

The Voyage of St. Brendan

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The Bardic Stories of Ireland

Patrick Kennedy.

1871.

THE present collection consists of mere legends, of facts invested in legendary garb, and of historic incidents. The legends are the embodiments of pagan myths modified and degraded, some few the creation of christian poets. The invasions, changes of dynasty, etc., set down as having occurred before the building of Emania, say 300 A.C., have all some foundation of fact on which the bards raised a legendary superstructure. What are now historic legends were first related in a metrical form to assemblies in the raths of kings and chiefs. In nearly every instance they embodied the deeds of the ancestors of the high people then present, or battles, or other striking events connected with the locality, and the narrative was only moderately charged with ornamentation ; but as the heroes and their deeds receded farther back from the era of the minstrel, and became consequently less interesting to the audience, he felt it expedient to surround the substance of the tradition with romantic or supernatural circumstances, and the longer the Bardic institution endured, the more heavily charged with fiction did their lays become.

In the early existence of the system, and before the minds of the unsophisticated hearers were affected for the worse by dwelling on the creations of fancy, they would be as certain to demand of the reciter if his story were true, as an intelligent child of our or of any time is to propose the same query to parent or nurse when something outside the sphere of its own experience is related. The child's delight in a surprising story is perfected by belief in its truth, and while he remains a child he will be sufficiently mortified when he hears that such and such incidents never occurred, or that his darling prince and princess never existed. His taste becomes gradually vitiated by having his mind fed on the unsubstantial pabulum of romance. A similar change took place in early society step by step with the strengthening of the bardic influence, and to this we owe the historic and traditionary legend.

A word on the question of the knowledge or ignorance of letters among our pagan ancestors. Tighernach of Clonmacnois (eleventh century), that most dry and mistrustful of our ancient chroniclers, acknowledged that the people of his day were in possession of reliable history from the date of the building of Emania, 300 A.C. But if no written records existed before the days of St. Patrick, what confidence could the early christian historians have had in the mere traditions, or oral-poetical accounts to which they had access, or what grounds would Tighernach have to assert that the events which occurred in every generation for a lapse of seven hundred years were accurately preserved in chronicles compiled in the fifth century ? The contemporaries of Tighernach, and those who lived a century or two later, would have set him down as a visionary for making such an assertion ; but from his era even to ours he is, without an exception, considered the most trustworthy authority for all events which occurred before his time.

One object of this little work being to amuse and instruct young folk, and infuse into them a wish to become acquainted with the history of the country, we feel justified in assuring them that the several occupations and invasions of the country, and other remarkable events recorded down to the building of Emania did really occur, but in a much more prosaic fashion than that depicted by the bards. Greater trust may be placed in all the quasi-historical or biographical incidents succeeding this era, when the supernatural circumstances are eliminated.

As the narratives descend from the preaching of Christianity towards the conquest, the fictional element gradually disappears, though the historical events continue to be invested with the very spirit of romance. We have selected these last, not for the confidence which may be reposed in their truth, but for the romantic interest attached to them. Their truth adds value and charm to their romance, and the ROMANCE OF IRISH HISTORY is the end and aim of the present publication.

The Legendary Fictions, The Fireside Stories, and the present volume furnish a tolerably ample collection of The Fireside and Bardic Stories of Ireland.

If any square-toed sage, objecting to the number of mere inventions here collected, and our consequent loss of time in chronicling them, suggests the more desirable occupation of setting before our readers unadorned historical matter, let him take into account the plentiful supply of histories already before the public, the general apathy of young people towards the perusal of dry chronicles, and the probability that by the time a listless student has got to the end of our fictions and fictitious-looking events, he or she may be laid hold on by a desire to know more about the genuine occurrences and the distinguished characters which belong to Irish history.

Readers unaccustomed to the orthography of Gaelic names, are instructed to pronounce the final *e* of every word, whether accented in the text or not, also when he finds, consonants crowded in a word, to give himself little trouble about their pronunciation, and finally, never to give *c* or *g* its soft English sound.

The Voyage of St. Brendan.

TOWARDS the end of the fifth century the three isles of Arran were held by a chief named Corbanus, who rendered fealty for them to Ængus, king of Munster. Enda, brother of this king, wished to devote his life to God's service in praying and labouring with his hands. He induced many other well-disposed men to join him ; and at his request his brother gave to himself and his little community possession of Arranmore, allowing Corbanus other and more valuable possessions. This chief being a heathen did not look on the new settlers with much favour. He stood on the shore of Ireland as Enda and his people were about steering in their corrachs for their new possessions, and cried out in derision, " Holy man, here are several vessels of grain which I intended to bestow on you. They will be of great use in sowing your barren territory, but your boats are too slight, and too well filled to receive them ; perhaps the gods whom you worship will convey them across without giving you any trouble." The saint cast a look of sorrow and reproach on the chief, and then betook himself to prayer. Corbanus's triumph was but short : he saw the vessels rise from the earth and shoot rapidly in an upward sloping direction over the boats and over the heads of the monks who occupied them, and so on directly to the platform above the landing-place of Arranmore. It need scarcely be told that St. Enda and his monks chanted hymns of gratitude on their landing ; but the conversion or non-conversion of Corbanus has been left in doubt by the old chroniclers.

And now our labourers in the holy vineyard diligently commenced the good work ; churches and monasteries soon arose under their hands ; and then whoever was not engaged in repeating the Holy Office, or singing divine hymns, was labouring at the cultivation of the land, or slowly and carefully copying out Missals or some book of the Testaments, or training pupils in the literary exercises of the day ; and their long and healthy lives seemed to them too short for all the work they wished to perfect for the glory of God and the good of their neighbour.

St. Fanchea, the sister of St. Enda, once paid a visit to her brother, accompanied by three of her nuns. She could not but be much edified by the devout and well-spent lives of the holy

islanders ; and when she was taking leave, she would not allow a single individual to quit his occupation for the purpose of rowing her to the continent. She made the sign of the Cross on the waves ; and then spreading her mantle thereon, she and her three nuns took their places on it, and went gliding across the rough waters of the bay to the nearest point on the continent, as the islanders then and now consider the coast of Ireland. One corner of the cloak was observed to sink a little below the surface of the water ; and St. Fanchea, a little surprised, asked the sister who occupied it what could be the cause. “ I know not,” said she, “ unless it be that I am bringing from the island a little pipkin, which I thought would be of service in our kitchen.” “ You have sinned by covetousness, dear sister,” said the saint ; “ throw away the occasion of it.” She dropped the vessel into the waves readily indeed, but with a little natural reluctance, and the cloak became as smooth as the surface of a table.

As St. Enda was one day sitting on a cliff at the south-eastern side of the island, enjoying the sight of the waves rushing in from the “ old sea,” and dancing under the un-clouded sunny air, the northern steep cliffs of the other isles forming the only shade in the picture, he became aware of a corrach sweeping round the western point of the nearer isle, and bearing towards the landing-point of Arranmore. As it approached, he distinguished the gowns and cowls of monks ; and when he received them at the beach he recognised in their chief the holy Abbot Brendan of Ardfert, in Kerry (A. D. 484-577). The meeting between the saintly men was most cordial and edifying to their companions ; and all were soon in the refectory, partaking of a welcome repast of oaten bread, milk, and lettuce, of which the voyagers had some need.

The host was too much rejoiced to have the holy Abbot under his roof to feel any curiosity concerning the cause of his visit ; but his guest, without waiting to be questioned, entered on the subject immediately after the slight meal was concluded.

“ Dear brothers, I have been suffering for some time from a strong impulse ; but I am ignorant whether it comes from the workings of my own ill-regulated imagination or if it is inspired by Heaven. It is strongly borne in on my mind that many, many leagues away, towards the setting of the sun, a large island rests in the ever-disturbed old sea, and that men and women of Adam’s race are there living as the blessed Patrick found our forefathers not a century since. If so, is it not clearly our duty to seek out these brothers and sisters, and endeavour to lead them out of the gloom of heathenism into the joyful light of Christian faith ?”

Here an aged monk interposed. “ I have heard of that island from the time I was a child. They always called it Hy-Breasil ; but most of those who spoke of it seemed to think that it was swallowed up by the pitiless waters about two hundred years since, and that it becomes visible once in every seven years. They also told that if any one would approach so near as to fling a lighted brand in on the shore, the island would remain firm above the roar and rush of the waves.”

Then said the saint : “ From the time that our corrach left the fair strand of Liath (Tralee) in the south, I have passed no house of God’s servants without consulting the aged men on this head ; and all I have heard agrees with your account. As we entered the rough and swelling frith where old Sionan joins the ocean, in order to visit a religious house on its northern bank, I could see the buildings, the gardens, and the silent streets of a sunk city many fathoms down in the rushing waters ; and I said. Oh ! that I could converse with one who, when in the flesh, found himself on firm land where our corrach now floats on the treacherous wave ! He could give me the information I require. Dear brother Enda, I will make use of your hospitable shelter till to-morrow, when I will renew my quest along the headlands and islets,—the isles of the White Cows, which were once as difficult to be found as Hy-Breasil, till an arrow tipped with fire struck it from a galley ; the isle of Clare, of Achil, of Inis na Gloiré, and so round within sight of Ben Gulban,—till I reach the northern isles of Arran and the rocky seawalls of Tir Conaill.”

The visit of the sainted Abbot caused no interruption to the labours or the religious exercises of the monks of Arran. He and his followers joined with them in their duties as if they had lived years on the island ; and next morning all thronged the church to be present at St. Brendan's Mass. After the awful moment of consecration, the appearance and demeanour of the celebrant was as if he stood in the visible presence of his Lord, such was the reverence and rapture that sat on his features ; and for some minutes after the Communion bright rays were seen encircling his head and breast.

When the sacrifice was ended, he spoke to the assembled crowd, intending only to address a short exhortation to them on courage and perseverance in their duties ; but as he spoke, the prophetic spirit took possession of him, and he revealed much of what was to happen to his beloved country in after times.

“ O sight of sorrow ! sacred isle, which will hereafter be called Arran of the Saints, where labour, prayers, meditation, and holy songs fill up the entire circle of the day,—the time will come upon you when your churches will not be found, and only a few scattered stones show where they once stood. Now, at evening and morning, the air resounds with the music of God's praises : hereafter, no sound shall be heard but the roar of the waves as they break on the rocks, and the harsh scream of sea birds. Instead of waving fields of yellow corn, on which thousands are fed, the rocky stretch of the isle will scarcely afford sustenance to the wild-goat. Woe to the decay of piety ! woe to the heathen spoiler ! Piety driven from Arran shall revive in the green meadows by the Sionan (Clonmacnois) ; but in generations to succeed nothing shall be left even there but the tombs of forgotten chiefs, the moss-covered ruins of church-walls, and the guardian crosses of the graves. But ‘ Arise, Lord, and let Thy enemies be scattered ; and let those who hate Thee flee from before Thy face ! ’ As fast as God's temples are pulled down in one place, they shall rise in another ; and if all were left desolate, the hill-cavern, the deep lonesome glen, or the wild heath shall be Thy temples, Lord, and the rough rock or flat stone Thy altar. Great empires may perish, great nations even lose the faith ; but this island, hallowed in the persons of Patrick and myriads of sainted men and women, shall preserve that priceless gift till the eve of the destruction, when it will calmly sink in the surrounding seas, and its inhabitants be spared, while still clothed with flesh, the unspeakable terrors of that dreadful day.”

At noon St. Brendan re-embarked ; and, having given his benediction to the kneeling hundreds that crowded the shore, bent his course northwards, through islets and islands, and by projecting capes, bringing consolation and gladness to every religious house he visited. The information got in the different stations, though slightly varying, agreed on the whole with what the old monk of Arran gave. We will not accompany him on his northern voyage, nor his return to his monastery in the south. The next thing we find him doing is guiding his galley straight towards the Fortunate Islands, in hopes of finding a favourable current to speed his vessel westwards. Twelve select monks accompanied him ; but one of the number, alas, was more intent on the possession of treasures, and on the enjoyment of life in a finer climate, than on bringing the good news of Christianity to the bewildered heathen.

So the galley went southward, and from day to day they felt the air growing warmer round them. The companions of the saint, as well as himself, had a thorough knowledge of the management of a sea-vessel—for all, before entering the religious life, had guided corrachs on the lakes, or the great river of the west, or among the islands that fringe the coast from Cape Kleir to the “ Island of the Tower” (Tory). They did not go far enough to find the current, but they found the Fortunate Islands, till now untrodden by man's foot, though often seen in the dreams of the old poets. Joyfully did they gather the ripe grapes to prepare from these the wine for the Holy Sacrifice ; and they laid in a store of cocoa-nuts for provision against the long voyage they still expected. They left no spot without carefully searching for traces of human beings, to whom they might address the words of life. At last they left behind

the isles, now called the Azores, and directed their course by the sun ; they had as yet met no storm, and the guiding of their galley was a task of little trouble.

Each day was spent as if they were still lodged in their monastery of Ardfert ; Mass was celebrated at the third hour (nine a.m.), and all the offices and hymns were recited or sung at their appropriate times. The night watches of three hours each were kept ; and thus they proceeded westwards, till at length they joyfully descried the hills, the forests, and the shores, of an island, which, on approaching, they might well have taken for paradise, hut for the absence of dwellers in human shape.

All the beauties that can arise from sunshine, clear blue skies, mountains green to their summits, shady woods, green sloping meadows, clear lakes, and sparkling streams, were there. Flowers of the most brilliant colours waved on shrubs, and sprung from the short thick herbage ; they hung in festoons between the trees, or depended from the branches, gladdening the sight, and giving promise of sweet and refreshing fruit ; while birds of the most beautiful and varied plumage entranced the souls of the voyagers by their melody. This melody was of a sacred character ; and the natural notes of the little choristers that produced it were as varied as those of the strings of the finest harp.

St. Brendan, judging from the style of the music that there was something supernatural about the beautiful little creatures, adjured them in God's name to explain the mystery. The branches of the tree next him were full of the charming songsters ; and as he spoke they ceased their song and one of them returned this answer :

“ Holy man, we were all glorious angels at the time now long past, when pride and disobedience entered the heart of the unhappy Lucifer ; and though we did not sympathise with his rebellious feelings, we dallied with the temptation, and were flung from heaven in his company. While the arch-enemy and his troops were piercing through the sulphurous waves of hell in their headlong fall, our descent was mercifully stayed by this island, which, bright and beautiful as it appears to you, is drear and desolate to us, who remember heaven. We still perceive the swift passage of our former glorious companions in their way to far-off worlds, to execute the will of the all-mighty and all-merciful : we see the shining traces left where they pass. Such happiness and glory is now lost to us ; but we do what is mercifully left in our power. We cease not, night and day, joining our voices to those of the heavenly choirs above ; and when, in the lapse of years, this island becomes the abode of human beings, and their prayers and hymns begin to ascend to heaven, we will be permitted to rise with them, and regain that happiness which it is not in our power to explain, nor in yours to comprehend.”

As they were leaving the happy island, probably one of the Bermudas, they were told that they would be allowed to return, and spend the next Paschal tide on its shore ; and so they resumed their westward course again.

But as they hoped to be nearing the desired land, they met a strong current, which, coming with a mighty rush from the south-west, swept them before it for several days. They began to feel an unwelcome degree of cold : a disagreeable wind came on them from the north-west, a fog enveloped them, and they had no means of judging in what direction they were drifting. While they were thus tossed about at the mercy of the winds and waves, they approached what seemed a low rushy island. They were wearied by the narrow limits of their little vessel ; and four of the number went on shore, for the pleasure of walking about at liberty, taking a small cauldron and some fuel with them to prepare a meal.

While one of the party blew up his fire, the others walked about to stretch their limbs. They were rather surprised at the slimy elastic surface of the ground, and the hard sharp sort of grass—if grass it could be called—which it produced ; but their surprise was soon changed

to terror; for, as they returned towards the fire-place, they found the soil heaving, the cauldron tumbling over, and the fire scattering on every side. There was no time to be lost : they hastened to the brink of the treacherous island, and scrambled into their galley. They were scarcely in safety on the hospitable deck, when they beheld the supposed isle move rapidly away, and the remnants of the fire flung on every side, with the convulsive heavings of the spot on which it had been lighted. They now judged that they had intruded on the repose of some sea-monster ; and immediately falling on their knees, they returned fervent thanks for their preservation.

Still the fog surrounded them, and still the vessel kept on its confused and uncertain course ; and at times they were swept along by furious gusts of wind, now darting down the steep side of a mountain-like wave, and then shooting up the ascent of the next, with a force seemingly sufficient to launch the ship into the clouds. At last they perceived a lurid light through the thick grey veil that surrounded them ; and frightful yells and explosions from the same quarter burst on their terrified ears.

The ship was impelled by the waves in the direction of the noises ; and they were soon able to distinguish a conical islet, volumes of fire and black smoke issuing from its summit, and a band of yelling demons hovering round the base of the hill. As soon as they became visible, they flung about their limbs in the wildest manner, yelled terrifically, and roared out these words from their brazen throats : “ Welcome, brother ! we have long waited for you. Your place is prepared : come, come !” St. Brendan was no more moved by the appalling spectacle than if he was looking on a group of dolphins gamboling on the quiet waves ; but the words of the evil spirits took him by surprise. He looked round on his pious companions : the faces of eleven were expressive of awe, but an awe overruled by the calm courage inspired by confidence in their heavenly Master. But, ah ! the horror and despair that distorted the countenance of the twelfth ! He flung up his arms, roared aloud in the extremity of his anguish, and cursed the hour of his birth.

“ Oh, my poor brother” cried the saint, as he looked with pity on the wretched man, “ turn away your eyes from the hellish sight : fall on your knees ; cry to our Lord for forgiveness of your sins ; call on the Mother of Mercy for her intercession : she will stand between you and these monsters of hell.”

“ Too late, too late !” cried out the unfortunate. “ While at home, I lived an unholy and hypocritical life. I sinned secretly ; and when I joined your company, it was only to find a pleasant land, treasures of gold and silver, luxurious living, and unholy companions.”

“ Dear brother, your sins cannot overpower God’s mercy. Take an act of contrition, detest your past ill deeds, and fling yourself on the mercy of your Father.”

“ I cannot ; there are my instigators and my companions for eternity.”

He sprung from the side of the vessel with hands clenched at the horrible spectres, the dark waves closed over the lost creature, and the volcano and the fiends vanished from the sight of the awed servants of God. For the next twenty-four hours they little heeded the movements of their vessel, nor in what direction it was driven by wind and wave.

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They had now been for several weeks wandering at random in the great waters, far to the northwards of the blessed isle of birds : their stock of fuel was nearly exhausted ; snow was falling in abundance, and they were suffering intense cold. The Eve of the Nativity had arrived, and the holy men were devising how they might celebrate the festival in the best way that their circumstances allowed. It was about an hour after noon ; and while they were ex-

pecting the immediate withdrawal of the feeble light that was abroad, the thick lead-coloured air began to brighten towards the south-west. It seemed as if dense veils were withdrawing one by one from between them and the sun ; and in a short time they began to enjoy his light and warmth, of which they had been deprived for weeks. They found themselves near a rocky island, and their joy was much increased by the sight of a man very roughly clad, standing on the shore and making signs to them expressive of the most joyful welcome.

Following the directions which he gave them, they guided their vessel round a point into a harbour naturally formed, where they were enabled to station it alongside of a ledge of smooth rock, which served as a rude but serviceable quay. The unknown gave his assistance ; and as soon as St. Brendan was on the land, he threw himself at his feet and embraced his knees with the deepest love and reverence. The saint raised and embraced him ; but as if he felt uneasy under the honour conferred on him, he passed to every one of the crew and embraced and welcomed them. “ Holy Father and most dear brothers,” said he, as soon as he had welcomed each, “ let me assist you in bringing the most necessary articles in the vessel to my cavern, which, thank God, is pretty comfortable, and large enough for all. For seven years I have not seen form or face of a brother, nor enjoyed the happiness of being present at Mass. I praise Thee, my Saviour, with all my powers, for that great benefit which I shall, with Thy divine permission, obtain on this festival of Thy Nativity.”

They collected whatever was most needful, and followed their guide and host to his cavern, which, though unpromising enough in outward appearance, was tolerably commodious within, and now rendered cheerful by the presence of a good fire. The hermit’s provisions consisted of some dried fish and pure spring-water. The ship’s stock of hard cakes was not yet all consumed, and a piece of the hard bread was as acceptable to the recluse as the pure water was to his guests. So, after a couple of hours occupied in the appropriate devotions of the festival-eve, they all sat down, and for the first time that day tasted food.

The vigil was appropriately kept ; but few of those who assist once a week at the Holy Sacrifice, with minds and hearts only slightly affected, could conceive the heavenly joy and rapture which took possession of the soul of the recluse as he assisted at the midnight Mass celebrated by St. Brendan. The saint himself was more rapt than usual ; and the rest seemed, after the sacrifice was ended, as if awaking from a blissful dream, in which they had been enjoying Paradise.

So they kept up, as well as they could, the twelve days’ festivities, being as happy as brotherly love, a lively sense of the immediate protection of Providence, and an all-absorbing love of God could make them. In one of their hours of relaxation, their host gave them an account of what had led to his solitary life on that remote and desolate island.

He had been an inmate of the monastery of Inis-na-Gloiré ; and, like the monk whose miserable fate was still so painfully remembered, he had fallen into sins of a deadly nature. Under the influence of remorse and despair he at last ran to the shore, intending to throw himself into the un pitying waves ; but before he came to the edge, his will had yielded to the motion of grace, and despair had given way to contrition. A boat was leaving the little harbour, and he felt inspired to enter it, and commit his after proceedings to Providence. After some days a terrible storm came, and swept the little vessel out of its coasting course into the wide wild deep. In a sudden lurch of the boat he lost his hold on the bulwarks, and he was flung out into the merciless water. He felt that his last hour was come. All the wilfully vicious thoughts that ever had caused him to sin,—all the sinful acts that he had ever committed,—became present to his inward sight at that moment, to drive him to despair ; but he invoked Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, and made an act of contrition and of charity. He then seemed as if falling into a delightful slumber ; and when his consciousness returned, he found himself lying on the rocks that skirt the landing-place of that isle. After a good deal of exploring, he

saw no sign of any kind of food, nor of fire to cook it ; and he was about lying down to await death when an otter came up, holding with his sharp teeth a fish, which he dropped at his feet. But how could he kindle a fire ? The otter ran before him to the edge of an upright rock, and scratching at its base, exposed to view a couple of hard bright flint stones. Collecting some dry sticks and moss and withered leaves, he lighted a fire by means of his flints, and made a feast on the otter's present. He afterwards discovered the cavern, and, under the promptings of necessity, found means of catching fish and some wild fowl. He had now lived a lonely life on the island for seven years, and as he hoped had his desires and affections weaned from worldly things—his chief regret being his separation from the blessings of public worship and the Sacraments. His deliverance from solitude, and succession to the inheritance of a lost brother, had been revealed to him a long time past. He had now attained the sum of happiness he could fancy to exist on earth, and besought his deliverers to unite their prayers for his perseverance in good. To the questions of St. Brendan on the existence of a large island yet undiscovered, and probably uninhabited, he answered that an aged monk of Inis-na-Gloiré had assured him that such was the fact, the only doubt being about the existence of inhabit-ants. It was not the island called Hy-Breasil, for that and the men and women last living on it were thousands of fathoms below the surface of the old sea.

Early in the spring the waters were mercifully opened, so that the bark was allowed to find its way southwards ; and, after a voyage of three weeks, they were permitted the sight of the wooded shore of the long-sought continent. The landing, the joy of the holy men, the celebration of an early Mass on their newly-found territory, cannot be described in detail, nor their after weary and laborious journey through swamp, prairie, thick forest, and stony hills. They held on their toilsome errand westwards, but neither found a human being, nor the traces of one. At last when their bodily powers were prostrate, and the deepening shades under the tall thick-growing trees betokened the approach of night, they beheld, through the stems and brushwood, the slow and turbid waters of a wide river flowing south.

Collecting some dry brushwood, they made a fire, and prepared their frugal supper. When it was over they betook themselves to prayer, and that holy exercise occupied them two hours.

Before disposing themselves to rest for the night, they sat down beside their cheerful wood-fire, and began to take counsel as to what was the next befitting step to take. St. Brendan was about addressing his little devoted band, when the attention of all was attracted by a luminous mass of vapour approaching from the farther bank of the river. As it drew near, it seemed to unfold itself, and presently all were on their knees, and gazing with delight and reverence on an angel glorious in shape and countenance. All feeling of weariness and of disappointment was gone, and their souls were filled with rapture, as he addressed them.

“ Faithful workers in your Master's vineyard, your present labours have come to an end : they are for the moment fruitless, but their intention has rendered them acceptable in the sight of Jehovah. This wide-spreading land will be yet unknown to the people of Christendom for the lapse of ten centuries. Then a heaven-led man acquainted with your voyage, and following in your track, will arrive on these shores, and myriads of dwellers receive the Gospel of the Saviour. The memory of your wanderings shall remain even till then fresh in the minds of the holy men of Erinn. Take now the repose of sleep ; then retrace your way to your remote isle, and work while it is light for your neighbour's salvation and your own.”

The angel ceased to speak ; but they enjoyed the entrancing light of his heavenly features for some short space, and then all faded but the ruddy light of their decaying fire. The night passed, and so did many succeeding ones ; and they measured back their woodland course, and found their bark as they had left it, moored in a quiet creek ; and guiding it eastwards, they landed on the blest “ Island of the Birds,” on the day preceding the Festival of Palms.

The always sweet melody of the birds grew wilder, sweeter, and more heavenly, as the blessed bark approached their shore ; and most delightful and consoling were the communications of the saints and these temporary exiles from Paradise. High Mass was celebrated by St. Brendan and two of his priests, on the great day of the Pasch ; and the assistants remained entranced during the portions in which the spirits sung their hymns,—echoes of those long since heard in heaven. The holy Sacrifice began two hours before noon. To the assistants and celebrants it seemed shorter than an ordinary Mass ; but when it came to an end, the trees were flinging long shadows towards the east.

They did not quit the happy island till after celebrating Pentecost. They then began to feel that the amount of happiness they were enjoying, though of a spiritual nature, was more than behoved a servant of God during his mortal pilgrimage. So they sorrowfully bade adieu to the blessed exiles, and trusted themselves once more to the wide deep. They reached the coast of Erinn in safety ; and of the later silent labours of the saint and his holy assistants, there remains but a scanty record. Their days were occupied in labour, in instructing the ignorant, in praying, in converting the few pagans that remained, and ill founding religious houses. An exciting history cannot be constructed out of materials such as these.

Another voyage varied the after-life of our saint ; but it was only a visit to the holy isle of Iona in the Hebrides, to St. Columba, the Apostle of the Pictish nation. He was called to his reward when on a visit to his sister, at her religious house of Clonfert, in Galway. As may be readily supposed, he loved to look on the wild scenery of the wave-worn western coast of his country : the mountain to which he has left his name still enjoys a wide view of the sea-cliffs and the broad Atlantic.

It will readily be believed that the sermons addressed to the more or less learned congregations of our days must differ in some degree from the instructions given to unlettered assemblies of those ages that possessed no printed books, or that were painfully passing from a pagan to a Christian life. Parables, allegories, striking histories, and miraculous events in saints' lives were frequently introduced in the homilies of St. Eloy, St. Hilary, St. Martin, and all the preachers of their eras ; and from time to time these were collected, and written down by monks skilful at the pen, and read on proper occasions, in the chieftain's hall and the monastic refectory. Hence the name “ legend ” from *legenda*—subjects fit to be read for edification. The most famous collection of this kind is the *Legenda Aurea*, copies of which printed by Caxton, are still extant. The voyage of St. Brendan, originally written for Queen Adelais, wife of Henry Beauclerc, is preserved in that work ; and the curious may read a poetic version of it in the *Dublin University Magazine* for January, 1848, contributed by Denis Florence Mac Carthy. There is an abridged prose version in the same periodical for May, 1852.

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