

A.D. 693-948 — Silver, Honey & Blood

An Illustrated History of Ireland

From AD 400 to 1800

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1873.

DEMAND for a Fifth Edition of the “ Illustrated History of Ireland,” within three years from the date of the publication of other Editions, consisting of 11,000 copies, is a matter of no little gratification to the writer, both personally and relatively. It is a triumphant proof that Irishmen are not indifferent to Irish history.

There can be little doubt that a new era has dawned upon old Erin’s shores. It remains to be proved if her sons shall be as faithful in prosperity as they have been in adversity. It remains to be proved, if opportunities are afforded us of obtaining higher intellectual culture without the danger of the moral deterioration which might have attended that culture under other circumstances, whether we shall avail ourselves of them to the full.

I have been informed also that some objection has been made to a “ political preface ;” and that one gentleman, whose name I have not had the honour of hearing, has designated the work as a “ political pamphlet.” Even were not Irish history exceptional, I confess myself perplexed to understand how history and politics can be severed. An author may certainly write a perfectly colourless history, but he must state the opinions of different parties, and the acts consequent on those opinions, even should he do so without any observation of his own. I never for a moment entertained the intention of writing such a history, though I freely confess I have exercised considerable self-restraint as to the expression of my own opinion when writing some portions of the present work.

If women may excel as painters and sculptors, why may not a woman attempt to excel as an historian ? Men of cultivated intellect, far from wishing to depreciate such efforts, will be the first to encourage them with more than ordinary warmth ; the opinions of other persons, whatever may be their position, are of little value.

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Christianity improves the Social State of Ireland—A Saxon Invasion of Ireland—Domestic Wars—The English come to Ireland for Instruction—A Famine and Tempests—The First Danish Invasion—Cruelty of the Danes—The Black and White Gentiles—King Cormac Mac Cullinan—Cashel—Amlaff the Dane—Plunder of the Towns—Arrival of Sitric—Death of Nial Glundubh—The Circuit of Ireland—Malachy the Second—Entries in the Annals.

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VERY few events of any special interest occur between the commencement of the seventh century and the Danish invasion. The obituaries of ecclesiastics and details of foreign missions are its salient points. The wars of the Saxon Heptarchy and the Celtic Pentarchy almost synchronize, though we find several Irish kings influenced by the examples of sanctity with which they were surrounded, and distinguished for piety, while Charlemagne pronounces their neighbours a perfidious and perverse race, worse than pagans. There can be no doubt

that Charlemagne's high opinion of the Irish was caused by the fact, that so many of the heads of his schools were of that nation, which was then in the vanguard of civilization and progress. The cloister, always the nursery of art, the religious, always the promoters of learning, were pre-eminent in this age for their devotion to literary pursuits. In the present work it is impossible to give details of their MSS. still preserved, of their wonderful skill in calligraphy, still the admiration of the most gifted, and of the perfection to which they brought the science of music ; but I turn from this attractive subject with less regret, from the hope of being soon able to produce an Ecclesiastical History of Ireland, in which such details will find their proper place, and will be amply expanded. [1] The revolution of social feeling which was effected in Ireland by the introduction of Christianity, is strongly marked. Before the advent of St. Patrick, few Irish monarchs died a natural death—ambition or treachery proved a sufficient motive for murder and assassination ; while of six kings who reigned during the eighth and ninth centuries, only one died a violent death, and that death was an exception, which evidently proved the rule, for Nial was drowned in a generous effort to save the life of one of his own servants.

The fatal pestilence did not appear again after its severe visitation, which terminated in 667. In 693 Finnachta Fleadhach (the Hospitable) commenced his reign. He remitted the Boromean Tribute at the request of St. Moling, and eventually abdicated, and embraced a religious life. In the year 684, Egfrid, the Saxon King of Northumberland, sent an army to Ireland, which spared neither churches nor monasteries, and carried off a great number of the inhabitants as slaves. Bede denounces and laments this barbarous invasion, attributing the defeat and death of King Egfrid, which took place in the following year, to the vengeance of heaven. [2] St. Adamnan was sent to Northumbria, after the death of this prince, to obtain the release of the captives. His mission was successful, and he was honoured there as the worker of many miracles.

The generosity of Finnachta failed in settling the vexed question of tribute. Comgal, who died in 708, ravaged Leinster as fiercely as his predecessors, and Fearghal, his successor, invaded it “ five times in one year.” Three wonderful showers are said to have fallen in the eighth year of his reign (A.D. 716 according to the Four Masters)—a shower of silver, a shower of honey, and a shower of blood. These were, of course, considered portents of the awful Danish invasions. Fearghal was killed at the battle of Almhain (Allen, near Kildare), in 718. In this engagement, the Leinster men only numbered nine thousand, while their opponents numbered twenty-one thousand. The Leinster men, however, made up for numbers by their valour ; and it is said that the intervention of a hermit, who reproached Fearghal with breaking the pacific promise of his predecessor, contributed to the defeat of the northern forces. Another battle took place in 733, when Hugh Allan, King of Ireland, and Hugh, son of Colgan, King of Leinster, engaged in single combat. The latter was slain, and the Leinster men “ were killed, slaughtered, cut off, and dreadfully exterminated.” In fact, the Leinster men endured so many “ dreadful exterminations,” that one almost marvels how any of their brave fellows were left for future feats of arms. The “ northerns were joyous after this victory, for they had wreaked their vengeance and their animosity upon the Leinster men,” nine thousand of whom were slain. St. Samhthann, a holy nun, who died in the following year, is said to have predicted the fate of Aedh, Comgal's son, if the two Aedhs (Hughes) met. Aedh Allan commemorated her virtues in verse, and concludes thus : —

“ In the bosom of the Lord, with a pure death, Samhthann passed from her sufferings.”

Indeed, the Irish kings of this period manifested their admiration of peaceful living, and their desire for holy deaths, in a more practical way than by poetic encomiums on others. In 704 Beg Boirche “ took a pilgrim's staff, and died on his pilgrimage.” In 729 Flahertach re-

nounced his regal honours, and retired to Armagh, where he died. In 758 Donal died on a pilgrimage at Iona, after a reign of twenty years ; and in 765 his successor, Nial Frassagh, abdicated the throne, and became a monk at Iona. Here he died in 778, and was buried in the tomb of the Irish kings in that island.

An Irish poet, who died in 742, is said to have played a clever trick on the “ foreigners” of Dublin. He composed a poem for them, and then requested payment for his literary labours. The *Galls*, [3] who were probably Saxons, refused to meet his demand, but Rumrann said he would be content with two *pinguins* (pennies) from every good man, and one from each bad one. The result may be anticipated. Rumrann is described as “ an adept in wisdom, chronology, and poetry ;” we might perhaps add, and in knowledge of human nature. In the Book of Ballymote he is called the Virgil of Ireland. A considerable number of Saxons were now in the country ; and it is said that a British king, named Constantine, who had become a monk, was at that time Abbot of Rahen, in the King’s county, and that at Cell-Belaigh there were seven streets [4] of those foreigners. Gallon, in the King’s county, was called Galin of the Britons, and Mayo was called Mayo of the Saxons, from the number of monasteries therein, founded by members of these nations.

The entries during the long reign of Domhnall contain little save obituaries of abbots and saints. The first year of the reign of Nial Frassagh is distinguished by a shower of silver, a shower of wheat, and a shower of honey. The Annals of Clonmacnois say that there was a most severe famine throughout the whole kingdom during the early part of his reign, so much that the king himself had very little to live upon. Then the king prayed very fervently to God, being in company with seven holy bishops ; and he asked that he might die rather than see so many of his faithful subjects perishing, while he was helpless to relieve them. At the conclusion of his prayer, the “ three showers” fell from heaven ; and then the king and the seven bishops gave great thanks to the Lord.

But a more terrible calamity than famine was even then impending, and, if we may believe the old chroniclers, not without marvellous prognostications of its approach. In the year 767 there occurred a most fearful storm of thunder and lightning, with “ terrific and horrible signs.” It would appear that the storm took place while a fair was going on, which obtained the name of the “ Fair of the clapping of hands.” Fear and horror seized the men of Ireland, so that their religious seniors ordered them to make two fasts, together with fervent prayer, and one meal between them, to protect and save them from a pestilence, precisely at Michaelmas. [5]

The first raid of the Danish pirates is recorded thus : “ The age of Christ 790 [*recte* 795]. The twenty-fifth year of Donnchadh. The burning of Reachrainn [6] by plunderers ; and its shrines were broken and plundered.” They had already attacked the English coasts, “ whilst the pious King Bertric was reigning over its western division. “ Their arrival was sudden and so unexpected, that the king’s officer took them for merchants, paying with his life for the mistake. [7] A Welsh chronicle, known by the name of *Brut y Tywysogion*, or the Chronicle of the Chieftains, has a corresponding record under the year 790 : “ Ten years with fourscore and seven hundred was the age of Christ when the pagans went to Ireland.” Three MSS. add, “ and destroyed Rechren.” Another chronicle mentions, that the black pagans, who were the first of their nation to land in Ireland, had previously been defeated in Glamorganshire, and after their defeat they had invaded Ireland, and devastated Rechru.

If by bravery we understand utter recklessness of life, and utter recklessness in inflicting cruelties on others, then the Vikings may be termed brave. The heroism of patient endurance was a bravery but little understood at that period. If the heathen Viking was brave when he

plundered and burned monastic shrines—when he massacred the defenceless with wanton cruelty—when he flung little children on the points of spears, and gloated over their dying agonies ; perhaps we may also admit those who endured such torments, either in their own persons, or in the persons of those who were dear to them, and yet returned again and again to restore the shrine so rudely destroyed, have also their claim to be termed brave, and may demand some commendation for that virtue from posterity

As plunder was the sole object of these barbarians, they naturally sought it first where it could be obtained most easily and surely. The islands on the Irish coast were studded with monasteries. Their position was chosen as one which seemed peculiarly suitable for a life of retreat from worldly turmoil, and contemplation of heavenly things. They were richly endowed, for ancient piety deemed it could never give enough to God. The shrines were adorned with jewels, purchased with the wealth which the monks had renounced for their own use ; the sacred vessels were costly, the gifts of generous hearts. The Danes commenced their work of plunder and devastation in the year 795. Three years after, A.D. 798, they ravaged Inis-patrick of Man and the Hebrides. In 802 they burned “ Hi-Coluim-Cille.” In 806 they attacked the island again, and killed sixty-eight of the laity and clergy. In 807 they became emboldened by success, and for the first time marched inland ; and after burning Inish-murray, they attacked Roscommon. During the years 812 and 813 they made raids in Connaught and Munster, but not without encountering stout resistance from the native forces. After this predatory and internecine warfare had continued for about thirty years, Turgesius, a Norwegian prince, established himself as sovereign of the Vikings, and made Armagh his head-quarters, A.D. 830. If the Irish chieftains had united their forces, and acted in concert, the result would have been the expulsion of the intruders ; but, unhappily, this unity of purpose in matters political has never existed. The Danes made and broke alliances with the provincial kings at their own convenience, while these princes gladly availed themselves of even temporary assistance from their cruel foes, while engaged in domestic wars, which should never have been undertaken. Still the Northmen were more than once driven from the country by the bravery of the native commanders, and they often paid dearly for the cruel wrongs they inflicted on their hapless victims. Sometimes the Danish chiefs mustered all their forces, and left the island for a brief period, to ravage the shores of England or Scotland ; but they soon returned to inflict new barbarities on the unfortunate Irish. [8]

Burning churches or destroying monasteries was a favorite pastime of these pirates, wherever they could obtain a landing on Christian shores ; and the number of religious houses in Ireland afforded them abundant means of gratifying their barbarous inclinations. But when they became so far masters as to have obtained some permanent settlement, this mode of proceeding was considered either more troublesome or less profitable than that of appropriating to themselves the abbeys and churches. Turgesius, it is said, placed an abbot of his own in every monastery ; and as he had already conferred ecclesiastical offices on himself and on his lady, we may presume he was not very particular in his selections. The villages, too, were placed under the rule of a Danish captain ; and each family was obliged to maintain a soldier of that nation, who made himself master of the house, using and wasting the food for lack of which the starving children of the lawful owner were often dying of hunger.

All education was strictly forbidden ; books and manuscripts were burned and *drowned* ; and the poets, historians, and musicians imprisoned and driven to the woods and mountains. Martial sports were interdicted, from the lowest to the highest rank. Even nobles and princes were forbidden to wear their usual habiliments, the cast-off clothes of the Danes being considered sufficiently good for slaves.

The clergy, who had been driven from their monasteries, concealed themselves as best they could, continuing still their prayers and fasts, and the fervent recital of the Divine Office. The Irish, true to their faith in every trial, were not slow to attribute their deliverance to the prayers of these holy men.

In 831 Nial Caille led an army against them, and defeated them at Derry ; but in the meanwhile, Felim, King of Cashel, with contemptible selfishness, marched into Leinster to claim tribute, and plundered every one, except the Danes, who should have been alone considered as enemies at such a time. Even the churches were not spared by him, for he laid waste the termon-lands of Clonmacnois, “ up to the church door.” After his death, [9] A.D. 843, a brave and good king came to the rescue of his unfortunate country. While still King of Meath, Meloughlin had freed the nation from Turgesius, one of its worst tyrants, by drowning him in Lough Owel. His death was a signal for a general onslaught on the Danes. The people rose simultaneously, and either massacred their enemies, or drove them to their ships. In 846 Meloughlin met their forces at Skreen, where they were defeated ; they also suffered a reverse at Kildare.

The Danes themselves were now divided into two parties—the Dubh Galls, or Black Gentiles ; and the Finn Galls, or White Gentiles. A fierce conflict took place between them in the year 850, in which the Dubh Galls conquered. [10] In the following year, however, both parties submitted to Amlaff, son of the Norwegian king ; and thus their power was once more consolidated. Amlaff remained in Dublin ; his brothers, Sitric and Ivar, stationed themselves in Waterford and Limerick. A great meeting was now convened by the ecclesiastics of Ireland at Rathugh, for the purpose of establishing peace and concord amongst the native princes. The northern Hy-Nials alone remained belligerent ; and to defend themselves, pursued the usual suicidal course of entering into an alliance with the Danes. Upon the death of the Irish monarch, the northern chief, Hugh Finnlaith, succeeded to the royal power ; broke his treaty with Amlaff, which had been only one of convenience ; and turned his arms vigorously against the foreigners. This prince was married to a daughter of Kenneth M’Alpine, the first, sole Monarch of Scotland. After the death of the Irish prince, his wife married his successor, Flann, who, according to the alternate plan of succession, came of the southern Hy-Nial family, and was a son of Meloughlin, once the formidable opponent of the lady’s former, husband. During the reign of Flann, Cormac Mac Cullinan, a prelate distinguished for his learning and sanctity, was obliged to unite the office of priest and king. This unusual combination, however, was not altogether without precedent. The archbishopric of Cashel owes its origin remotely to this great man ; as from the circumstance of the city of Cashel having been the seat of royalty in the south, and the residence of the kings of Munster, it was exalted, in the twelfth century, to the dignity of an archiepiscopal see.

Of Cormac, however interesting his history, we can only give a passing word. His reign commenced peaceably; and so wise—perhaps we should rather say, so holy—was his rule, that his kingdom once more enjoyed comparative tranquillity, and religion and learning flourished again as it had done in happier times.

But the kingdom which he had been compelled to rule, was threatened by the very person who should have protected it most carefully ; and Cormac, after every effort to procure peace, was obliged to defend his people against the attacks of Flann. Even then a treaty might have been made with the belligerent monarch ; but Cormac, unfortunately for his people and himself, was guided by an abbot, named Flahertach, who was by no means so peaceably disposed as his good master. This unruly ecclesiastic urged war on those who were already too willing to undertake it ; and then made such representations to the bishop-king, as to induce him to

yield a reluctant consent. It is said that Cormac had an intimation of his approaching end. It is at least certain, that he made preparations for death, as if he believed it to be imminent.

On the eve of the fatal engagement he made his confession, and added some articles to his will, in which he left large bounties to many of the religious houses throughout the kingdom. To Lismore he bequeathed a golden chalice and some rich vestments ; to Armagh, twenty-four ounces of gold and silver ; to his own church of Cashel, a golden and a silver chalice, with the famous Saltair. Then he retired to a private place for prayer, desiring the few persons whom he had informed of his approaching fate to keep their information secret, as he knew well the effect such intelligence would have on his army, were it generally known.

Though the king had no doubt that he would perish on the field, he still showed the utmost bravery, and made every effort to cheer and encourage his troops ; but the men lost spirit in the very onset of the battle, and probably were terrified at the numerical strength of their opponents. Six thousand Munster men were slain, with many of their princes and chieftains. Cormac was killed by falling under his horse, which missed its footing on a bank slippery with the blood of the slain. A common soldier, who recognized the body, cut off his head, and brought it as a trophy to Flann ; but the monarch bewailed the death of the good and great prince, and reproved the indignity with which his remains had been treated. This battle was fought at a place called Bealagh Mughna, now Ballaghmoon, in the county of Kildare, a few miles from the town of Carlow. [11]

Flahertach survived the battle, and, after some years spent in penance, became once more minister, and ultimately King of Munster. As he advanced in years, he learned to love peace, and his once irascible temper became calm and equable.

The Rock of Cashel, and the ruins of a small but once beautiful chapel, still preserve the memory of the bishop-king. His literary fame also has its memorials. This Rule is contained in a poem of fourteen stanzas, written in the most pure and ancient style of Gaedhelic, of which, as well as of many other languages, the illustrious Cormac was so profound a master. This Rule is general in several of its inculcations ; but it appears to have been written particularly as an instruction to a priest, for the moral and spiritual direction of himself and his flock. He was also skilled in the Ogham writings, as may be gathered from a poem written by a contemporary, who, in paying compliments to many of the Irish kings and chiefs, addresses the following stanza to Cormac : —

“ Cormac of Cashel, with his champions,
Munster is his,—may he long enjoy it !
Around the King of *Raith-Bicli* are cultivated
The letters and the trees.”

The death of Cormac is thus pathetically deplored by Dallan, son of Môr : —

“ The bishop, the soul’s director, the renowned, illustrious doctor,
King of Caiseal, King of Farnumha : O God ! alas for Cormac ! ”

Flann’s last years were disturbed by domestic dissensions. His sons, Donough and Conor, both rebelled against him, but Nial Glundubh (of the black knee), a northern Hy-Nial chief, led an army against them, and compelled them to give hostages to their father. Flann died the following year, A.D. 914, and was succeeded by the prince who had so ably defended him. Meanwhile, the Danes were not idle. Amlaff [12] has signalized his advent by drowning Conchobhar, “ heir apparent of Tara ;” by slaying all the chieftains of the Deisi at Cluain-

Daimh ; by killing the son of Clennfaeladh, King of Muscraighe Breoghain ; by smothering Machdaighren in a cave, and by the destruction of Caitill Find (Ketill the White) and his whole garrison. Oisill is the next chief of importance ; and he “ succeeded in plundering the greatest part of Ireland.” It is not recorded how long he was occupied in performing this exploit, but he was eventually slain, and his army cut off, by the men of Erinn. The deaths of several Danish chieftains occurred about this period, and are referred to the vengeance of certain saints, whose shrines they had desecrated. In A.D. 864 according to the Four Masters, 867 according to O’Flaherty, the Danes were defeated at Lough Foyle, by Hugh Finnliath, King of Ireland. Soon after, Leinster and Munster were plundered by a Scandinavian chief, named Baraid, who advanced as far as *Carraighe* (Kerry) : “ And they left not a cave underground that they did not explore ; and they left nothing, from Limerick to Cork, that they did not ravish.” What treasures the antiquarian of the nineteenth century must have lost by this marauder ! How great must have been the wealth of the kings and princes of ancient Erinn, when so much remains after so much was taken ! In 877 the Black Gentiles took refuge in Scotland, after suffering a defeat in an engagement with the White Gentiles. They were, however, consoled by a victory over the men of Alba, in which Constantine, son of Kenneth, was slain, and many others with him. Their success proved beneficial to Ireland, for we are told that a period of “ rest to the men of Erinn” ensued. The Danes still held their own in Dublin and at Limerick, occasionally plundered the churches, and now and then had a skirmish with the “ men of Erinn ;” but for forty years the country was free from the foreign fleets, and, therefore, enjoyed a time of comparative quiet.

In the year 913 new fleets arrived. They landed in the harbour of Waterford, where they had a settlement formerly ; but though they obtained assistance here, they were defeated by the native Irish, both in Kerry and in Tipperary. Sitric came with another fleet in 915, and settled at Cenn-Fuait. [13] Here he was attacked by the Irish army, but they were repulsed with great slaughter. Two years after they received another disastrous defeat at Cill-Mosanhog, near Rathfanham. A large cromlech, still in that neighbourhood, probably marks the graves of the heroes slain in that engagement. Twelve kings fell in this battle. Their names are given in the *Wars of the Gaedhil*, and by other authorities, though in some places the number is increased. Nial Glundubh was amongst the slain. He is celebrated in pathetic verse by the bards. Of the battle was said : —

“ Fierce and hard was the Wednesday
On which hosts were strewn under the fall of shields ;
it shall be called, till judgment’s day,
The destructive burning of Ath-cliaith.”

The lamentation of Nial was, moreover, said : —

“ Sorrowful this day is sacred Ireland,
Without a valiant chief of hostage reign !
It is to see the heavens without a sun.
To view Magh-Neill [14] without a Nial.”

“ There is no cheerfulness in the happiness of men ;
There is no peace or joy among the hosts ;
No fair can be celebrated
Since the sorrow of sorrow died.”

Donough, son of Flann Sinna, succeeded, and passed his reign in obscurity, with the exception of a victory over the Danes at Bregia. Two great chieftains, however, compensated by

their prowess for his indifference ; these were Muirheartach, son of the brave Nial Glundubh, the next heir to the throne, and Callaghan of Cashel, King of Munster. The northern prince was a true patriot, willing to sacrifice every personal feeling for the good of his country : consequently, he proved a most formidable foe to the Danish invader. Callaghan of Casshel was, perhaps, as brave, but his name cannot be held up to the admiration of posterity. The personal advancement of the southern Hy-Nials was more to him than the political advancement of his country ; and he disgraced his name and his nation by leaguering with the invaders. In the year 934 he pillaged Clonmacnois. Three years later he invaded Meath and Ossory, in conjunction with the Danes. Muirheartach was several times on the eve of engagements with the feeble monarch who nominally ruled the country, but he yielded for the sake of peace, or, as the chroniclers quaintly say, “ God pacified them.” After one of these pacifications, they joined forces, and laid “ siege to the foreigners of Ath-cliath, so that they spoiled and plundered all that was under the dominion of the foreigners, from Ath-cliath to Ath-Truisten.” [15]

In the twenty-second year of Donough, Muirheartach determined on a grand expedition for the subjugation of the Danes. He had already conducted a fleet to the Hebrides, from whence he returned flushed with victory. His first care was to assemble a body of troops of special valour ; and he soon found himself at the head of a thousand heroes, and in a position to commence “ his circuit of Ireland.” The Danish chief, Sitric, was first seized as a hostage. He then carried off Lorcan, King of Leinster. He next went to the Munster men, who were also prepared for battle ; but they too yielded, and gave up their monarch also, “ and a fetter was put on him by Muirheartach.” He afterwards proceeded into Connaught, where Conchobhar, son of Tadhg, came to meet him, “ but no gyve or lock was put upon him.” He then returned to Oileach, carrying these kings with him as hostages. Here he feasted them for five months with knightly courtesy, and then sent them to the Monarch Donough,

After these exploits we cannot be surprised that Muirheartach should be styled the Hector of the west of Europe. But he soon finds his place in the never-ceasing obituary. In two years after his justly famous exploit, he was slain by “ Blacaire, son of Godfrey, lord of the foreigners.” This event occurred on the 26th of March, A.D. 941, according to the chronology of the Four Masters. The true year, however, is 943. The chroniclers briefly observe, that “ Ard-Macha was plundered by the same foreigners, on the day after the killing of Muirheartach.” [16]

Donough died in 942, after a reign of twenty five years. He was succeeded by Congallach, who was killed by the Danes, A.D. 954. Donnell O’Neill, a son of the brave Muirheartach, now obtained the royal power, such as it was ; and at his death the throne reverted to Maelseachlainn, or Malachy II., the last of his race who ever held the undisputed sovereignty of Ireland. But it must not be supposed that murders and massacres are the staple commodities of our annals during this eventful period. Every noteworthy event is briefly and succinctly recorded. We find, from time to time, mention of strange portents, such as double suns, and other celestial phenomena of a more or less remarkable character. Fearful storms are also chronicled, which appear to have occurred at certain intervals, and hard frosts, which proved almost as trying to the “ men of Erin” as the wars of the Gentiles, black or white. But the obituaries of abbots or monks, with the quaint remarks appended thereto, and epitomes of a lifetime in a sentence, are by no means the least interesting portion of those ancient tomes. In one page we may find record of the Lord of Aileach, who takes a pilgrim’s staff ; in another, we have mention of the Abbot Muireadhach and others, who were “ destroyed in the refectory” of Druim-Mesclainn by Congallach ; and we read in the lamentation of Muireadhach, that he was “ the lamp of every choir.” Then we are told simply how a nobleman “ died in religion,” as if that were praise enough for him ; though another noble,

Domhnall, is said to have “died in religion, after a good life.” Of some abbots and bishops there is nothing more than the death record ; but in the age of Christ 926, when Celedabhaill, son of Scannal, went to Rome on his pilgrimage from the abbacy of Beannchair, we are given in full the four quatrains which he composed at his departure,—a composition which speaks highly for the poetic powers and the true piety of the author. He commences thus : —

Time for me to prepare to pass from the shelter of a habitation,
To journey as a pilgrim over the surface of the noble lively sea ;
Time to depart from the snares of the flesh, with all its guilt ;
Time now to ruminare how I may find the great Son of Mary ;
Time to seek virtue, to trample upon the will with sorrow :
Time to reject vices, and to renounce the demon.

Time to barter the transitory things for the country of the King of heaven ;
Time to defy the ease of the little earthly world of a hundred pleasures ;
Time to work at prayer in adoration of the high King of angels.”

The obituary notices, however, were not always complimentary.

We find the following entry in the Annals of Clonmacnois : —

“Tomhair Mac Alchi, King of Denmark, is reported to go [to have gone] to hell with his pains, as he deserved.”

- [1] *Expanded*, — I take this opportunity of requesting from laymen or ecclesiastics who may read this announcement, the favour of any information they may consider valuable.
- [2] *Heaven*,—*Ec. Hist* lib. iv. c. 26. “From that time the hopes and strength of the English crown began to waver and retrograde, for the Picts recovered their own lands,” &c. The Annals of the Four Masters mention a mortality among cattle throughout the whole world, and a severe frost, which followed this invasion : “The sea between Ireland and Scotland was frozen, so that there was a communication between them on the ice.”—vol. ii. p. 291. They also mention the mission of Adamnan to “Saxon land.”
- [3] *Galls*.—Gall was a generic name for foreigners. The Danes were Finn Galls, or White Foreigners, and Dubh Galls, or Black Foreigners. The former were supposed to have been the inhabitants of Norway; the latter, of Jutland. In Irish, *gaill* is the nom, and *gall*, gen.
- [4] *Streets*.—In Armagh the buildings were formed into streets and wards, for the better preservation of monastic discipline. Armagh was divided into three parts—*trian-more*, the town proper ; *trian-Patrick*, the cathedral dose ; and *trian Sassenagh*, the home of the foreign students.
- [5] *Michaelmas*,—Annals, p. 371. Another fearful thanderstorm is recorded in the Annals for 799. This happened on the eve of St. Patrick’s Day. It is said that a thousand and ten persons were killed on the coast of Clare. The island of Fitba (now Mutton Island) was partly submerged, and divided into three parts. There was also a storm in 783—“thunder, lightnings and wind-stoims”—by which the Monastery of Clonbroney was destroyed
- [6] *Reachrainn*.—Rechru appears to be the correct form. It has not yet been ascertained whether this refers to Lambay, near Dublin, or the island of Rathlino. See note, p. 32, to the “Introduction” to the *Wars of the Gaedhil with the Gall*.
- [7] *Mistake*.—*Ethel. Chron. Pro.* book iii.
- [8] *Irish*.—The history of the two hundred years daring which these northern pirates desolated the island, has been preserved in a MS. of venerable age and undoabted authenticity. It is entitled *Cogadh Gaedhil re Gallaibh* (the Wars of the Gaedhil with the Gall). It was quoted by Keating, known to Colgan, and used by the Four Masters ; but for many years it was supposed to have been completely lost, until it was discovered, in 1840, by Mr.

O'Curry, among the Seabright MSS. The work is now edited, with a translation and most valuable notes, by Dr. Todd. Several other copies have been discovered since, notably one by the Franciscan Brother, Michael O'Clery, which is at present in the Burgundian Library at Brussels. From internal evidence, it is presumed that the author was a contemporary of King Brian Boromh . Dr. O'Connor refers the authorship to Mao Liag, who was chief poet to that monarch, and died in 1016, two years after his master. Dr. Todd evidently inclines to this opinion, though he distinctly states that there is no authority for it.

- [9] *Death*—It appears doubtful whether he really died at this time. It is said that he repented of his sins of sacrilege, and ended his days in penance and religious retirement. See *Four Masters*, p. 472.
- [10] *Conquered*.—Duaid Mac Firbis gives a curious account of these contests in his *Fragments of Annals*, The White Galls, or Norwegians, had long been masters of the situation. The Black Galls fought with them for three days and nights, and were finally victorious. They take the ships they have captured to Dublin, and deprive the Lochlanns (Black Galls) of all the spoil they had so cruelly and unjustly acquired from the “shrines and sanctuaries of the saints of Erin ;” which the annalist naturally considers a judgment on them for their sins. They make another struggle, and gain the victory. But the Danish general, Horm, advises his men to put themselves under the protection of St. Patrick, and to promise the saint “honorable alms for gaining victory and triumph” over enemies who had plundered his churches. They comply with this advice ; and though greatly inferior in numbers, they gain the victory, “on account of the tutelage of St Patrick.”
- [11] *Carlow*.—The site of the battle is still shown there, and even the stone on which the soldier decapitated Cormac. Cormac's death is thus described in a MS. in the Burgundian library : “The hind feet of his horse slipped on the slippery road in the track of that blood ; the horse fell backwards, and broke his [Cormac's] back and his neck in twain ; and he said, when falling, *In manus tuas commendo spiritum meum* and he gives up his spirit ; and the impious sons of malediction come and thrust spears into his body, and sever His head from his body.” Keating gives a curious account of this battle, from an ancient tract not known at present.
- [12] *Amlaff*.—Dr. Todd identifies Amlaff with Olaf Huita (the white), of Scandinavian history, who was usually styled King of Dublin, and was the leader of the Northmen in Ireland for many years: See “Introduction” to the *Wars of the Gaedhil*, p. 69.
- [13] *Cenn-Fuit*—Fuat Head. The site has not been accurately identified.
- [14] *Magh-Neill*. *i.e.*, the Plain of Nial, a bardic name for Ireland.—*Four Masters*, vol ii p. 595.
- [15] *Ath Truisten*.—From Dublin to a ford on the river Green, near Mallaghmast, Co. Kildare.
- [16] *Muircheartach*.—This prince obtained the soubriquet of Muircheartach of the Leathern Cloaks. The origin of this appellation has not been precisely ascertained.

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