

An Inquiry
Concerning
The Primitive Inhabitants
of
Ireland.

By Thomas Wood, M. D.

Author of the Prize Essay, published in the thirteenth volume of the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy :—“ On the mixture of Fable and Fact in the early annals of Ireland ; and on the best mode of ascertaining what degree of credit these ancient documents are justly entitled to.”

“ All nations seem willing to derive merit from the splendour of their original, and where History is silent, they generally supply the defect with fable.” — Goldsmith.

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Irish History, considered merely as a compilation from the accounts of bards, is not deserving of sober investigation. Its absurdity is too glaring for criticism, and would not merit examination, were it not for the basis of the fabulous superstructure being in a great measure true, and for the importance which some learned authors have attached to fiction.

It appears to have been the work of different hands : it is full of anachronisms, and is in other respects confused. The epic poems, from which the history is compiled, chiefly comprise a relation of those unnatural wars, which, it is said, originated in a very trifling cause and were waged, not only between two reputed brothers, soon after their supposed arrival in Eirin, but between the posterity of each, during many successive centuries, although this island was, long before the arrival of their families, planted with tribes naturally jealous of encroachment.

In the endeavour to develop truth, amidst the mazes of fable, the deceptive play on names, and the errors of conjecture, I found it necessary to expose those manifest fictions which, for ages, have usurped its place, disguised and distorted it.

I have the honor to be,
With all due respect,
Your most humble,
Obedient and obliged Servant,

THOMAS WOOD.

August 15, 1821.

Tuatha De or Damni [1]

This tribe is of the family of Iobaath, son of Beothuidh, son of Iarbhaineol faidh,—the prophet, son of Neimeadh—Poetry. They sojourned in Bœotia according to some, while others assert that they dwelt in Attica, about Athens. Here they learned the art of necromancy and enchantment. ‘ By their extraordinary witchcraft they used to infuse demons into the dead bodies of their armies to put them in motion ; when the Syrians, however, perceived that they were the corpses of those whom they had previously slain on the field of battle that fought against them, the next day, they entered into council with their own priests, who advised them to drive a stake of mountain-ash through the corpse of every one of those who used to revive against them ; and added, that if they were quickened by demons, they would be instantly converted into worms ; but that if they were really revived, the bodies would not admit of instant corruption.’ [2] This experiment prevented resuscitation. The Syrians obtained a victory in consequence, and the Tuatha De Danann having fled and quitted the country, arrived in the land of Lochlann, where their skill in magic procured them a favorable reception. Here they occupied four cities, and instructed youth. They afterward arrived in the north of Scotland where they remained seven years in Dobhar and Iardhobhar. ‘ They possessed four articles of high value, of which one was the stone of destiny, which used to roar under each king of Ireland upon his election.’ [3] And it is now ‘ under the throne on which the king of England is usually crowned, having been forcibly taken from the abbey of Scone in Scotland, by Edward the first. [4]

‘ After the Tuatha De Danánn had continued seven years in Scotland they removed into Ireland, and landed on Monday the first of May, in the north of Ireland, and immediately set fire to their shipping.’ ‘ After that they formed a magical mist about themselves for three days ; so that they marched unperceived by the Fir Bolg, until they reached Sliabh an iaruinn, [5] whence they sent ambassadors to Eochadh and to the nobility of the Fir Bolg, to demand the sovereignty of Ireland from them, or to try the fate of a battle.’ The old translation informs us that this monarch, having accepted the challenge, lost from ten to one hundred thousand men, in consequence of their enchantment. They afterwards defeated the African pirates.[6]

Some antiquaries are of opinion that the Tuatha De Danánn called themselves after three sons of Danánn, who were famous sorcerers. Others assert that both the mother and sons were worshiped as deities. Some think the name defined from their skill in poetry, *dan* signifying an *art*, and likewise a poem or song ; and the word *Tuath*, which literally means the north, is equivalent with lords or commanders.[7]

Among the different kings which are noticed by Keating [8] mention is made of three sons of Chearmada mil-bheoil [9]—the honey-mouthed son of a man, son of Daghdha [10]—the good, who were called after idols or gods which they worshipped. [11] According to the psalter of Cashel, the Tuatha De Danánn held the sovereignty of Ireland, in all, one hundred and ninety-seven years. [12]

The Origin of the Milisians

(Mac Mileadh—literally, the son of a soldier.)

Deduced from the CINNEADH SCUIT, the Scythian race, and FINE GAOIDHIL
— FINE GAILL, the Gallic Family. [13]

Moses gives no account of the sons of Magog, the great ancestor of the Scythians. Those

are supplied by the book of invasions and ‘ particularly by that choice volume called the Leabhar dhroma sneachta or, the snow-backed book, which was written before St. Patrick arrived in Ireland. According to this MS. it seems Magog had three sons whose names, were Báath, [14] Ibáath, [15] and Fathachta. [16] Fenius Farsuidh [17]—the true family of the Muse, king of Scythia, and ancestor of the Gaodhal or Gadelian race, was descended, from the first of those sons. ‘ From the second sprang the Amazons, Bactrians and Parthians ; and from the last came Partholan—Bartholomew, who first settled in Ireland after the deluge, as well as Neimheadh—Poetry son of Aghnamhain—Song ; and consequently the FirBolg—Belgæ and Tuatha De Danánn [18]—Damni. Of the race of this Fathachta too came the great Attila, who subjected Pannonia to his sway, continued long to harass the Roman power, laid waste and depopulated Aquileia, &c. [19] ‘ From Scythia, too, descended of the line of Magog, was Zeliordes king of the Huns, who. made war upon the emperor Justinian, &c. [20] Josephus affirms, that Magogia is the name by which the Greeks denominated Scythia.’ The Gadelians, or descendants of Gaodhal glas [21]—Gaill, may with the same right be called Scythians or Scuiti [22] from Scythia, as the old English are called Goill from Gaul or France, whence. they came.—‘For this reason it is that the descendants of Fathachta, son of Magog, viz. Partholan, son of Seara, with his people, Neimheadh— Poetry, son of Aghnamhuin—Song, from whom the Nevians are denominated, the Fir Bolg and the Tuatha De Danánn are called the Greeks of Scythia, because they were originally from that country. In my opinion too, the reason why the descendants of *Gaodhal* son of Niul, [23] son of Fenius Farsuidh, are particularly called Scots, is because it was this Fenius Farsuidh and his posterity that obtained the sovereignty of

Scythia ; and that Niul the younger son of Fenius came in for no division of territory, like the brothers of Fenius, who got possession of countries, whence they and their descendants were particularly denominated ; on that account Niul enjoined his posterity to designate themselves from Scythia, by perpetually calling themselves Scots—Scuit ; whereas they had possession of no territory, and Niul had no other property left him by his father, but the benefit of the sciences and various languages ; leaving the undivided sovereignty of Sythia to his eldest son Nenual.’ [24]

‘ Some Latin writers assert that Gaodhal was son of Argus or Cecrops, who was king of the Argives ; but that cannot be the fact, because,—that line terminated about six hundred and sixty-seven years after the deluge ; whereas—Hector Boetius, and all the books of conquests of Ireland, affirm that the Gaoidhil were in Egypt at the time that Moses ruled the children of Israel there. Moreover, the books of invasions inform us, that about this time Scota, daughter of Pharaoh Cingris, bore Gaodhal to Niul, son of Feniusa Farsuidh, son of Báath, son of Magog. The time that Moses began to govern the Israelites in Egypt was about seven hundred and ninety-seven years after the flood ; and according to that computation there was about three hundred and forty-five years from the time of Argus, or Cecrops, till Gaodhal was born ; so that it is impossible for Gaodhal to be a son of Argus or Cecrops [25] Some assert that Scythia, according to Gaillic etymology, signifies ‘ *the land of thorns.*’ [26]

The old translation of Keating’s history informs us, that Niul, the second son of Fenius was sent abroad ‘ to improve himself in the seventy-two learned languages.’ [27] This, in the late translation, is thus altered : —‘Fenius, however, being determined, as we mentioned, to become skilled in the various languages, despatched at his own expense seventy-two persons of learning to the several countries of the three parts of the world, at that time inhabited, and commanded them to remain abroad for seven years, that each of them might learn the language of the country in which they were to reside.’ [28]— Upon their return, Fenius, sixty years after the building of the tower of Babel, or, according to others, two hundred and forty-two years after the flood, set out with them to the plain of Shenaar, near the city of Athens, bringing with him a great number of the Scythian youth. Fenius, having spent twenty years here, returned to Scythia and established seminaries of learning there and appointed Gaodhal,

son of Eathoir [29]—a Ship, as president over them. ‘ Fenius then commanded Gaodhal to regulate and digest the Gaoidhealg—Gailic, or Irish language into five dialects, as it now is, viz.—the béarla na Feine [30]— the Fenian or the Finnish language ; bearla na ffileadh— poetic or bardic ; bearla eadarscartha—the historic ; bearla Teibhidhe—that of physicians ; and, the gnath-bhearla—the common dialect ; and to name them generally from himself : so that it is from Gaodhal, son of Eathoir, that it is called Gaoidhealg, and not from Gaodhal glas, as others imagine. [31]

Gaodhal is variously defined ; Buchanan derives it from *gaothin*, noble, and *al*, all ; i.e. the illustrious or all noble : others from the Hebrew *gadol*, great, on account of his great learning : some from *gaoith-dil* which signify a lover of learning. [32]

Pharaoh Cingcris, king of Egypt, having heard of Niul’s great learning, invited him to instruct the youth of that country. Niul accepted the invitation, and the king bestowed upon him the lands called Capaciront or Campus Cirit, near the red sea, and gave him in marriage his own daughter Scota. [33] Scota bore him a son, who was called *Gaodhal*. [34] It may appear strange, perhaps, to some that Niul, who was the fifth descendant from Japhet, should be cotemporary with Moses, since it was the space of seven hundred and ninety-seven years from the deluge to the time that Moses took upon him the command of the children of Israel. But I answer that it is not incredible that Niul might have lived some hundred years, for in those ages men lived a long time. [35] During the time that Niul resided at Capaciront, the children of Israel escaped from Pharaoh and came to the red sea, where they encamped near Niul’s residence. Niul went to inform himself who they were. Aaron met him outside the camp, and gave him an account of the children of Israel and of Moses, &c. Mean time Niul and Arron formed a mutual friendship ; Niul told him that his corn and other provisions were entirely at his service. This offer of Niul was communicated by Aaron to Moses who prophesied that wheresoever any of the posterity of this youth should inhabit, no venomous creature would have any power. That same night a serpent by Niul’s son, Gaodhal ; but the wound was immediately healed by the application of the rod of Moses. who prophesied that wheresoever any of the posterity of this youth should inhabit, no venomous creature would have any power. This is fulfilled in Crete and in Ireland.—‘ Some historians assert that Moses locked the bracelet he had on his arm to the neck of Gaodhal, hence the epithet *glas*. Others derive it from the green colour of his armour. And from this Gaodhal or Gaodhal-glas all the Gaodhil are denominated. [36] Niul informed Moses that Pharaoh’s resentment would be directed against him for his favourable reception of him. Then Moses said, come with us, and if we reach the country which God hath prophesied for us, thou shalt get a share of it ; or, if you choose we will give you Pharaoh’s fleet—and set out to sea in it. Niul took this determination. A thousand armed men were then sent to the shipping, and they were delivered into his power. He went on board, and the next day he saw the opening of the sea before Moses &c. and its closure upon Pharaoh and his host, by which they were drowned. They amounted to sixty thousand foot and fifty thousand horse, as Eachtguis O’Cuanain archdeacon of Roscrea—Ros-Cré, asserts in a poem which begins thus :

“ Whoever thou art that believe not truth,”

Pharaoh Intur, the successor of Pharaoh Cingcris remembered the old grudge to the descendants of Niul, i.e. the friendship they formed with the children of Israel. They then made, violent war on the Gaodhil, who were thereby banished out of Egypt. Thomas Walsingham agrees with this in the book called *Hypodeigma* ; but Walsingham is not to be wholly credited, for it was not to Spain ‘ that a certain chieftain of the Scythian nation went, but to Scythia ; and Hector Boetius also errs in asserting that this chieftain was Gaodhal : no, it was Eibhear Scot, the great grandson of Gaodhal who went to Scythia,—and it was the sixteenth generation from him named Bratha, son of Deaghatha, that first reached Spain. [37] This ac-

count is proved from Giolla Caombain, an antiquary. Eibhear's father *Sru* was the leader of the expedition from Egypt till they reached the isle of Crete where he died.' His son Eibhear Scot took the command of the people, amounting, according to Giolla Caomhain, to twenty-four men, [38] with their wives, until they reached Scythia ; and, wherefore, a certain author asserts, it was from his appropriate nickname, i. e. *Scot*, that the Gaodhil are called the Scotie race, or the tribe or family of Scot. ' According, indeed, to a certain author, *Scot* signifies the same as *Archer*—for in this time there was not a bowman superior to him ; and from the nickname given him, the appellation attached to his posterity.' Keating however, disapproves of this opinion, ' because it is the general conception of, antiquaries that the reason for calling the Gadelian race the *Scotic race*, is, that they came originally from Scythia.' [39]

When they reached Scythia, a war broke out between them and their relations, the descendants of Niul. This warfare continued for seven years, until *Agnon* son of Tait, the fifth generation from Eibhear Scot downwards, happily killed his relative Refloir, of the race of Nenual—Noble Champion, who was then king of Scythia. The posterity of Gaodhal, however, were afraid of the collected forces of the sons of Refloir, and they consequently left the country in a body, passing the territory of the Seared Breasts or Amazons and arriving on the borders of the Caspian sea, took shipping and landed in an island of the Caspian where they remained a year. Their leaders on this expedition were Agnon and Eibhear, the great-great-grand-children of Eibhear Scot, who led them into Scythia. Agnon died in this island, but left three sons. Eibhear had two sons, Caichear and Cing.' [40] 'At the end of a year they left the island, the crews of three ships, and sixty persons in each ship, and every third man had a wife. [41] They were driven into an island called Caronia, in the Pontic sea, where they resided one year and three months. On emigrating thence, they met Syrens at sea, whose enchanting but fatal music, Caichear, one of their leaders, prevented his people from hearing, by melting wax into their ears. During their voyage ' Caichear prophesied to them that no place was a settlement for them until they would reach Eirin ; mentioning at the same time, that it must not be themselves, but their posterity that should arrive there. They emigrated thence to Gothia ;' where they abode thirty years, and some of them remain there until this day. Some historians assert that they remained there one hundred and fifty years ; others say three hundred years. [42]

Bratha, [43] a distant descendant of Eibhear Scot, emigrated, from ' Gothia, near Crete and Sicily, to Spain, with the crews of four ships ;' and their chiefs or leaders were Oige — Youth, Uige—Knowledge, the two sons of Allod—Antiquity, Mantán and Caichear. [44] There were fourteen married couples and six soldiers in each ship, (one hundred and thirty-six souls) ' and, upon landing, they defeated the race of Tubal, son of Japhet, who then inhabited the country, in three successive battles. [45] However, a sudden plague seized the sons of Allod, so that they all died except ten. They grew up after, and Breoghan, son of Bratha was born. This Breoghan was he who defeated the armies of Spain in many battles, raised or built Brigantia near Corunna, and Breogan's tower in Corunna itself. [46] This Breoghan had ten sons, [47] of whom one was called *Bi-le*. The son of this Bile was Galamh—Feats of Arms, a champion usually named Milesius of Spain, from Mileadh— a soldier. The old translation informs us that this Milesius engaged the Spaniards frequently and with success, for ' he almost made a conquest of the whole country, [48] and his Gadelians obtained some of the principal offices in the government. [49]—A fancy seized him to go with a fleet, manned with Spanish youth, to Scythia, to visit his relations : he equips thirty ships.—He sets out on the Mediterranean, and sailed directly N.E. by Sicily and Crete, until he reached Scythia, [50] where he was graciously received by the King, who not only made him commander in chief of the Scythian army, but gave him in marriage his daughter *Seang*—Slender-waisted, who bore him two sons, Donn,— a brown colour, and Aireach Feabhruadh—the hostile bloody conflict. At length the father-in-law became jealous of Milesius' military prowess, and in consequence plotted to put him to death ; but Milesius—the Soldier, apprised of the intention,

contrived to destroy his unnatural relative; Haring effected his death, and his wife having died in Scythia, he put to sea with the crews of sixty ships, and set out straight into the Mediterranean, in which he pursued his course till he arrived at the mouth of the Nile. He sent an embassy to Pharaoh Nectonibus, from whom he received land of inheritance.

‘ There happened at this time a great war between Pharaoh and the king of Ethiopia. Pharaoh made Milesius marshal of his forces, and the latter defeated the Ethiopians in several engagements. Pharaoh, in recompense for his services, gave him his daughter *Scota* in marriage.

‘ She bore him two sons in Egypt, Eibhear fioan and Amhirgin.’ And during his residence there, he got twelve of his young men instructed in the principal arts of Egypt.—‘ Milesius at length reflected that Caichear, the priest, had long before prophesied to his ancestor Laimh fionn—Fair hand, that it must be in Ireland his posterity must obtain established sovereignty. [51] He then equipt sixty ships, supplies them with crews and takes his leave of Pharaoh. He landed on an island bordering on Thrace. It is called Irenia, and it is there that *Ir*, [52] son of Milesius, was born. He thence proceeds to an island called Gothia, in the straight leading into the north ocean, [53] and he delayed there some time ; and there it was that *Scota* bore him a son, who was named *Colpa*, [54] the swondsman. They moved thence into the North strait which separates Europe and Asia, and passed on leaving Europe on the left, till they arrived at the land of the Picts, named *Alba*. They spoiled the border of this country, and proceeded after that, leaving Great Britain on the right, till they arrived at the mouth of the river Rhine ; and S.W. with their left to France, and landed in Biscay. On arrival ‘ his relations came to welcome Milead and disclose to him that the Gothi and many other foreigners were harassing the country and all Spain.’ In consequence of this information, ‘ Milesius assembled his own adherents throughout Spain, marched at their head with the forces of the fleet he had led to the country, against the Gothi and foreigners, whom he defeated in fifty-four battles, so as to expel them out of Spain. [55] The old translation of Keating adds : ‘ by this means Milesius and his relations, who were the family of Brogan, [56] the son of Bratha, became masters of almost the whole kingdom of Spain. Milesius had thirty-two sons, of whom *Scota* bore two, Eibhear in Egypt, and Eireamhon [57] in Galicia ; the remainder in other foreign countries.

A scarcity of corn having happened during twenty-six years in Spain, on account of the great drought of the seasons, the family of Breogan reflected upon the numerous conflicts which occurred between them and the Gothi, the prediction of the Druid Caichear ; and, entering into consultation, , they determined upon dispatching *Ith*—Corn, the son of Breogan, in quest of the West isle. Some think ‘ *Ith* discovered the island in a starry winter night, with a telescope, [58] from the top of the tower of Brigantia ; but it appears the inhabitants of both countries were known to each other long before *Ith* was born,’ in consequence of *Eachaidh*, [59] the last king of the Fir Bolg, and son of Erc, having married *Taillte*, daughter of *Magh-mor*—the large plain, king of Spain. ‘ They used then on either side to practise traffic and commerce, and an exchange of their wares and valuables one with another ; so that the Spaniards knew Eirin, and the Irish were acquainted with Spain. [60]

Ith then prepared a ship, and it was manned with one hundred and fifty picked men ; and sailed till they arrived in the north of Ireland, at *Magh Ithe*. [61] As *Ith* landed he sacrificed to Neptune. On this some of the natives came, who conversed him in the Scotie language, i.e. Gaidhealg—Gailic or Irish ; and he answered them in the same tongue, and said that he was descended from *Magog*, as they were themselves, and that the Scotie language was his native tongue.’ ‘ The historians, according to this passage in the Book of Conquests, assert that the Scotie language, called Gaidhealg—Gailic, was the native tongue of *Neimheadh*—Poetry, and his people, and consequently of the Fir Bolg—Belgæ, and also the Tuatha De Danann—*Damni*. For *Gaodhal* son of *Eathaoir*—a Ship, instructed the Scythian youth, in the public

schools, before Neimheadh—Poetry, began his voyage from Scythia to Ireland ; and the Irish tongue was the common language in Scythia, when Neimheadh came thence. Richard Creagh, primate of Ireland, in his book concerning the origin of the Gaelic and the Gaoidhil says, ‘ the gaelic has been constantly used in Ireland since the arrival of Neimheadh, six hundred and thirty years after the flood, until this day.

Ith was informed that the island was called *Inis Ealga*—the noble Island, and governed by three princes, sons of Chearmada mil-bheoil—the honey-mouthed human offspring, who were then quarreling in Ulster about a number of jewels, (wealth in the late translation) which were left them in gavel. Ith marched with one hundred Gadelians to meet them : was courteously received and chosen umpire. On taking leave however he was suspected of a design, to invade the island, and in consequence, Mac Coill—the son of the log or forest, was sent in pursuit with a force of one hundred and fifty men. A desperate battle was fought between them at Magh Ithe—the plain of corn, or at Droimlighear, according to others. Ith died of his wounds upon his return, and Milesius died in Spain. [62]

[1] The arrival of this tribe in Ireland probably preceded that of the Beigæ several centuries ; but the former having been expelled by the Rhobogdli, the bards allude to the time of their second settlement. They were the *Damni*, who occupied in the S. W. part of Scotland, Carrick, Conningham and Renfrevr part of Kyle and part of Clydesdale. Ptolensr calls them Damii or Darini; and the Irish epithet De is supposed by Camden to have been borrowed, from their residence on the river Dee.

[2] Keating, p. 197.

[3] Keating p.199

[4] Keating, p. 201. ,

[5] Literally, the mountain of iron ; situate between Lough Allen and Lough Erne.

[6] Keating, old trans, p. 26, 27.

[7] Keating, late trans, p. 207

[8] p. 213

[9] *Cear*, offspring ; *modh*, a man ; *mil*, honey ; *bhaille*, the mouth.

[10] *Dà, da'gh, deàgh*, the good.

[11] Those were *Cuill*, a log or a forest ; *ceacht*, a ploughshare, and *Grian*, the sun. The bard bestowed this island, under three denominations, in marriage upon each ; Mac Greine, *the son of the sun*, married it under its common name *Eire* ; Mac Ceacht, under one of its poetic denominations, *Fodhla* ; and Mac Coill under another, *Banba*. They are said to have reigned alternatively ; each during one year.—As the bard or poet personified the island, he must surely hare intended to personify its products and the sun, as the source of vegetation. The idea of this island having been wedded to her native woods, to agriculture and the sun, is truly poetic.

[12] Keating's history.

[13] This promiscuous mixture of Gothic and Celtic denominations, which the Bard applied to the Brigantian tribe, evinces that he was ignorant of the history of the Goths and Celts ; and the general name *Mileadh*, a soldier, prove that he knew nothing of the Brigantian leaders in Ireland.

[14] Ba'th, the *sea, death, slaughter*.

[15] Iobadh, *death*.

[16] Fathachta, fo, *a prince, tochdach, silent, quiet*.

[17] Fine, *tribe or family, usa, just or true, fearsa, a verse*.

[18] Keating, p, 217.

[19] Idem.

[20] Idem.

[21] Idem, p. 219.—O'Brien in his Irish English Dictionary (Remarks on the letter A, p. 5,)

Informs us that, ‘ notwithstanding the complex and inform shape of the words *Gaidhil*, *Gaodhil*, *Gaoidhil*, *Gaidhilic*, *Gaoidhilic* into which they have been changed, yet the originals from which they were derived are still preserved in their primitive simplicity, by the very pronunciation of these latter words, which is very nearly the sense as that of the former, inasmuch as the adventitious letters *dh* are not pronounced and serve only to distinguish the syllables : which shows that this was the only purpose they were-first thrown in for. We should not in the mean time forget that it is to this change made in the words *Gaill* and *Galic* doubtless by our heathenish bards, who inserted the letter *d*, that we owe the important discovery necessarily reserved, to their successors who embraced Christianity, of those illustrious personages, *Gadel* and *Gadelus* : the former, an usher under that royal schoolmaster Pheniosa Farsa, king of Scythia, in his famous school on the plain of Sennaar, where this Gadel invented the Irish alphabet and Gadelian language, so called, as it is pretended, from his name ; and the latter a grandson of that king, by his son Niul, married to Scota, daughter of Pharaoh as our bards call him, instead of Cinchres, king of Egypt.’ ‘ And from this Gadelus, our learned Bards gravely assure us that the Irish derive their name of Gadelians, who, they tell us, were also called Scots from his wife, the Egyptian princess Scota. The discovery, I have said was necessarily reserved to our christian bards, as their heathenish predecessors most certainly could have no notion of the plain of Sennair, of Pharaoh or of Moses ; objects not to be known but from the holy Scriptures, or some writings derived from them, such as those of Josephus, Philo, &c never known to the Irish bards before their christianity. I have remarked in another work, not at yet published, that our christian bards did not lose much time in availing themselves of the sacred history to frame this story, in as much as we find it word for word in the scholiast on the life of St. Patrick by Fiachus, bishop of Sleipte, one of that saint’s earliest disciples ; which scholiast, the learned and judicious Colganus, places toward the end of the sixth century. This date is much earlier than that of the MS. called *Leabhar Gabhala*, or the book of conquests, wherein our story now mentioned is embellished with further circumstances.

- [22] The undertaking of this *noble* son of the *real family of the Muse* evinces that nothing is impossible to a poet. This tribe, avowed to be a Scythian or Gothic one, has notwithstanding used the Celtic and not the Gothic language, in all its peregrinations ! The bard does not seem to have known the difference between those languages or that the *Belgaid* or *Gothic* had ever been used in Ireland.—Vide Cod. Lecan. fol. 283
- [23] *Niul*, *neul*, *light* ; *neall*, *noble*.
- [24] *Nenual*—*Nia-nuil*, a *noble champion*, *niadh*, a *champion*, *néall* ; *noble*—Keat. p. 219
- [25] Keating, p. 221.
- [26] *Idem*.
- [27] *Idem*, p. 31
- [28] *Idem*, p. 225.
- [29] Keating p. 229.—*Eathar*, a *ship*.
- [30] I conceive this to be a mixture of the Sclavonic and Irish Celtic, which was probably used by the Finnish militia or Finn-landers.
- [31] Keating, p. 229
- [32] Keating, p. 231.
- [33] This island, as I observed before, was previously wedded, under three denominations, to the three sons of *Cearmoda*. They were killed in the battle of *Tultean* ; but the widows still remained or, in other words, the island still continued to be known under the three usual names, until the arrival of the Mileiians, who, having killed those queens, abolished their names. By this supposed event the bard wished us to believe that they subdued the island. In compliment to his victors, he labours to revive her under a new appellation, which he traces to the immediate family of *Heremon*, *Oir Mumhan*—East Munster, the hero of his poem. And, not content with the mother of *Niul* being called *Scota*, and of royal descent, he bestows upon him a wife of the same name, and of a family equally

illustrious.

- [34] The bard, having informed us of the source from which Ireland was called *Scotia* now tells us how the *Gaill*, whom he naturally represents as her offspring, acquired their name. In a subsequent part of this treatise I shall endeavour to prove that the latter name was coeval with the first colony in Ireland and that both are derived from different sources.
- [35] Keating, p. 233.
- [36] This play upon the word *Gall*, the primitive appellation for a Gaul, a Briton, or Irishman, which is the plural is *Gaill*, is accounted for thus by Doctor O'Brien, p. 4 of his Dictionary, remarks on the letter A.—“ The Irish bards or rhymers, wanting to stretch out this monosyllable *gaill* into two syllables to serve the exigency of their verses and rhythmical measures have first formed it into *Gadhill*, agreeable to the former of the two rules now mentioned ; and when the second rule, *caol le caol*, &c. took place, it required that an *i* or an *e* should be thrown in before the consonant *d*, by which means it turned out *Gaidhill*, or *Gaedhill* instead of its simple original formation *Gaill*.”
- [37] Keating, p. 245.
- [38] Keating, p. 247, says, from the account of other antiquaries, that those emigrants amounted to one hundred and twenty persons, and that they reached Scythia from Egypt in four vessels each containing thirty persons.
- [39] Keating, p. 245.
- [40] Gothic appellations, borrowed from the Eibhearniand Caudu of Ptolemy
- [41] Keating, p. 250.
- [42] Keating, p. 255.
- [43] *Spying*.
- [44] Belgic names.
- [45] Keating, p. 255.
- [46] Keating, p. 255.
- [47] The names of the mountains and plains in the north and south of Ireland have been collected into a catalogue, to furnish those sons with names.
- [48] Keating, p. 42
- [49] These achievement over the Spanish are omitted in the late translation.
- [50] Keating, p. 255.
- [51] Keating, p. 259.
- [52] A name given to Ireland either by the Belgæ or Danes.
- [53] By Gothia the bard probably meant Gothpland, an island of the Baltic on the east coast of Sweden ; but as I am ignorant of the strait, mentioned in a few subsequent lines, which separates Europe from Asia, and of any course east of Europe, which could bring this family to Alba or Caledonia without sailing round the world, I submit this navigation to those, who may wish to amuse themselves with our bardic knowledge of geography.
- [54] Colpa or Colbdi, the ancient name of the harbour of Drogheda.
- [55] Keating, p. 261.
- [56] Idem. p. 43. From this and similar passages in Keating's history, it appears that the Milisians, who were called *Clanna*, or *Slioch Bhreoghain*, were the Brigantes of Ptolomy ; whom Ortelius fixes west of Dublin, Ware in Waterford, Mercator in the S. E. part of Ireland, and the Irish bards in Leinster and Conacht. The latter sites, including Aoi bh Breogain, or the present county of Waterford, and Magh Breha in Meath, comprehend the first and subsequent settlements of the Brigantes, and of their allies and contemporary settlers, the ceann-cangi of county Clare.
- [57] The bard, having been ignorant of the real leaders of the Belgæ and of the Brigantes, adopts the name of the principal Belgic tribe, the *Eibbearn* to designate a feigned chieftain ; and that of East Munster, *Ur* or *Oir Mumhain* corrupted into Eir-eamhon, in which a fortress has been erected, to denote a fictitious chieftain of the Brigantes. The bard having been equally ignorant of the supposed father of those heroes, denominates him either *Galamh*, which signifies a warrior,—or *Mileadh*, a soldier ; and not having known that

the Eibhearni were a Belgic tribe, and the Brigantes a Celtic one, he not only blends these distinct families into one, but deduced both from the same immediate lineage. The predominance of the Belgæ over the Celts of Ireland may, notwithstanding the blunder committed by the bards, in denominating the Brigantes a Scythian tribe, be inferred from the frequent mention of those Gothic names, *Scota*, *Eibhear*, *Amhirgin*, *Caichear*, &c, and from their conspicuous figure in Irish history.

[58] The improbability of this story would have destroyed its credit, if it were not revived by the Rev. Mr. O'Connor, who informs us through Strabo that in a wonderful insulated tower in Spain, called the oracle of Menestheus, the refracted rays of light, as if diffused into pipes were magnified. In a note it is added, that this Menestheus was a general of the Athenians, in the Trojan war, who on his return to Athens, was banished ; and that he passed into Spain—*Rerum.Hibern. script. vet. c. O'Connor, p 50*—Plutarch, however, on the contrary, informs us, that on Menestheus' return from the war of Troy, he died in the isle of Melos in the Archipelago, A. M. 2871. It is therefore probable, as the primitive Celts of Gaul and Spain were an unlettered people, that the tower in question had been erected by, or in honor of, some other Menestheus, and in an age posterior to his. The palster of Cashel is quoted through Keating by Mr O'Connor ; but Keating did not believe a word of the assertion ; nor does Strabo insinuate that an object could be seen over the convexity of the sea, at a distance of one-hundred and fifty leagues It is by no means improbable that the author of the Psalter of Cashel, or some previous Irish writer, had taken the hint from the account of Strabo.

[59] I am of opinion that the name *Vodii* or *Udii*, applied to that Belgic sept, which occupied part of the county Cork in the second century, was given by Ptolemy in imitation of some *Eochadh* (pronounced *Eohy* or *Yohy*) who was their king. Keating seems to confirm the truth of this supposition, by informing us that the province of one of them, who was called *Eochadh Abhradh-ruaidh*, extended from Cork to Limerick, and thence eastward, to the meeting of the three waters, or the *abhan Breogain* at Waterford. And as an additional corroboration, the old translation of Keating, p. 6, informs us that one of those *Eochaidh*'s was surnamed *Mumho*, implying that his territory was situated in Munster.

[60] Keating, p. 263.

[61] Magh Ithe, the plain of corn, a territory in the county London-Derry.

[62] Keating, p. 265. The retrograde genealogy to Noah follows, and is traced, according to holy Cormac Mac Cuileannain, from Galamh—a champion, through Celtic names signifying trees, plains, pitched battles, champions, slaughter, antiquity, fair knees and white hands &c.

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