

Transactions
of the
Iberno-Celtic Society

for
1820.

Vol. I.— Part I.

Containing

A Chronological Account Of Nearly Four Hundred

IRISH WRITERS,

Commencing With

The Earliest Account Of Irish History,

And Carried Down To The Year Of Our Lord 1750 ;

With

A Descriptive Catalogue

Of such of their Works as are still extant in Verse or Prose, consisting of upwards of

One Thousand Separate Tracts.

BY EDWARD O'REILLY, ESQ.

Author of the Irish-English Dictionary and Grammar, &c. &c. &c. and Assistant Secretary to
the Society.

Dublin :

PRINTED, FOR THE SOCIETY,

BY A. O'NEIL, AT THE MINERVA PRINTING-OFFICE, CHANCERY-LANE.

1820.

PREFACE.

AMONGST the various modes adopted by most modern nations for the advancement of Science, and the investigation of natural and civil History, that of establishing literary Societies seems to be as effectual as it is prevalent. There are few nations in Europe that have

not associations to promote Arts and Sciences ; to encourage philosophical research ; to illustrate local antiquities, and perpetuate national History. Ireland, also, has had her Societies, some of whom laboured, by their publications, to rescue from oblivion and decay, some of the vast quantities of her ancient Annals, her Laws, her Poetry, and her Music.

In the year 1740 a number of literary Gentlemen associated under the name of the Physico-Historical Society, under whose patronage were published the Histories of Cork, Kerry, and Waterford. In the year 1752, another Society was formed in Dublin, whose views were confined to the publication of tracts in the Irish language. It was known by the appellation of *Cóimhthional Gaoidhilge*, or Irish Society, but does not appear to have ever published. About this time, indeed, the first edition of O'Connor's "Dissertations on the History of Ireland" appeared, but we have no cause to infer that the work was ever encouraged by either of those Societies. The publication, however, attracted a good deal of notice, and drew from the celebrated Doctor Johnson a letter to the author, on the subject of Irish literature, from which the following extract may not be considered impertinent. — "I have long wished that the Irish literature were cultivated. Ireland is known by tradition to have been the seat of piety and learning ; and surely it would be very acceptable to those who are curious either in the original of nations, or the affinities of languages, to be further informed of the revolutions of a people so ancient, and once so illustrious. I hope you will continue to cultivate this kind of learning which has lain so long neglected, and which, if it be suffered to remain in oblivion for another century, may perhaps never be retrieved." In the year 1777, Doctor Campbell, author of "Strictures on the Ecclesiastical and Literary History of Ireland," was the bearer of another letter from Johnson to Mr. O'Connor, from which, as it has been since wilfully misquoted by Campbell, it becomes necessary to give the following extract, as it appears in the Life of Johnson, by Boswell, who may be presumed to have fairly given the letter as it was written by its illustrious author. — "What the Irish language is in itself, and to what languages it has affinity, are very interesting questions which every man wishes to see resolved, that has any philological or historical curiosity. Doctor Leland begins his History too late. The ages which deserve an exact inquiry, are those times, *for such times there were*, when Ireland was the School of the West, the quiet habitation of sanctity and literature. If you could give a history, though imperfect, of the Irish nation, from its conversion to Christianity, to the invasion from England, you would amplify knowledge with new views and new objects. Set about it, therefore, if you can ; do what you can easily do without anxious exactness. Lay the foundation, and leave the superstructure to posterity."

After the extinction of the Irish Society, nothing appears to have been done towards the publication of our History or Antiquities by any collective body, until about the year 1782 or 1783, when some essays having appeared under the name of "Collectanea de Rebus Hibernicis" induced the highly-talented authors to co-operate and found the Society of Antiquaries. The principal person in the formation of this Society, and the publication of those tracts, was the late General Vallancey ; and the specimens he gave of some of our ancient laws excited much curiosity, and a desire for further information on so interesting a subject. Amongst those who were particularly charmed with its novelty and importance, was the late celebrated Edmund Burke. That Gentleman felt the matter of such vast moment to literature, that he prevailed on Sir John Seabright to restore to this country many of her ancient records that had fallen into his hands, and he accordingly presented to the library of Trinity College, Dublin, an invaluable treasure of Irish MSS. that had been collected from various parts of Ireland about the beginning of the last century, by the learned and indefatigable antiquary Edward Lhuyd, author of the *Archæologia*.

What were the views of Mr. Burke in this interference, and what his expectations from the University and the Society of Antiquaries, will best appear from his letter of 15th August, 1783, addressed to General Vallancey. In this he says, "I shall tell you what a judicious antiq-

uary, about twenty years ago, told me concerning the Chronicles in verse or prose, upon which the Irish histories, and the discussions of antiquaries are founded, that he wondered that the learned of Ireland had never printed the originals of these pieces, with literal translations into Latin or English, by which they might become proper subjects of criticism, and by comparison with each other, as well as by an examination of the interior relations of each piece within itself, they might serve to shew, how much ought to be retained, and how much rejected. They might also serve to contrast or confirm the histories which affect to be extracted from them, such as O'Flaherty's and Keating's. All the histories of the middle ages, which have been found in other countries, have been printed. The English have, I think, the best histories of that period. I do not see why the Psalter of Cashel should not be printed, as well as Robert of Gloster. If I were to give my opinion to the Society of Antiquaries, I should propose that they should be printed in two columns, one Irish and the other Latin, like the Saxon Chronicle, which is a very valuable monument, and above all things, that the translation should be exact and literal. It was in the hope that some such thing should be done, that I originally prevailed on Sir John Seabright to let me have his MSS. and that I sent them by Doctor Leland to Dublin. You have infinite merit in the taste you have given of them in several of your collections. But these extracts only increase the curiosity and the just demand of the public for some entire pieces. Until something of this kind is done, that ancient period of Irish history, which precedes official records, cannot be said to stand upon any proper authority. A work of this kind, pursued by the University and the Society of Antiquaries, under your inspection, would do honour to the nation."

Dean Swift, also, (though fond of abusing the Irish) in a letter to the Earl of Oxford, gives much praise to our ancestors for the care with which they preserved the "memory of times and persons" so much greater than is used "in this age of learning, as we are pleased to call it;" and in a letter to the Duke of Chandos, dated 31st August, 1734, he requests that nobleman to restore to Ireland, by presenting to the library of Trinity College, Dublin, then newly erected, a large quantity of her ancient records, on paper and parchment, then in his Grace's possession, that had been formerly collected and carried off from this country by the Earl of Clarendon, during the time of his government here. The Duke, however, did not comply with the Dean's request, and the manuscripts still remain in an English library.

That the ancient Annals of Ireland are of vast importance and value to the Historian, is an opinion not confined to the natives of these islands. Several learned men on the Continent have felt and acknowledged their credibility and utility. The *Journal des Sçavans* for October 1764, has these words: "C'est un principe incontestable, que, sur l'histoire de chaque pays, les annales nationales, quand elles sont anciennes, authentiques, et reconnues pour telles par les etrangers, meritent plus de foi que les annales etrangeres." — "Plusieurs sçavans etrangers, reconnoissent que les Irlandois, ont des annales d'une antiquité très respectable, et d'une authenticité à toute epreuve." The author proceeds to quote upon this point, the authority of Stillingfleet and Innes, "qui ná jamais flatté les Irlandois."

However, neither the Society of Antiquaries nor the University have attempted or encouraged the publication of any of those pieces which Swift, Johnson, Burke, and others, thought of so much importance to literature, and to the credit of Ireland. Indeed very shortly after this period the Society of Antiquaries became extinct. From that institution, however, sprung up the Royal Irish Academy, which, notwithstanding that in the early volumes of its transactions, some little has been done for Irish Antiquities, as well as in the last volume, seems to have directed its principal attention to Science.

This neglect of Irish history and antiquities induced a few individuals, early in the year 1807, to form the Gaelic Society of Dublin. That Body, within a year after their formation, published a volume, containing some observations on the Irish language; Teige M'Daire's

Instructions to a Prince, in the original language and character, accompanied by a literal translation into Latin, and an English translation in verse : and the tragic tale of the Children of Usnach, also in the original language and character, with a strictly literal translation into English.

Besides the volume now mentioned, the Gaelic Society has published nothing, as a Body, but individual Members have published works which furnish the means for a complete elucidation of the History, Laws, Manners, and Customs of the ancient Irish. The Reverend Doctors O'Brien and Neilson, the late Mr. Patrick Lynch, and the late Mr. Haliday, a youth of extraordinary talent and acquirements, members of that Society, have each published a Grammar of the Irish language, and Mr. Edward O'Reilly, who was also one of its members, has lately published an Irish-English Dictionary, consisting of upwards of fifty thousand words, collected from ancient and modern manuscripts, and from printed books.

Subsequent to the formation of the Gaelic Society, an association, under the name of the Archæological Society, was commenced in Dublin, for the same purposes as the former, but its exertions have as yet effected little.

Ungrateful and useless would be the task for us to inquire, why so little effectual has yet been done towards the preservation and elucidation of our national records and antiquities, whilst those of almost every other European nation have been sedulously attended to by their respective people. Yet we cannot but regret the fact, that our ancient Manuscripts, the monuments of our country's fame, still remain on the shelves of libraries, covered with the dust of ages, and disregarded by our natives.

The example of other nations should stimulate us to exertion. The Highland Societies of Edinburgh and London have done a vast deal for their nation. By them, and by their encouragement, several volumes have been published on Gaelic literature and antiquities ; many of them are in the original language of their country, between which and our native tongue there is scarcely any difference, being only a provincial variation. Within a few years past the people of England have reprinted such of their old Chronicles as in any manner tended to throw a light upon the ancient state or history of their country ; and while England and Scotland apply a suitable attention to the antiquities and ancient literature of their respective nations, shall it be said that Ireland alone in the empire, remains without an exertion of her sons to revive her ancient fame, and assert the justness of her claims as the nurse of Science, and the patron of Literature, to whom she afforded an hospitable asylum, when out-cast and alienated from every other nation in Europe !

Prompted by all these considerations, a few Irish Gentlemen have formed themselves into an association, under the name of the Ibero-Celtic Society, for the national objects set forth in their Resolution of the 28th of January, 1818, in these words ;

“ Resolved, That the principal objects of this Society shall be the preservation of the venerable remains of Irish Literature, by collecting, transcribing, illustrating, and publishing the numerous fragments of the Laws, History, Topography, Poetry, and Music of ancient Ireland ; the elucidation of the Language, Antiquities, Manners and Customs of the Irish people ; and the encouragement of Works tending to the advancement of Irish Literature.”

The list of the Members of this Association has lately been enlarged by the addition of some of the most illustrious and learned characters in the country. From such a community much is to be hoped ; and much that impeded the progress of former Societies is happily re-moved from the course of this. No deficiency of members sufficiently skilled in our native language, is here felt ; no want of the free and open means to study and attain a competent knowledge

of it, longer dispirits. There are now published Grammars and a Dictionary, by the aid of which any gentleman may acquire a knowledge of one of the most ancient and most expressive languages in the world.

To the attainment of its end, the intention of the Ibero-Celtic Society is, to publish such works of merit in the Irish language, as are still preserved in ancient manuscripts, deposited in public libraries, or in the hands of individuals. Of these venerable remains of Irish learning many are of great merit, and all deserve to be rescued from oblivion, as they are fully illustrative of the history, genius, manners and customs of the Irish people. Some of these manuscripts are in the hand-writing of their respective authors. Others, the larger part we must admit, are only copies, but they are copies of considerable antiquity, and preserved in the compilations of writers of great celebrity, such as the authors of the *Din Seanchas*, the *Psalter of Cashel*, the *Book of Leinster*, the *Book of Glendalough*, the *Ulster Book*, the *Munster Book*, the *Book of the Eoganachts*, the *Book of Meath*, the *Book of the Conallians*, the *Book of the Oirgiallans*, the *white Book*, the *Book of Leacan*, the *Book of Ballimote*, the *Book of Fermoy*, the *Book of Hua Conghabhala*, the *Book of Mac Partholan*, the *Book of Conquests*, the *Book of Cavan*, &c. &c. &c. and in the *Annals of Tigernach*, of *Senat Mac Magnus*, of *Inisfallen*, of *Boyle*, of *Conaght*, of the *four Masters*, &c. &c. &c. and also in the *Reim Rioghraidhe*, and in the *Registries* of several ancient families, still preserved by their descendants.

That originals of most of our earliest Records should now be lost, may be easily accounted for, when we consider ;

First, That, immediately after the Introduction of Christianity, most of the then existing books were burned, in order to destroy the vestiges of Pagan superstition contained in them. Several, however, were completely copied into the *Psalter of Tara*, and from it into the *Psalters* or *Registries* of the principal churches and religious houses in Ireland.

Secondly, That the Danish and Norwegian invaders, who infested and obtained a temporary power over our country in the ninth and tenth centuries, committed great devastation on our ancient Records. Barbarous and ignorant themselves, they took delight in the destruction of every thing connected with learning and science.

Thirdly, That ever since the invasion of the island by the Anglo Normans, under Henry the Second, the destruction or loss of the ancient historic monuments of the country has daily increased, partly from the policy of Princes ; partly from the indifference of new settlers to the subjects recorded ; and partly by removal of the natives to other lands.

After the reign of James I. of England, when numbers of the Irish chiefs and clergy were deprived of their ancient inheritance, and obliged to fly for refuge to France, Spain, Germany, and Italy, they carried with them the records of their families and the archives of their churches and religious houses. Hence works, in the hand-writing of their respective authors, are not now numerous in Ireland ; and it is rather a matter of wonder, that so many vestiges of our ancient celebrity still remain, than that there are not more original documents now to be found, in a country which, though acknowledged to have been the sanctuary of science, was subject to the depredations of barbarous invaders for a number of centuries.

But though many of the originals of our ancient books are dispersed through the libraries of other nations, we have still some amongst ourselves, besides numerous authentic copies, of great antiquity, treating of History, Law, Topography, Poetry, Music, Astronomy, Medicine, &c. of which the most common are those on History and Medicine.

The copies of our ancient Laws now extant are not numerous, though we are told by Archbishop Usher, that in his days the Irish had large volumes of their Laws in their own language ; and so late as the beginning of the last century, copies of them were common in Ireland, as we are assured by Thady O'Rody, an excellent scholar, who, in the year 1699, shewed several volumes of those Laws to Sir Richard Cox, who had entertained an opinion that our law was arbitrary, and not fixed or written. However, though our Law-books are not now so numerous as formerly, enough still remains to show the manners and customs not only of the Irish people, but also much of those of the other Celtic nations : for Ireland never came within the pale of the Roman empire, nor was she ever subjugated by any of the hordes by whom that empire was overturned ; she was not even invaded by any foreign nation for several ages before Christianity, nor until the ninth and tenth centuries, when, in common with France, England, and other countries, she was exposed to the predatory incursions of the Danes and Norwegians. But although these barbarians were able to establish themselves in other countries, and to make some considerable settlements on the coast of our own, their power here was neither of extent nor permanency sufficient to produce any material change in the manners of the people, or the laws of the country. The invasion of Ireland by Henry II of England, and the partial dominion exercised over the island by his successors, had scarcely any influence on the people, or produced any change in the laws, until the reign of James I. The Irish chiefs, therefore, succeeded to their principalities, and governed their tribes according to the ancient laws enacted by their ancestors, in the early period of their monarchy ; and many of the Anglo-Normans who had obtained settlements amongst them, adopted the laws and manners of the inhabitants. Hence Ireland might furnish, what perhaps no other European nation is able to afford, a complete view of ancient Celtic legislation.

To ascertain the period at which each of our laws was enacted, is, perhaps, at the present moment impossible : both the language and the subject matter of these prove their great antiquity. Many of them were undoubtedly composed before the introduction of Christianity, and others immediately after, and certainly before the Danish invasion. That they were intended for the government of the entire kingdom, and not confined to particular districts, as is supposed by some ingenious writers, may be proved from the Law-books of the different Breithimhs, or Judges, still existing. Those written or preserved by the M'Clancys of Thomond, the O'Breslin's of Fermanagh, the O'Doran's of Leinster, and the M'Egans, who were the hereditary Judges of the O'Brien's of Ormond, the O'Reilly's of Breifne, and several other tribes, are in substance the same, and scarcely differ in any thing, except in the words of their respective glosses.

Having shewn the ends for which the Ibero-Celtic Society is associated, and the utility of laying before the Public some of the most valuable of our ancient Manuscripts, we proceed to exhibit a chronological account of Irish writers, and a descriptive catalogue of their works ; which shall be followed by another catalogue of works whose authors are not now known, but which are of equal value and importance to the Celtic scholar with those whose writers we are able to ascertain. From these works the Society, if encouraged by the Public, propose to publish a Selection of Annals, Laws, Poetry, &c. in the original Language, either accompanied by literal Translations or not, as their means may in future enable them to determine.

In the following account, the Libraries in which each book, tract, or poem is to be found, are pointed out ; and the Society earnestly requests that any Gentleman having copies of these, or of any other pieces not here mentioned, will communicate the same to the Secretary, that the Celtic scholar may know where those Works may be consulted.

Transactions ... for 1820, containing a chronological account of ... Irish writers, commencing with the earliest account of Irish history and carried down to the year 1750; with a descriptive catalogue of such of their works as are still extant in verse or prose (1820)

A
Chronological Account
OF
Irish Writers
AND
Descriptive Catalogue of such of their Works as are still extant
IN
VERSE OR PROSE.
By *EDWARD O'REILLY*.
Chronological account,
ANNO MUNDI 2935.

AMERGIN, son of Golamh, surnamed *Mile Spainneach*, (the Spanish hero,) was brother to Heber, Heremon, and Ir, from whom the Milesian families of Ireland are descended. He accompanied his brothers, and the other Gathelian chiefs, in their emigration from Spain to Ireland, and was the poet of the colony. In the *Leabhar Gabhaltus*, or Book of Conquests, compiled in the fourteenth century, from much more ancient books, and in the book of the same name, composed by the O'Clerys, who were employed in the compilation of THE ANNALS OF THE FOUR MASTERS, at the commencement of the seventeenth century, are preserved three poems, said to be written by Amergin ; the first of these, consisting of only two *ranns*, or eight verses, begins "*Fir torachta tr;nidhe*" and contains the decision of Amergin upon the proposal of the *Tuatha-de-Danan*, that the Milesians should retire from the shores of Ireland ; the second consists of twenty verses, beginning "*Aliu iath n'Erend*." This is a particular kind of Irish versification, called CONACLON, in which the last word of every verse is the same as the first word in every succeeding verse. The third poem consists of six *ranns*, or twenty-four verses, beginning "*Aim goeth mr, s,*" said to have been composed by Amergin, upon his landing at Inver Colpa, near Drogheda.

Amongst the Seabright collection of Irish manuscripts, in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, class H. 54, folio 53, is preserved a small tract on the qualifications of a Bard, beginning "*Aocoire coir goirlath gor ronir dia dam a dr;lib demrib*." In the third line the author informs his readers, that he is "*Amergin Glungel, of hoary head and gray beard*." — "*Os me Amargen glrngel, gair glas, greliath*."

These compositions are written in the Bearla Feini, and accompanied with an interlined gloss, without which they would be unintelligible to modern Irish scholars. The gloss itself requires much study to understand it perfectly, as the language is obsolete, and must in many places be read from bottom to top.

That these poems were really the productions of Amergin, may be very reasonably doubted. Tarah, the chief residence of our ancient monarchs, is particularly mentioned in the second poem ; and therefore, unless we suppose this author to have possessed the spirit of prophecy,

as well as the inspirations of poetry, it could not have been written by him ; as our ancient historians, agree that the palace of Tarah was not erected, nor the name imposed on the hill on which it was built, until after the establishment of the Milesian dynasty. They are, however, of the highest antiquity, and their language and peculiar versification, independent of any other merits they may possess, claims for them the attention of the antiquary, and entitles them to preservation.

II. Contemporary with Amergin, was LUGHaidh, son of Ith, and nephew of Golamh, or Milesius.

In the books of Conquests or Invasions, already mentioned, is preserved a poem, said to be composed extempore by Lughaidh, upon the death of his wife *Fail*, the daughter of Milesius. This poem begins “ *Sr, dhem sund for san tracht,* ” “ *Here we sat on the beach* ” and is given entire at the word *Ainbtheacht*, in O’Reilly’s Irish-English Dictionary lately published. The language of this poem does not appear to be so old as those attributed to Amergin, but it is undoubtedly of very great antiquity. It is valuable as it shows in a strong light an amiable picture of female modesty, and proves how highly that virtue was estimated by the ancient Irish.

A. M. 3236.

III. OLLAMH FODHLA, monarch and lawgiver of Ireland, established the *Feis* of Tarah, or triennial assembly of the states of Ireland, as is asserted by *Feirceirtne file*, a famous poet, who flourished about the time of our Saviour’s incarnation. The laws promulgated by this prince, are quoted in Cormac’s Glossary, written into the ninth century ; but we are not able to say where copies of them are now to be found ; perhaps some fragments of them may still exist in the large collections of Irish laws preserved in the library of Trinity College.

A. M. 3596.

IV. CIMBAETH, monarch of Ireland, wrote some laws, fragments of which are to be found in ancient vellum MSS. in the library of Trinity College, Dublin. Class H, 53 and 54.

A. M, 3619.

V. ROIGNE Rosgadhach (Royné the Poetic) son of Ugoine mór, flourished in the time that his brother MAL was monarch of Ireland.

In the book of Invasions we find a poem ascribed to this author, giving an account of the peregrinations of the Gathelians, and the names of their chiefs, from their departure from Egypt, until their arrival in Spain, and afterwards in Ireland ; with an account of the partition of that country amongst the sons of Milesius. The poem begins “ *A mec ain Ugaine.* ” “ *Oh praise-worthy son of Hugony,* ” and contains an answer to some enquiries made by his brother *Mal*, upon the origin of the Irish people.

If every other proof of the antiquity of this piece were wanting, the language alone would be sufficient to evince its early composition. In fact, it would be nearly unintelligible to Irish readers of the present day, if it were not for the interlined *gloss* that accompanies the text, and even the Gloss is so obsolete, that none but those who have made Irish MSS. a particular study, are able to interpret it. Some laws, said to be written by this prince, are still to be found in some of our old books. A copy of the poem is in the collection of manuscripts in possession of the Assistant Secretary to this Society.

A. M. 3900.

VI. EOCHADH, son of Luchtua, King of Munster, flourished at this time, and wrote some laws, fragments only of which are now to be found.

A. M. 3902.

VII. SEAN, son of Agaidh, flourished at this time. He wrote a code of laws called *Fonn Seanchas mor*. A complete copy of a law tract bearing this title is to be found in the Seabright collection of Irish MSS. in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, H. 53, pag. 13. and another in H. 54. pag. 358.

A. M. 3940.

VIII. CONGAL, son and poet to Eochaidh Feidhlioch, Monarch of Ireland, flourished at this period. He wrote some laws quoted in our Fenian Institutes, and a poem of thirty-four verses, beginning “*Eol damh aighidh Erca gnimh*” upon the deaths of the seven MAINES, celebrated in the historic tale of *Tain bo Cuailgne*. Copies of this poem are to be found in the collections of different Members of the *Iberno-Celtic* Society. One copy, written on vellum, A. D. 1430, by Adam O’Cianan, a famous scribe, is in possession of the Assistant Secretary.

A. M. 3950.

IX. ADHNA, chief Poet of Ireland, flourished in the early part of the reign of Conor Mac Nessa over the province of Ulster. Some fragments of laws, said to be the joint production of him and others, are still in existence in the library of Trinity College, Dublin.— He was the father of NEIDE, who maintained the celebrated contest with Ferceirtne the poet, for the Ollamh’s (Professors) Chair of Ireland.

X. At the same time with Adhna, flourished ATHAIRNE, of Binn Edair, (Howth) who, under the general proscription of the poets, in the reign of the monarch Conaire the first, fled with the rest of the bards of Ireland into Ulster, where they received shelter and protection from Conor Mac Nessa, king of that province, and the Mæcenas of Ireland. Here Athairne, Forchern, Ferceirtne and Neide, compiled a code of laws, which, in common with the institutes of other *Reachtaires*, (lawgivers,) are called by the general name of *Breithe Neimhidh*, or laws of the nobles, improperly translated by O’Flaherty, O’Connor, and others, “*Celestial Judgments.*”

XI. At this time also flourished FORCHERN, the poet, who, O’Flaherty, the venerable Charles O’Connor, Columbanus, and others, say wrote the *Uraicepht na n Eigeas*, or primer of the learned. But this cannot be true, unless we suppose that Forchern and Ferceirtne are the same person. For in the account prefixed to the oldest copies (and indeed to all the copies that we have seen) of this work, it is ascribed to Ferceirtne ; thus “*Libor Fercértne sunda. locc dó, Eman Macha ; áimsir Conchobhair mic Nessa, Persa dó Feircértne file ; atucr,d, dan, do breith aeso fain for fes,*” “*the Book of Ferceirtne here. Its place, Emania of Macha, (now Ardmagh) ; its time, the time of Conor, son of Nessa; it person Ferceirtne the poet ; its being done, moreover, to bring ignorant people to knowledge.*”

XII. FERCEIRTNE, *file*, (the poet,) upon the death of Adhna, the chief Bard of Ireland, was appointed to the vacant professor’s chair by Ollioll and Meidhbhe, king and queen of Conaght. We have seen above, that he was the author of the *Uraicept*, or *Uraicecht*.

In the Seabright Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, class H. 54. fol. 49. is preserved Ferceirtne's eulogium of Curaidh, son of Daire, or "*Amra Conroi*," beginning "*Ni hada domanmr,n*," and in the same book, at folio 152, is a law tract, attributed to the same author.

In the Book of Invasions, contained in the Book of Leacan, and in the Book of Invasions compiled by the O'Clerys, in possession of the Assistant Secretary, is preserved a poem, consisting of thirty-two verses, written by this author. It begins "*Ollamh Fodhla feochair gal*" "Ollamh learned, a fighter valiant," and accounts for the establishment of the Feis of Tarah, the erection of the *Muir Ollamhain*, or College of Professors, by Ollamh Fodhla, and gives the names of six monarchs of his race, who succeeded him without the intervention of a prince of any other family ; a thing very uncommon in those days. It also accounts for the origin of the names of Munster, Leinster, Ulster, &c. There is a copy of the Uraicept (or Uraicecht, as some copies have it) in the Book of Ballymote, in the library of the Royal Irish Academy, written about the year 1390 ; another in the library of Trinity College ; a third, in a large and very valuable vellum book, the property of Sir William Betham ; and a fourth in the collection of MSS. belonging to the Assistant Secretary of this Society.

XIII, NEIDE, the son of Adhna, though younger than Ferceirtne, Forchern and Athairne, was their contemporary. He was in *Alba* (Scotland) at the time of his father's death, and hearing of that event, and that Ferceirtne had been appointed to the Ollamh's chair, he determined upon returning to his native country, and asserting his right to the professorship. Upon his arrival in Ireland, he instantly proceeded to Emania, and, Ferceirtne being absent, seized on the *Tuidhean* or Ollamh's robe, and took possession of the chair. Ferceirtne, hearing of this incident, instantly returned to Emania, and meeting with Neide, a dispute for the professorship was carried on between the rival bards, upon the qualifications necessary for an Ollamh. This dispute is handed down to us, under the title of "*Agallamh an da shraidh*," "Dialogue of the two Sages." Two very ancient copies of this tract are in the Library of Trinity College, and a correct transcript on paper is in the collection of John Mac Namara, of Sandymount, Esq. a member of this Society, and another in the collection of the Assistant Secretary.

The language of this tract is the *Bearla Feni*, or Fenian dialect of the Irish, and appears to be of the period to which it is ascribed. The account of the work which precedes it, is mixed with fable, but it is still valuable, and the publication of it would, probably, prove a fact, more to the literary credit of ancient Alba, than all that the Highland Society have been able to produce on the subject of the poems of OISIN, or *Ossian*, as he is called by English writers.

A. M. 3982.

XIV. At this period flourished LUGHAR, the poet of Olioll and Meldhbh, king and queen of Conaught. He wrote a poem of 156 verses on the descendants of Fergus, son of Roigh, beginning "*Cland Fhergusa clann ós cách*," "The family of Fergus, a tribe superior to all." The poet informs us, in the last rann but one of his poem, who he is, and for what purpose he composed his verses. His words are

*"Is me Lughair feile féigh, draoi Meidhbhe is Oilill fhéil
do chum na rainsi co bechd, d'fhr,l Roigh a ccruachain Connacht."*

"I am Lughar, an acute poet, Druid of Meidhbh and generous Olioll ; I made these *ranns* correctly, for the blood of Roigh in Crochan Conacht."

A copy of this poem is in possession of the Assistant Secretary.

A. D. 90.

XV. MORAN, Chief Judge to Feradhach Fionnfachtnach, Monarch of Ireland, wrote some laws which are now only known by quotations from them, in the works of some more modern writers. His testamentary precepts to his King Feradhach, are preserved in very ancient manuscripts. They begin “ *Adrae do comla a mo Nere nuall gnaidh. Nothaidh buaidh ngaire . Ga in tech ar a follmhaigher fasac ; for ber fir finad , branaidh mo bhretha no mo bhriathra re mbas.* ” “ *Arise, proceed, my Nere of noble deeds. Observe this brief address. Short is the way in which the wise are directed. Bear hence these words of truth, let my dying words be perpetuated.* ”

This tract is valuable, as it shews the opinions of the ancient Irish upon the qualifications necessary for a just and good prince. The language is nearly the same as that of the laws, and it may be presumed is really of the period assigned to it.

A fine copy of this tract, accompanied with an interlined gloss, is in the manuscript collection belonging to the Assistant Secretary of this Society.

A. D. 95.

XVI. FERADACH *fionfachtnach*, Monarch of Ireland, promulgated those laws which obtained for him the glorious title *Fionfachtnach, i. e.* Fair and Just.

A. D. 177.

XVII. MODAN, son of Tulban, lived in the reign of Conn of the Hundred Battles. He wrote a book for the unlearned, called *Meill Bretha*, or Just decision.

XVIII. Cotemporary with Modan was CIOTHRUADH the poet. He was the messenger sent by Conn of the Hundred Battles to Mac Neid, with proposals for peace, and upon this occasion composed his poem beginning “ *A mhic deanaidh sith re Mac Neid* ” “ My son, make peace with Mac Neid.” This poem is given in the *Leabhar Muimhneach*, or Munster Book, a copy of which is in the collection of the Assistant Secretary.

A. D. 180.

FINGIN, son of Luchta, lived in the time that Conn of the Hundred Battles governed Ireland. He wrote a poem, beginning “ *buaid Cr,nd rig roid ro gaide,* ” upon the five famous roads, said to be made to Tarah, on the night of Conn’s birth. This poem is given in the *Dinn Seanchas*, in the book of Leacan, folio 239, column 3, as authority for the origin of the name of *Slighe Dala*, or Dala’s way.

A. D. 200.

XX. OLIOLL OLUM, king of Munster, was son-in-law of Conn of the Hundred Battles. He died, according to the “ Four Masters,” in the year 234. But the annals of Inisfallen represent him as living in the year 254. O’Flaherty differs from both these authorities, and says he died A. D. 237. It is said he was the author of some poems, and particularly one beginning “ *A macáin na na ci cia so,* ” is ascribed to him. It is addressed to his grandson Fiach, whose father and five other sons of Olioll were killed at the battle of Mucruimhe, A. D. 195. But although this composition is certainly ancient, there are some allusions in it that would lead one to think it was not the work of a Pagan author. The poem beginning “ *Beir mo sciath,* ” is also attributed to this prince.

About the same period in which Olioll lived, flourished FACHTNA, son of Sencha, a compiler of laws, sometimes referred to by later writers upon that subject.

A. D. 250.

CORMAC, son of Art, monarch of Ireland, lived at this period. He caused the Psalter of Tarah to be compiled, as the depository of the records of the nation. This was long considered as lost, but is now said, perhaps not truly, to be extant in the British Museum. He wrote some laws, an imperfect copy of which is to be found in the Seabright collection in the library of Trinity College. One tract, beginning "*Cis lir fogla etgidh,*" treats of the privileges and punishments of different ranks of persons, and draws a line of distinction between undesigned injuries, such as those suffered by unavoidable accident, and those happening by neglect. The commentator on this law, makes some observations on the number *four*, and assigns reasons why that number should be preferred to others. Cormac also wrote instructions for his son Cairbre Liffeachar, who succeeded him on the throne of Ireland. These instructions are called *Teagarg rioghdha*, or royal precepts. A copy of the precepts of Cormac is preserved in the book of Leacan, another in an ancient and very valuable vellum M.S. the property of Sir William Betham, another copy or two may be found in the library of Trinity College, and others in the collections of different members of the Ibero-Celtic Society. The copy belonging to the Assistant Secretary begins "*A ra crnd, Corbmaic, ol Cairbre, cid is deach do Ri ? Nin. Ol Cormac. Is dech do ainmne cin debaidh ; fordadh cin ferg ; ro-agallama cen mordacht ; deithide senchusa ; frithfolá fina ; fir confr,lliódh ; trocaire candlutaighed ; rith do thuatthaib ; ratha ecsamhla ; bretha fira ; geill inglasaidh ; sloghaibh fria dethbhère ; troscadh for coigcrioacib ; moradh gach neimhe ; airmaid file ; adhradh De*" &c. "*O descendant of Conn ! O Cormac, said Cairbre, what is good for a king? That is plain, said Cormac. It is good for him to have patience without debate ; firmness without anger ; easy address with-out haughtiness ; attention to the precepts of the elders, (laws); just covenants and agreements to strictly observe ; mercy in the execution of the laws ; peace with his districts ; boundless in rewards ; just in decisions ; observant of his promises ; hosting with justice ; protecting his boundaries ; honoring each noble ; respecting the poets ; adoring the great God,*" &c. This tract, occupying six folio pages, closely written, is carried on by way of dialogue between Cairbre and Cormac, in which the former asks the opinion of the latter upon different subjects, relative to government and general conduct, and Cormac, in his replies, gives precepts that would do honor to a Christian divine.

It may not, perhaps, be improper to observe that Cormac was the father-in-law of the famous FIONN MAC CUBHAIL, General of the *Fianna Eirionn*, and father of Oisín the poet ; and, consequently, if the genuine poems of Oisín were extant, their language would be the same as that of Cormac's works, which are nearly unintelligible to the generality of Irish readers, and completely so to the vulgar. The language of those poems which the Highland Society have given to the world as the originals of Oisín, is the living language of the Highlanders of the present day, and if properly spelled and read by an Irish scholar, would be intelligible to the most illiterate peasant in Ireland. A comparison of the languages of Cormac and the *Scotch* Oisín, might probably go far towards ascertaining the period in which the Highland Bard was born.

XXIII. FITHIL, Chief Judge to Cormac, wrote some laws, fragments of which are to be found in the old vellum MSS. in the library of Trinity College.

A. D. 270.

XXIV. FERGUS *finbel*, son of Fionn Mac Cubhail, and brother of Oisín, flourished at this period ; he wrote a poem, beginning "*Tibra sengarmna fosnas,*" which is given in full in the *Dinn Senchas*, as authority for the account there given of the origin of the name of the fountain of *Sengarmna*. See *Dinn Seanchas* under the year 550, preserved in the book of Leacan. and in a valuable vellum manuscript in the library of Sir William Betham, and in the collection of the Assistant Secretary.

A. D. 280.

XXV. FLAITHRI, son of Fithil, wrote a poem, beginning “ *Mian Corbmaic tighe teamhra,*” “ The desire of Cormac, of the house of Tarah,” upon the qualifications required by Cormac in different persons and things. Copies of this poem are common ; a very ancient copy is in the collection of the Assistant Secretary.

A. D. 283.

FIONN Mac Cubhail was killed this year, at Ath Breagh on the Boyne, not far from Tarah. He is said to have assisted in the formation of some laws, in the time of Cormac Mac Art, There are some prophecies ascribed to him, which are undoubtedly the forgeries of some Christian writer.

In the Dinn Seanchas contained in the book of Leacan, folio 231, col 4, is given, as authority for the name of Dun Fornoct, a poem, attributed to Fionn. This poem consists of twenty-eight verses, beginning “ *Fornoct do dún a Druim Dean,*” “ *Fornoct to the fort of Druim Dean.*”

A. D. 284.

XXVII. OISIN, the son of Fionn Mac Cubhail, so much celebrated for his poetic genius, survived the battle of *Gabhra Aichle* near Tarah, fought this year, in which his son Oscar and the principal part of the Fenian heroes lost their lives. Many beautiful poems are extant that bear the name of Oisín, but there are no good reasons to suppose that they are the genuine compositions of that bard. If ever they were composed by Oisín, they have since suffered a wonderful change in their language, and have been interpolated, so as to make the poet and Saint Patrick cotemporaries, though the latter did not commence his apostolic labours in Ireland until the middle of the fifth century, when, by the course of nature, Oisín must have lain in his grave about one hundred and fifty years. There is a prophecy attributed to Oisín, preserved in an ancient vellum MS. the property of William Monck Mason, Esq. a member of this Society ; but the first line of the poem being addressed to Oisín himself, shows it to be a forgery. The poem begins “ *A Oisín, anraidh rin,*” “ *O Oisín, melodious poet.*”

Transactions ... for 1820, containing a chronological account of ... Irish writers, commencing with the earliest account of Irish history and carried down to the year 1750 ; with a descriptive catalogue of such of their works as are still extant in verse or prose (1820)

Author : Ibero-Celtic Society ; O'Reilly, Edward
Subject : Irish literature ; Manuscripts, Irish
Publisher : Dublin
Language : English
Digitizing sponsor: Internet Archive
Book contributor: University of California Libraries
Collection: americana; cdl

Source : Internet Archive
<http://www.archive.org/details/transactionsfor00iber>

Edited and uploaded to www.aughty.org
April 26 2010