ; his son *Ross* was the father of *Fergus* at one time King of *Ulster* ; *Cas*, father of

Factna the wise, whose son was the famed Conor Mac Nessa, King of Ulster at the time of Christ ; Conga, a third son was father of Conall Kearnach ; these men and their cousin Cuchulainn were the leading heroes of the Red Branch Knights who flourished about the opening of the first century of the Christian period—say in the days of Julius Caesar and Pompey.

(9). Eochaidh Feidleach father of the renowned Queen Meav, restored the pentarchy.

(10). Fergus Mac Roigh, was so called, from his mother's name Roigh. His father was Ross, son of the Ardrigh Ruadhraidh. Fergus was King of Ulster ; he made love to Nessa the widow of his deceased cousin Factna, and she consented to become his wife, on condition that he should permit Conor, her son, to sit beside him on the judgment seat of his kingdom for one year. The superior manner of Conor, like another Absalom, and the plotting and seductive bearing of his mother, Nessa, gained the affections of the people. After a time the people wished to dethrone Fergus and to make Conor Mac Nessa, king. Fergus quietly resigned in favour of his stepson. The great Irish story known as Deirdré, the third of Three Sorrowful Tales of story-telling among the Gael, relates to this period. King Conor Mac Nessa, and ex-King Fergus Mac Roigh, with their cousins the sons of Uisneach and their followers are the leading characters in this dramatic story.

The *Táin-bó-Cuailgné* in Irish, or the Tain-quest by Sir Samuel Ferguson or, Lady Ferguson's *Ireland before the Conquest*, should be read in order to get an insight to the manners and customs of this period, and to learn the achievement's of the heroes who lived and fought for duty, for reward or glory. The manners of the people of the time, and the spirit that animated the knights and military heroes are not unlike those of the Homeric period—when Agamemnon King of Men, Achilles and Ulysses flourished. See the *Foray of Queen Meav* by Aubrey de Vere, and other legends of Ireland's heroic age—amongst those legends that known as “ the Sons of Uisneach,” is worth the student's perusal.

The best and fullest version of all yet published regarding the Sons of Uisneach and the Irish Deirdré is the neat volume from the pen of Dr. Robert Dwyer Joyce, M.D., M.R.I.A. Dublin : M. H. Gill and Son, O'Connell-street upper, 1877.

Q. I. A certain writer on Irish History styles a continuous line of monarchs “ the spinal column of a Nation ; ” using this metaphor, he boldly states “ the History of Ireland is invertebrate, ” i.e., it has no such regal backbone—be good enough to say is there any truth in that statement.

A. The detailed record already presented in the preceding pages supplies the answer that there is no truth in the statement ; nor even the shadow of a foundation for such an expression of opinion .

It is enough for one to go back to the second race of immigrants who had landed in this country before the coming of the Milesians from the south of Europe. These were the Belgæ or Firbolgs, as they are called in our national annals. They ruled in this land before the arrival of another Keltic shoal of immigrants known as Tuatha Dé Danann. Each people spoke a tongue known as Keltic ; each were ruled by primitive laws, kindred to those known amongst the early Latin and Greek races. These people had a government directed by kingly power and authority ;— they had rulers and an Ardrigh, or supreme king who was monarch of all.

Dr. Petrie, in his history of Tara Hill, tells us that the “ Firbolg was the first who erected a palace at Tara, and divided the island into five provinces, that each province had its own king, and that the Ardrigh or supreme monarch ruled the whole island.”

Reckoning a regal succession in Pagan or Christian Ireland, it is the Ardrigh or monarch who alone, is taken into account, and not the kings of subordinate power or position. Now those two Keltic races just named had laws and a civilized state of society and a regular established policy carried out with efficiency and success, considering the early period in which those dynasties flourished. They had a parliament too ; they recognised religious rites : they had military orders even then, or early model combinations that subsequently produced the military systems so famous in Ireland in later Pagan times ; they had Ollamhs, that is doctors learned in science and art ; they had Druids, and at a later time Brehons or Judges and Bards, Chroniclers and professional story writers, or Seanachaidhs.

Next the Milesian immigrants succeeded the Belgæ and the Danann races ; and of the Milesian line alone, there flourished, according to O’Flaherty, one hundred and thirty-six (136) monarchs in Ireland before the people came under the influence of Christianity.

One dynasty possessed regal power in Ireland for three thousand years, up to the time when Henry II. landed in this country. That was rather a large backbone ! The last elected Ardrigh of Ireland was Monarch Roderick O’Conor—who finally retired from the turmoil of a troubled life, and found place in the seclusion of religious retirement at Cong in Connacht.

Taking the Belgian and the Danann lines of chief monarchs along with those of the Milesian race, from Heremon to Roderick O’Conor—what a lengthy array of monarchs presents itself, forming “ a spinal column” and a “ royal backbone” such as no other nation can boast of. In fact no country west of China, has had another such spinal column extending through three dynasties along a period of years calculated by thousands. If the history of a nation is, as some state, the biography of her kings, Ireland even in pagan periods has had a sufficiently full history in the record if nothing else of those famous monarchs, who hold an honoured name in the ancient annals of our people.

The statement, therefore, that Ireland had no royal backbone ; and that she was not a nation before the conquest, is a gratuitous assertion, devoid of even a shadow of truth, and quite opposed to the facts of history.

Q. 6. For the sake of clearness and distinctness mark the era that elapsed from the time of the Kings Fergus Mac Roigh and Conor Mac Nessa to the death of Dathi, the last of the Pagan monarchs.

A. For students it is best to divide that term of years into three periods. The first is known amongst antiquaries and Irish literary men as the Heroic period, sometimes called the “ golden age” of Irish story—the second is known practically as the Fenian period ; the third may be termed the Christian dawn, or the marauding period,

This division has not hitherto been formally made ; nevertheless there should be a line drawn between the two periods first and second named above. Sir Samuel Ferguson hints at this division in his introductory note to the poem “ The healing of Conall Carnach,” when he says alluding to the story of Deidré, “ the best part of *Irish Heroic tradition* connects itself with the reign and period of Conor Mac Nessa, preceding, by nearly three centuries, the epoch of Cormac Mac Art and the Fenian or Irish romances.” The line cannot well be drawn pointing out the exact year that separates the first period from the second, but Conor Mac

Nessa may be regarded as the central figure around which may be grouped all the events connected with the first period—say from the reign of Ruadhraidh to the days of Conn of the Hundred Fights, A.D. 145. This includes the historic exploits of Conor himself ; the story of ex-king Fergus Mac Roigh ; the tale of Deidré, and the part taken by the sons of Uisneach ; the flight of Fergus and his followers to Connacht the exploits of Queen Meav, her character as a historic personage, and her subsequent mythical existence ; the events connected with the palace of Emania, or Navan near Armagh ; the five orders of Knighthood then flourishing in Ireland—namely :—

- (a). Niagh Nasc,—or Knights of the Golden Collar.
- (b). Curraidh na Craoibhé ruaidhe, or Knights of the Red Branch or, as O’Curry thinks, Knights of the Royal Branch,
- (c). Clanna Deagha,—the Munster Knights,
- (d). Clanna Baoisgne,—Leinster Knights,
- (e). Clanna Morna,—Connacht or Belgian Knights.

The “ Fenian” period, on the other hand, includes from the reign of Conn (A.D. 145) or of his grandson Cormac Mac Art, up to the year A.D. 350. And from A.D. 350, up to the death of Dathi may be called the “ Christian dawn,” for Ireland, a period when the Kings of Eire made it the study of their lives to make incursions into Alba, and into Britain, into Armoric Gaul and even, like Dathi, to cross rivers and mountain ranges till they reached the Alps. It was during those years that the Picts and the Scots dashed into Britain and drove the native inhabitants from the south of Alba, and from the territory north of the Humber southwards. It was then the natives called on the Roman authority for help—and the Irish soldiers—the “ Scoti,” were brave enough to meet the Roman legions face to face in the field of battle. This time may well be called the marauding period. The heroes of the Fenian period are quite distinct in time, in character, in place and in exploits, from those who flourished at an earlier date. Such are Fionn Mac Cumhaill the leader of the Fenian hosts, son-in-law of the monarch Cormac, Diarmaid, Graine, daughter of the reigning monarch, Cailte Mac Ronain, Oisín, Oscar ; and then the place around which these heroes figure is usually the hill of Tara—or, Fionn’s residence at the hill of Allen near Kildare. The heroes of the “ golden” period—time of Conor Mac Nessa—are connected with the palace at Emania, or with Cruachan. It is true that the spirit of Knight-hood had continued from the first age up to the time of Treunmor, of Cumhal, of King Cormac and his son-in-law Fionn, when it attained its fullest development. Garaidh Mac Morna was at this time chief of the Fiann of Connacht.

A fair sized volume could readily be compiled on each of those two periods, the heroic or golden, and the Fenian period, properly so-called. Another volume to explain the events fully, should present the Scoti and the neighbouring nations, with the kings and their followers who invaded Alba and Britain and the kingdoms of Western Europe in the fourth century of the Christian era.

Q. 3. Explain the “ Clan” System amongst the Gaels ; and the customs known as Tanistry and Gavel Kind.

A. The “ Clan” System which existed in Ireland up to a late period and flourished in the Highlands of Scotland, presents nothing more than the idea of the family system, enlarging its bounds as widely as one chooses, or grouping different families together, all under one *Keann* or head, *i.e.*, King. The term *Clan* means children in the Gaelic tongue, and *Keann* signifies head or chief. It is the patriarchal system, which is fully illustrated in the life of Abraham ; or it is like the family system kept up to this day by the Slavs in the Eastern confines of the empire of Austria say in Croatia or Servia.

In a small tract known as *A Plea for the Evicted Tenants of Mayo*, written by the present writer, and published by Browne and Nolan, Nassau-street, Dublin, 1888 the following view of the clan system is presented :

THE “ CLAN ” SYSTEM.

“ The peasants of Ireland still cling to the idea that every Government ought to be paternal in regard to its subjects. It is now some two hundred and seventy years since the Brehon laws ceased to have any legal directive force in Ireland. The “ clan ” system, as it was called, had prevailed up to the “ flight of the Earls.” These laws—or the first principles of them—have come down from the very infancy of human society. The family, it is well known, was the earliest standard of social government. Those who lived under one fatherly guide and governor were known as a “ clan,” which in Irish Gaelic signifies children or family. The members of the tribe were to the chief what the children of a household are to the head of the house. To all the members, no matter how numerous, the chief was a “ father ” or “ pater,” and his ἀρχή government “ patriarchal.” It is worth keeping in memory that wherever the “ clan ” system prevailed, as it did invariably amongst the Kelts—the clan Chief, in times past, could no more entertain the idea of dissociating the land from the people who lived on it, than a father could entertain the notion of dispossessing his children. The chieftain in past times was regarded by the Gaels as head of the clan—that is chief father. Such was the form of government amongst the Gaels in Ireland. To this hour the traditionary notion abides in the minds of the masses, that the ruling administration ought to be fatherly.

OTHER PEOPLES’ VIEW — THE GOVERNING POWER AS FATHERLY.

“ The Keltic race is not singular in its views of early primitive sovereign authority. In the East, throughout Hindustan, from Peking to Stamboul, the inhabitants look up to the “ King ” as to a great father, and the Queen, or Empress, as a great mother. Kingdoms have been altered, and the forms of government changed, but the essentials of good government have never changed, and cannot change. The patriarchal spirit influenced the Emperors Augustus and Trajan, as well as it did Romulus or the early kings of Alba-Longa. We find that Assuerus, who reigned from India to Ethiopia over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, was as fatherly as ever had been Astyages, the grandfather of Cyrus the Elder—the founder of the Persian Empire.”

How exceeding like the “ clan ” system amongst the Gaels is the system of “ house-communions ” amongst the Slavs, the following quotation from a note in vol. III. of the Brehon Law plainly shows :—

“ The system of house-communion stated succinctly is as follows : The land in the countries and among the classes in which it prevailed did not belong to individuals, but was held as a sort of trust in perpetual entail for the benefit of house-communions. A house-communion consisted of a number of individuals united by an actual, or occasionally a fictitious tie of consanguinity. All the children of members of the house-communion were *ipso facto* co-partners in the property of what we may call the family corporation. Membership in a house-communion descended only through the male line. Unmarried women belonged to the house-communions of their fathers, and widows to those of their late husbands. An adopted member took the surname of the house-communion (in Ireland the name of the clan) into which he was adopted.” Quoted from the *Fortnightly Review*. No. LXIV. pp. 372. 373.

The head of each house-communion had no right to sell or do away with, or give up any part of the property of the house-communion, without consulting the members of the com-

munion. In like manner no chieftain amongst the Gaels had any right to resign or appropriate the property of the clan of which he was head. He held the lands for the whole tribe and not for himself.

TANISTRY.

The chief of a clan, was at first in ruling, patriarchal. The interests of the community demanded that the head of the clan should be a man of sound sense and of a healthy frame, capable to guide and to defend those under his charge. When the days of patriarchal government amongst the Hebrews had passed away, and when God's chosen leaders, were, as in the case of the prophet Samuel set aside, then the people were allowed to elect leaders, such as Saul and David. So it was amongst the Gaels. After a time the "Leadership" became elective. No one with any corporal or mental blemish was eligible to the position of chief of a "clan." Tanistry then means simply the election by the voice, or the votes of the people composing the clan, of one worthy to rule and lead the family community. The term *tán* signifies land, wealth, and *táin* booty, power, wealth; tainte in the plural has that meaning as—"is fearr an slainte na an *táinté*" an Irish adage, meaning that "health (sláinté) is better than wealth (táinté)." *Táin*, then is applied to one having wealth and dignity; and *tánaiste* is the name given to one elected to the position of lord or dynast, or ruler of a clan; it is also applied to the presumptive or apparent heir to a chieftain or prince.

GAVEL-KIND.

What does it mean? The term *Gabh* in Gaelic means, to hold, to seize, to get possession of, the infinitive form is *Gabhail* or Gavel. Hence *Gabhaltas* is the term in use to this hour amongst the people to express a *hold-ing* "of land." *Kinn*, a clan under the same head,—was written in former times *Kind*, *nd* for *nn*. The compound term "Gavel-kind," means then, the possession of the "clan," as opposed to individual rights. The land belonged to the whole community and not to any special family. Hence on the death of any particular householder, his portion of the common property did not descend by entail to his eldest son, or to any of his children, but became the property of the entire clan. It was the *Gabhaltas* of the *Kinné*, [1] and not of a special family. When a land-owning member of an Irish Sept died, its chief made a re-distribution of all the lands of the Sept. He did not divide the estate of the dead man among the children, but used it to increase the allotments of the various house-holders of which the Sept was made up.

[1] *Kinné* is gen. case of *Kinn* a Sept—*Kinn* is a Sept, under one *Keann*, or head.

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