



The Story
of
Ireland



Standish
O'Grady



Bahner.
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R. Ellis Roberts.

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THE STORY OF IRELAND.

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THE STORY OF IRELAND

BY

STANDISH O'GRADY
AUTHOR OF "FINN AND HIS COMPANIONS."

Methuen & Co.
BURY STREET, LONDON, W.C.
1894

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IRELAND: HER STORY.

CHAPTER I.

ANCIENT IRELAND.

WHEN Julius Cæsar and the Romans invaded Britain, Ireland was inhabited by a nation whom the Romans called *Scoti* or *Scots*. The same nation, too, occupied the western half of Scotland, while the Picts held the remainder of that country. But the people of Ireland did not call themselves *Scots*; they called themselves the *Gaedil*, or the *Gael*, because, they said, they were the children of a very far away and ancient hero named *Gaedil*.^v The Romans called the island *Scotia*, and also *Hibernia*. The people themselves had a great many names of their own for the island. They called it *Inis na Fidba* or the Isle of Woods, *Inis Elga*, the Noble Island, and many other names. They were an ingenious and inventive people, and extremely fond of songs and stories, so that the island was full of bards, who, with their harps, used to travel from one house to another, singing songs for the people about the island in which

they lived, and the brave deeds of their ancestors. These bards had three names for Ireland which they used oftener than others. They called it Banba when they thought of its plains, woods, and mountains ; and Fohla when they thought of it in connection with learning, laws, and history ; and Eire when they thought of its warriors, heroes, and kings. This word Eire in another form becomes Eirin, and so we have the name Erin which is generally used in poetry. For example—

There came to the beach a poor exile of Erin.

These three names, Banba, Fohla, and Eire, were also the names of three goddesses whom the people worshipped, and who they thought loved the island greatly, and took care of it at all times.

The bards, too, used to celebrate the valour and excellence of an ancient hero called Ir, and so got into the habit of alluding to the island in their songs as the land of Ir. So we get the name Ireland or Ireland, which is in everybody's mouth to-day, though it was first invented two thousand years ago by one of those makers and singers of songs who used to go about the island with their harps, amusing the people and also instructing them in their history. No one knows that bard's name, or anything about him, yet the word that he invented is known all round the world to-day.

The ancient Greeks, too, had names of their own for Ireland. They called it Ogygia, and believed that their great hero, Ulysses, who in his oared

galley wandered over so many seas, spent seven years here after he had been shipwrecked ; and they said that the Queen of the Island was very kind to the poor shipwrecked hero, and that when the gods told him to make another attempt to get home she gave him an axe, in order that he might cut down trees, and make for himself a raft, and that she gave him wine, and many good things to sustain him on his long homeward voyage. The ancient Irish were, indeed, very hospitable, and I think the Greeks, who told this story about Ulysses, and the Queen of Ireland, must have heard from their merchants and sailors how kindly they had been entertained by the Irish kings and chieftains in their rude palaces. For even in those days many merchants from abroad used to come to Ireland to trade with the people. They would bring weapons and corn and other things in exchange for the skins of cattle and of wild animals. The wealth of the Irish consisted chiefly in their vast herds of cattle roaming over green plains, and their herds of swine feeding on beech-nuts and oak-nuts in the great forests. The Greeks also called the island Ierne, and other names, and amongst the rest, Holy Island, because they thought that the island was full of gods and bright with their temples, and that the people spent most of their time in singing and harp-playing in honour of those gods. This was not quite true, and yet it was near the truth, for history cannot show in the whole world a people who had so

many gods as the ancient Irish, or who thought more about them, or related in their honour such countless numbers of songs and stories. Apart from their various necessary industries and their wars, the mind of the people was wholly occupied with thoughts about their ancestors and their innumerable gods and goddesses.

We are dealing now, remember, with the Irish people as they were about the time when the Romans invaded Britain, and about the time when Jesus Christ was born, long before the blessed apostle Patrick came to Ireland out of Britain to teach the people that they should worship Christ and obey his law, and not worship their innumerable gods and goddesses any more.

CHAPTER II.

COMING OF THE MILESIANS.

THERE was once in Spain a great King who had spent his youth in many wars and wanderings and adventures. Finally he conquered the north of Spain, and settled down there to live quietly on the sword-land which he had conquered. He had eight brave sons and a great many cousins and kinsmen, who ruled the country under him. His name was Milesius, and it was from him that the Irish are also called Milesians. After the death of that brave old wandering king, his sons and people thought that their country had grown too narrow for their numbers, and that they required new lands. While they were in this mood, one of their magicians and wise men declared that from the lofty summit of a look-out tower, which he had at Corunna by the sea, and which was called Tor Brogan or Brogan's Tower, he had distinctly seen in the north, far across the blue floor of the sea, a most beautiful and spacious island. It was full, he said, of the greenest plains and the noblest forests, of great rivers, streams and lakes, with gentle softly rounded mountains, and many and excellent harbours, and that the air there was

*From L. miles
W. miles
a soldier?*

* The Tors in Devon Somerset + Cornwall are evidently the Irish Tor (Welsh Twr) a tower.
Do Brychan the W. form of this name? (Brogan)

singularly mild and temperate, as he had discovered by certain signs.

The sons of Milesius determined to send one of their cousins to spy out the land. They gave him ships and sailors and warriors in sufficient number, and sent him off from Tor Brogan. The name of this bold explorer was Ith. He with his galleys rowed prosperously over the great sea, put into Ireland, beached his galleys, and at the head of his warriors marched inland. Presently he was met, conquered and slain, in a quite unaccountable manner by the people of the land. It was, indeed, no easy matter to fight with these people, for they were mighty and superhuman beings. A certain man amongst them was charged with the special duty of guarding the coasts of Ireland. Once in forty-eight hours he used to walk round the island, stepping from promontory to promontory, and cape to cape. His name was Mananan, son of Lir,^{01.24p?} that is to say, son of the sea. When he shook his mantle, storms went out from it and fleets were destroyed. From this that I tell concerning Mananan, one can guess what the rest were like. Indeed, they were not men at all but gods. I suppose Mananan was asleep when Ith's fleet was putting in to the land.

A few of Ith's people escaped from that slaughter. When they returned to Spain, they confirmed all that had been said of the beauty and goodness of the land, but added that it was held by a race of enchanters, gods, demons, or they

¹ Is this the w. odd? "m. odd."

⁰ The Welsh Mananan ap Ilyr Iledan

knew not what, to whom all mere human prowess was a laughing stock.

Yet the brave sons of Milesius were not at all frightened. They had never seen their own equals in battle, and, as for enchantments and super-human power, they believed that they had amongst them a Druid who, by his magical arts, his spells and incantations, could match and master even those weird people. They determined to avenge the death of their cousin, to conquer and hold Ireland, and exterminate those enchanters. They were the more resolved to do this because they had an oracular stone which used to speak to them and advise them, and this stone being consulted, now told them that the island where Ith was slain was the island they were destined to occupy, Inis Fail, or the Isle of Destiny. Inis Fail is another name for Ireland, and is often met with in poetry. So the sons of Milesius made great preparations, and at last rowed northwards in their numerous galleys, bringing with them their wives and children, their slaves and their horses, so determined were they to take possession of the Isle of Destiny. At last they saw the mountains and peaks of Ireland springing purple out of the blue main. The joyful news went around. The whole host shouted, women held their children up in their arms to see the Isle of Destiny, the rowers doubled their manly labour, and dashed the surface of the sea into bigger swathes of hissing and boiling foam, and the great galleys, snorting, rushed for-

*Like the
wind and
Thorough
of the sea*

* How like the Spies sent by Moses. to show natural
to magnify the terrors of the unknown.

o The gentry called Rubens also the King of
of the Young.

ward as if they were alive. The green plains, the dark green woods, the promontories, and the white beaches were now visible. Suddenly all the land vanished from their sight like a smoke wreath. There was nothing seen but the sky and the vast circle of the blue sea. The Tuatha De Danan—that was the name of the gods of Ireland—had made the whole island no bigger than a shield upon the surface of the ocean. The little green islet in the blue-green sea was visible to no eye. The gods themselves, who, when they chose, could take a stature reaching to the heavens, were now tiny little fairies in that diminutive space of earth, hidden away in the hollow of the waves. Then the Milesians called on their famous Druid to dissipate the spell. Amergin, for that was his name, chanted a druidic song of great power. The spell was broken, and the island took again its own natural size and features. Again the host shouted and the rowers bent to their oars. But their rejoicing did not last long. Now from the land black clouds as black as night rolled like ink across the sea and enveloped the whole fleet, so that the Milesians were plunged in dense darkness, and their oars got entangled, and the galleys crushed against each other.* This time, too, they were saved by Amergin, who raised his strong voice like a trumpet repeating the right spell, so that the power of the gods of the land was broken, and the glorious sun, the sky, clouds, sea, and the island itself were clearly revealed. The Milesians

* Pharaoh lost in the Red Sea once again!

thought that the arts of their weird foes were now quite exhausted ; but that was not so. Mananan shook his magic mantle in his wrath, and a terrible tempest of all the winds at once was let loose over the deep. The surface of the sea became a sheet of white and flying foam. The masts and the cordage of the galleys whistled and sang in the blast. Now the billows rose in mountains, so that at one time the Milesians were lifted up to the sky, and at another let down into the dim and terrible depths of the ocean, where the ships struck against the sand and the rocks at the bottom of the sea. The fleet was scattered and driven in different directions over the ocean. Some of the ships were broken against sharp rocks, some swallowed up in devouring quicksands. But brave and determined men often overcome great calamities, and rise superior to fate. Many of the ships were successfully beached though in different parts of the island. What is more surprising is that many of the Tuatha De Danan came to welcome them as their destined successors in the sovereignty of the island, and, in particular, the three beautiful goddesses who gave their names to the island—Banba, Fohla, and Eire or Erin. As to the rest, they were partly subdued in battle, and partly consented to a peace with the Milesians. According to the terms of the peace the Milesians were to enjoy the visible sovereignty of Ireland and the Tuatha De Danan the invisible. So they became the gods of the Milesians. Temples were

raised to them ; sacrifices made ; hymns sung, and games celebrated in their honour. It was a good while, however, before they quite became invisible, and veiled their godhead from the eyes of mortal men. There were tremendous wars and fightings between the Milesian heroes and the gods before that result was accomplished, and the Tuatha De Danan persuaded to be satisfied with being the gods of the new nation. They were the more unwilling because they themselves had come into the sovereignty of Ireland after enormous fightings with huge Firbolgs, dark and terrible Fomorians, and other dim and indistinct races of giants, and strange supernatural beings.* So you will find in Grecian History that the gods of Homer were obliged to fight their way against the elder gods, Titans and dragons, and many forms of evil and brute strength. The meaning of all this, for it is full of meaning, you will some day be able to understand more clearly.

* The Sons of Anu.

CHAPTER III.

THE GODS OF THE IRISH.

THOSE who visit the beautiful lakes of Killarney will see towards the east two conspicuous mountains called the Paps. The ancient and full name of these twin peaks was "the Two Paps of Dana." This Dana was a great divinity of the Pagan Irish, and is described as the mother of the Irish gods. More generally she is referred to as the Mor-
Reega, or Great Queen. She was the daughter of Iron-Death. She appeared in camps on the eve of battle, and shouted with a shout like ten thousand men. Then she wore helmet and shield, was girt with a sword, and bore two spears in her hand. But to accomplish her purpose she could take many forms. She appeared sometimes in the shape of a gray-backed crow, sometimes as a great water-dragon, also as a red cow without horns, and once, at least, as a beautiful peasant maiden with bright eyes and auburn hair.⁶ Naturally she played a great part in the wars of the gods and giants which preceded the coming of the Milesians. She took part, too, long afterwards, in the wars of the demi-gods and heroes, assisting her favourites much in the same way as Pallas Athene used

Márra Ri
Márra Rian

* So in W. the name for a rounded hill is *Bryn*.

The masculine for *Bryn*, the pap or breast.

o This resembles Gwion Bach of the Mabinogi.

Márra

to assist Achilles and Ulysses in the Homeric battles.

The Dagda was her (Dana's) husband. He was called the Mighty Father. He represented the earth and the fertility and goodness of nature. The earth was figured as a magic cauldron that belonged to him. All kinds of food were found in this cauldron; each man took from it what he liked best. The Dagda too had a live harp possessing mysterious attributes. As he played upon it spring, summer and winter, the whole beautiful procession of the months and seasons passed forth out of the trembling strings. Once he was taken captive by Fomorian giants. He called to him his harp. The harp heard him and came, it passed through the assembly, it struck down and slew nine Fomorians. When the Dagda trailed his spear behind him the track of it on the plain was like the mearing or boundary pass of a territory. The Fomorians, who, like the Norse Iotuns, seem to have been a game-some race of huge beings, once played a funny trick upon him. As he was going to court a beautiful Fomorian maiden, they met him and made him feast with them. The feast consisted of a mighty Irish stew made of hundreds of hashed oxen. The Fomorians put such a spell upon the stew that when the Dagda went into the presence of the beautiful maiden after that mighty luncheon his stomach was filled out like the canvas of a ship before a gale, while the Fomorians laughed and grinned hugely over the joke.

Paris
Cent. 1875
again

There is, of course, an inner meaning in this, as in all very ancient tales. No one, for example, reading Greek mythology will believe that Kronos was a man who ate his own children as fast as they were born or that he once swallowed a boulder-stone in mistake for a baby.

Another great god amongst the Gael was Lu^{also spelt "Ingh."} the Long-handed. The wise men of France say that he was also worshipped by the ancient Gauls, whom Cæsar conquered, and that his name like moss in an agate, is preserved in the name of the town which is called Lyons. Lu was the long-handed, far-shooting sun-god, the Phœbus Apollo of the Gael. He had a hound dazzling white. The hound became a dark yew tree for a season, and then blazed forth again in his proper form. Lu had a rod-sling, with which he never missed a shot. With this sling he killed the one-eyed Fomorian giant, Balor, the glance of whose one eye converted men into stones, like the sight of the Gorgon's head in the shield of Athene. As the Dagda had a live harp so Lu had a live spear. The craving of that spear for slaughter was so great that its head was kept plunged in a vessel filled with the juice of poppies and mandrakes in order to lull it to sleep. Even so at the approach of battle streams of fire would rush forth from the haft. Otherwise as the lightning sleeps in the black clouds, so the live spear of Lu-Lamfada lay still in its sleepy bath. Lu was called the Ildana, for there was no art or craft in which he was not perfect. It was he who

^o The Gypsies have reserved this term Slen (light) for the Moon - Slen-ad, i.e. The luminous.

Slen Lawlin

delivered the gods from their slavery and thralldom to the Fomorian giants. He had three mighty gods under him, who worked his will all over the world. How and why he made them his ministers is the theme of a great story. Their names are Brian, Juchar, and Jucharba.

Angus Ogue, son of the Dagda, was the god of youth, love, and beauty. He had a golden lyre possessing strange qualities. Three of his own kisses he changed into birds. Though they could not be seen, their singing inspired the hearts of youths and maidens with love. Once a Pagan Irish king said that there was no such person, but at Tara, one evening in the gloaming, Angus appeared before him with his lyre, and sang to him and prophesied. He travelled on the pure cold blast of the wind, and when his friends were in trouble from enemies he cast his mantle over them so that they were not seen. His temple, or the pediment of it, stands to-day on the green margin of the Boyne. Concerning this place a modern poet has sung :—

Brugh na Boinne
I lingered on the Royal Brugh which stands
By the dark rolling waters of the Boyne,
Where Angus Ogue magnificently dwells.

I describe only a few of the greater deities. There are many others like these, while the minor gods, those who were worshipped in certain places, are countless and indescribable. Every river,

stream, lake, valley, mountain, and strand, had its own genius or sprite. Many wells even were the dwelling places of such sprites, and only privileged persons were permitted to approach them.

CHAPTER IV.

NATURE MYTHS.

THE following river stories are examples of the endless legendary lore of the ancient Irish concerning the scenery of their country :—There was once a well of bright water, surrounded by seven hazel trees. The nuts were crimson. Whoever drank of the water or ate the nuts would know all things. At the time of the shedding of fruits the all-knowing Salmon¹⁶, the Salmon of Knowledge, who, too, was a god, Fiontann by name, and could relate all things from the beginning of the world, used to appear in the well and eat the nuts as they fell upon the surface of the water. No one was allowed even to see the well, save a man called Nectan, and his three sons. They were no doubt the priests of the well. If anyone else even looked at the water he became blind. At last a woman named Boanda, singularly beautiful and of extraordinary magical power, said that she did not fear the threats of Nectan, and that she would visit the wonderful well. She did so, but the well rose against her in its wrath with a roaring of mad waters and torrents of flying foam, and caught her, overwhelmed her, and swept her away eastwards in its

¹⁶ Gleisaid Shym Shinn — evidently the Welsh & Irish were acquainted with each other's myths.

might. The flood which that well poured forth is the River Boyne, one of the most tranquil and majestic of our rivers. The too-daring lady became the water-wraith, or genius of the river, giving to it her own name. She has to dwell there for ever. This beautiful river-goddess was the mother of Angus Ogue, the god of youth, love, and music. Another story relates to the Barrow. The Mor-Reega^o, that is to say War, bore a terrible and fierce son. Him, Diancecht, the marvellous physician, the *Æsculapius* of the Gael, foreseeing dire consequences if that portent were suffered to live, in his wisdom slew. From his heart he cut three serpents. He perceived that in the fulness of time those serpents would have broken forth and exterminated all the living creatures of Ireland. The wise Diancecht slew the young serpents also, burned them with fire, and poured the ashes into the great river of, Leinster, the Barrow. Such was the deadly poison that lurked even in the ashes, that the tranquil river foamed and boiled, reducing to shreds and nothingness every living creature in its depths. Hence that river got its name, for the Barrow means "boiling." One meaning of the story is evident enough, for war, though not in itself evil, but oftentimes most just and righteous, does bring both devouring and terrible monsters, as the Mor-Reega bore that son with those malignant serpents in his heart. Not only about their scenery, but about almost everything that can be mentioned, the Irish Bards related stories, some

* W. Bár, ? = Berw^g B "Bár-gwŷ = the turmoil water?"
o Can the W. Mening be the same word? L. Arviragut.

quaint and queer, some beautiful, but nearly all clever. Here, for example, is their account of the invention of their beloved harp. One of the very ancient gods loved a fair maiden. She feared and disliked him, and whenever she saw him fled. So she fled along the coast of Ireland, and he followed her, for he loved her greatly, but whenever looking back she saw him, again she flew off as swift as the wind. At last she came to a strand called Camus,^{W. cam} which means bending or crooked. There she paused, for she heard sweet, unceasing, mournful, sounds, rising and falling like the music of what we now call an \textae olian harp. These sounds, so sad and sweet, awoke in her gentle heart a curious sense of awe and mystery, and many mixed emotions which she never felt before, for music was not yet known in Ireland. Upon that strand there lay the skeleton of a great fish cast up long since by the waves of the sea. Many dry, hard tendons and strings, which had not yet quite decayed, were stretched from rib to rib of the fish, and upon these, as on harp strings, the wind played. As they trembled, they made that noise which seemed so strange and sweet to the maiden.⁴ Then the god, her lover, drew nigh and saw how she lingered beside this rude instrument of wailful music, and how pleased and delighted she was with the sound. Cleverly then he took the hint from that rude natural harp sending forth its music there on the wild strand. He went to an adjoining wood, and there shaped the first harp that was ever known.

* How like the Greek legend as to how Apollo invented the harp. ^{as} it was the framing of a turtle shell, with the dry tendons stretched across.

He slew a wild animal, and from the vitals made strings for it, and finally began to play upon it with his fingers, as the wind with its unseen fingers played on the bony remnant of the whale. Then he approached the maiden playing as he came, not meaningless sweet sounds, but true music. The maiden rose up and followed him, followed as if drawn by invisible cords, only willingly and with a glad mind. Through rough places and smooth she followed him till he reached his home. There she lived with him ever after as his loving wife. This god whose name I do not know, perhaps the great Dagda, was the first harper in Ireland. The story is as good as, or even better than, the corresponding Greek story which tells how the infant Hermes killed a tortoise, and from his shell made the first harp.

CHAPTER V.

PRIMITIVE KINGS AND HEROES.

SUCH were the people who lived in Ireland while the Romans were conquering Britain. They were not a single nation governed by a strong king, but a nation of many nations. A great deal of the land was forest, but there were many openings in that wide-growing forest—green plains which good kings had cleared in order that their flocks and herds might graze there. In each of these plains there was a nation or tribe living under the government of its own king, and, between it and the other nations grew the great woods filled with beasts of the chase, herds of wild swine, the great red deer with his noble face and spreading antlers like trees, wild oxen, badgers, and troops of wolves. When children waked at night they heard the wild baying of the wolves. But their fathers and big brothers waged war upon the wolves, and had hounds of a type now extinct, animals of great size, speed, and courage to hunt them down.

These kings lived in houses made very cleverly of straight fir trees, interlaced with rods and twigs. The houses were round and had cup-shaped roofs thatched neatly with rushes. Between the twigs,

the builders hammered in moss like the caulking between the planks of boats, to keep out the wind, and round the walls, on the inside, the occupiers hung up an arras of thick cloth, brightly-coloured, blue, green, and purple. The fire was in the middle of the house, and the smoke escaped through a hole in the roof. In King's houses clear-burning timber, and such as gave out a pleasant odour, was generally used. Round the King's house were smaller ones for his people, and encircling the whole of the little city so formed there ran a strong rampart, with a palisade of timber, and round the rampart a foss filled with water. There was a draw-bridge which was always raised at night before supper, which was the great event of the day. Then the King sat in his high seat, and all his people feasted together before him, none being excluded. The poor swine-herd who had been herding his swine all day in the forest now shut them up in their pens, and sat down to a good hot supper at the king's table. Remember this when we come to the story of St Patrick's captivity in Ireland, for he herded the swine of one of these patriarchal kings.

Usually a good many of these small kings joined together in leagues and elected one king to rule over them, and to be their commander in war. All spoke the same language, had the same stories and traditions, and worshipped the same gods. The bards and harpers, who went freely and perpetually over the whole island, told them of the goodness

Shake. A. S.
the staked
home
& possibly
W. Car-brey
car-dell

or bravery of kings living far away, so that kings in the far north were known to kings in the south, and friendships were thus formed and kind messages and gifts exchanged between men who were separated by long distances, and by many deep woods and trackless mountains. So sometimes one excellent king had a great many other kings for his servants, and could lead out to war a large army. He was then called not *Ri*, which means king, but *Ard-Ri* or High King, a king of kings.

As the forests grew less and the plains more spacious the wars too became more frequent, and were conducted upon a larger scale. For the divine wisdom which made man and the whole world has provided too for the making of nations. A nation to be really a nation must be at peace with itself and subject to one king, not to a great many. It might seem a better way for people wishing to become a nation to elect their king and then loyally to obey him. But no king in any country was ever made in that way. The kings of all our European nations came up as the result of an immense amount of fighting between small kings and between powerful families, each of which thought it had the best right to be the Royal Family. In the same way in Ireland when the forests were cut down or pierced with roads, and when people increased in number, and the various septs and tribes were obliged to have dealings with each other, great wars began, and if Ireland had been left to herself a King of Ireland and a Royal

Pendragon
Bretwolda
Arthur
Ard-ri
belly on?

Family of Ireland would have come up in the long run out of those wars, just as out of the wars of the Saxon nations of England the King of the English at last appeared.

In later times Tara was the capital of Ireland, and the kings of Tara kings of Ireland, but when the Romans were conquering Britain, the strongest of the various royal families, which aimed at the kingship of all Ireland, appeared in the north, in Ulster. Here, at a place called Emain Macha, near the city of Armagh, was the chief palace and strength of a most noble race of men who called themselves the Red Branch. In dim old times they began to be great and to conquer, and to subject to themselves the various nations of Ulster. They produced one after another a succession of excellent kings, so excellent that a little after the time of Julius Cæsar, these kings of Emain Macha ruled most of the north of Ireland. At the time of their greatest glory and renown their king was Concobar MacNessa, Concobar, son of Nessa. He is described as tall and straight, with bright and yellow hair, and a reddish-coloured forked beard, his complexion white and ruddy with "two large blue eyes flaming in his head." He had a shield called Ocean in the midst of which there was a woman painted as a sign. When Concobar was in danger, the shield roared, and the sea that encircled Ireland roared responsively a note of warning. The laws of chivalry which were widely observed over Europe in the Middle Ages are

found strong in Ireland even in these times. These laws commanded fair play in battle, respect for bards, minstrels, and women, and for all who were weak and helpless. Of one of Concober's knights it is related that when in single combat he had injured the arm of his opponent, he bade his people bind up his own corresponding arm that the battle might be equal. Another of Concober's knights met his death while seeking to save the life of a bard. Of a third, it is related, that when one of his warriors suggested to him a stratagem by adopting which he might overcome his enemy, he was greatly displeased. Full of wrath he rushed at this dishonest counsellor who, seeing his angry face, turned to flee. The enraged knight did not kill him, but he did something better. He gave him a kick such as men could deliver in the heroic ages, and sent him stumbling and sprawling over I forget how many acres of ground, till at last he fell in a very unpleasant place. These Red Branch heroes would not fight by stratagem or take any shabby advantage of an enemy. They would not attack by night, or by surprise, or fight two to one. Rude as they were they were just such men as the Spanish Cid, and the brave French Chevalier Bayard would have owned as brothers. The name of the Red Branch Knight who delivered that immortal kick was Fergus Mac Roy. From him Carrig-Fergus, that is to say the Rock of Fergus, takes its honourable name. Another of Concober's knights was attacked, shot at by arrows, and

Carrig
= Craig

nearly killed by a foolish and weak young man, who, like Paris in Homer's poem, happened to be a clever bow-man. The only revenge that the Red Branch Knight took, seeing his opponent to be so weak and unwarlike, was to cuff him soundly about the ears. The name of that knight was Cuculain, a knight so great and excellent that he deserves to have a chapter all to himself. Such generally were these grand old heroes of the Red Branch of Ulster, from whose strength and courage and other manly attributes sprang the rude beginnings of European chivalry, which was strong in Ireland before its beautiful laws began to be understood in the rest of Europe. As chivalry made its earliest appearance here, so, too, it lasted in Ireland longer, I think, than in any other country. Towards the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign, one of her Irish Generals, his name was Hugh O'Gallagher, was tempted to make a night attack on an enemy. He answered with noble disdain, "I will not fight with my enemy under cover of the darkness of the night, or take of him any unfair advantage whatsoever, but in the clear light of the sun I will fight with him a fierce battle."

The Red Branch believed themselves to be under the special protection of the great war-goddess called Macha. Hence the name of their chief citadel and strength, Emain Macha, which means the height or eminence of Macha. Macha, they said, lived here as the wife of a mortal hero,

✓ e.g. Pen-maen

one of their old kings. Warring on giants, she once went out against them, alone took their three kings captive, bound them with wythes, and brought them hither *on her back*. Then she took the pin of her brooch, and with it traced on the plain, the outlines of a city, set these giants to build it for her, and, as they laboured, cracked about their heads her sounding thongs.

At one time over a great part of Europe the war chariot was in use. Homer's heroes fought from chariots. The memory of the Romans does not reach as far back as the Italian age of chariots, but when Julius Cæsar invaded Britain the warriors of Cassivelaunus fought against him from war cars. The art of fighting from chariots was practised at the same time in Ireland. In the days of Concobair MacNessa the Irish were a chariot-fighting nation. Concobair and his knights of the Red Branch went out to war in their thundering chariots. Seen through the luminous mists of loving memory all things in the eyes of the bards seemed vast and superhuman. The Red Branch Knights were of gigantic stature. When in their chariots they crossed Ireland their steeds drank rivers dry.

While the Red Branch and their King Concobair flourished in Ulster, Connaught was governed by a Queen, Queen Meave. She is described as a beautiful woman, yellow-haired, with a long pale face. She went out to battle like a man, and hurled her spears like an accomplished warrior.

When she rode forth there were nine chariots in front of her and nine behind, nine on the right hand and nine on the left, that she might not be troubled by the press of the people. She had a husband, indeed, but he was of no account. At the same time the Province of Leinster was governed by another woman who is called the Half-Red Meave: She was auburn-haired, as Meave of Connaught was yellow-haired. In this, which we may call the heroic age of Irish history, there were a great many celebrated women, some queens and warrioresses, some bards, some druidesses, and some judges.

Isat cea Cartimandua

CHAPTER VI.

ASCENT OF TARA.

BUT it was not destined that Emain Macha should become the capital of Ireland, or the Red Branch Kings Ard-Ris of the Island. After the heroic days of Concobar and Cuculain the Red Branch declined. Their great force was, as it were, spent and used up. Then Tara began to become great and conspicuous. Tara is a large green round hill on the southern bank of the Boyne. From its top one can see most of Meath. By slow degrees the kings of Tara and of the surrounding rich plains began to rule far and wide, and gather under their authority many distant kings. This was the time when the Roman pro-consuls governed Britain, and established widely there the Roman law and Roman order and civilization. Between them and the kings of Tara there was peace, and peaceful friendly intercourse. Without losing in Roman slavery their native hardihood and self-respecting manhood, the Irish kings learned much that was useful and good from the civilized Romans, who were so near them. Now the Irish began to build water-mills, and to give up the use of the old hand-quern. The first mill was built by a king of Tara

upon a neighbouring stream called the Shining One, now the Nanny Water, a stream rich in bulrushes, water-lilies, and all manner of water flowers. This good king, the bards said, built the mill because he had pity upon the poor grinding thralls, one of whom was a beautiful and delicate maiden whom he loved, perhaps a Christian. Of these kings of Tara three became very famous and powerful. The first of these was Conn of the Hundred Battles, a huge and fierce warrior, red-haired, with mighty limbs, headlong and impetuous, a man blazing with ceaseless energy, who seldom or never was out of his battle harness. Of him the bards sang, "His march was the rush of a Spring tide, and his journeying the evacuation of territories, and the whole earth was filled with his glory." But in his fiery soul there were springs too of sweet affection. Once he sent his foster-brothers on an embassy; they were slain by the king to whom he sent them. It was night when the tidings of that slaughter were brought to Conn. He sat down, and, in his wrath and grief, without uttering one word, chewed down the ashen haft of his great spear till his teeth *screeched* against the bronze blade. Such was Conn of the Hundred Battles, who exalted Tara over all cities, and from whose loins sprang innumerable kings powerful and famous. His name survives in the name of one of our provinces, Connaught or Conn-Acht^v means Children of Conn.

The next was Conn's son Art, surnamed the

*vConn-âch
(ach-aw)*

Solitary. Unlike his father he was mild and serene, a just and upright king, and like Isaac in the Old Testament, apparently fond of solitude and meditation. His work was mainly the consolidation of the conquests of his fiery sire.

The third was Cormac son of Art, son of Conn, usually called Cormac Mac Art.* After Concoabar of the Red Branch he was the most beautiful being that ever appeared in Ireland, tall and nobly formed, white and ruddy, with long yellow glistening hair and curling beard, teeth like pearls, lips red as the rowan berries, "from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot without the least blemish or imperfection." Like Solomon, too, Cormac though most wise and also most valiant, was, in peace-time, glorious in his apparel. He rebuilt Tara splendidly, and held there every autumn Parliaments of his subject-kings who came to him from all quarters of the island. It was he who built the mill on the Nanny Water. It was to him that the god Angus Ogue is said to have appeared in the gloaming. This most excellent king was either a Christian or a follower of some Roman philosophical sect, Epicurean, or Platonist, or Stoic. At all events he did not worship the gods of his country.

↓ The Roman pro-consuls now drew their best legions out of Ireland. Owing to their size, beauty, and valour, owing to their loyalty also, and amenability to discipline, many Irish warriors were at this time drafted into the Praetorian

* Coemac = Cawer-fab? Art = W. Arthur?

Cohort, and made the guards of the life of Cæsar. When the Romans decided not to make any attempt on the liberties of the Irish, they began to cultivate friendly relations with the Irish kings.

CHAPTER VII.

FINN AND HIS MEN.

DURING these three reigns there flourished in Ireland a strange and strangely interesting race of warrior-hunters called the Fians or the Fianna of Erin. All the forests and wild places of Ireland they claimed as their own. From May Day to Hallow Eve they hunted these forests and waste places with their enormous dogs, dogs which when conveyed to Rome frightened the Romans. These dogs were really very gentle and affectionate, though even one of them could pull down a red deer or the fierce wild bull.

From of old the Fians had exercised these great privileges in Ireland, but in the reign of Conn, Art, and Cormac, the Fians reached the height of their fame and power. Their supreme captain at this time was Finn, son of Cool,[†] still widely remembered by the people of Ireland. His hair was like molten silver, his complexion dazzlingly white and ruddy, his countenance like the sun. He was very wise, kind, and fatherly, and in his heart there was no guile. All the Fians loved him like a father. His son was Ossian the great poet and bard of the Gael, his grandson, Oscur, the type of courage,

+W. Col

magnanimity, and unconquerable strength and power. Ossian could never be brought to believe that God was as strong as Oscur. In hell it is Oscur who guards the Fianna against the demons; God gave him a flail of iron, the two parts of which were joined by one rush which God promised would never snap or wear out. He gave Oscar leave therewith to chastise all hell should Satan and his angels ever dare to molest the excellent Fians. One more of Finn's men I will name, and that is Diarmid the Brown, the type of masculine beauty and stainless chivalry, bravest of the brave and gentlest of the gentle.

Of his Fians Ossian sang thus, and the proud boast was true,—

“We, the Fianna of Finn, never lied,
Falsehood was never attributed to us,
By courage and the strength of our hands
We used to come out of every difficulty.”

Another of Finn's men, the very wise and in all things excellent Caelta, when asked how it came to pass that the Fians prospered so greatly without having knowledge of the true God, answered—

“It was because we had courage in our hearts, strength in our hands, and discretion in our tongues.”

Truly, a great race were those Fians, and their

glory will never die.¹ It was of the Fians that a modern Irish poet composed these lines—

“Long, long ago, beyond the misty space
Of twice a thousand years,
In Erin old there lived a mighty race,
Taller than Roman spears.”

¹ For a fuller account of the Fians, see the Author’s “Finn and his Companions.”

CHAPTER VIII.

NIAL OF THE NINE HOSTAGES.

THE Roman Empire was cradled in heroism, and its infancy nourished by heroic songs. The genius of the antique Romans was essentially Northern. It was not Teutonic, for their language does not show a Teutonic element, but it does show most extensive Celtic element. In fact, between Rome and the Teutonic nations there lay a broad belt of Celtic territory. The north of Italy was all Celtic, and named Cis-Alpine Gaul, for the race whom the Greeks called Celts were by the Romans called Gauls.

From time to time, in prehistoric ages, hosts of Celtic invaders from the North must have swept over the Italian Peninsula, subdued the degenerate Italians, and then gradually become absorbed in the mass of the people. From some such invasion probably sprang the antique Romans, exhibiting on the banks of the Tiber the manly and robust virtues which they or their fathers brought with them from the hardy north. They too had their bards, weavers of heroic song, a great race of men, perhaps the true founders of Rome, singing men, and historians worthy of the heroes whose

actions they celebrated. Various specimens of that rude but noble literature have been preserved by the historian Livy. Their tale of Romulus and Remus, how they were suckled by a she-wolf, they may have brought from the North. I find it too among the heroic tales of Ireland. It is told of Cormac Mac Art, but told better with more vividness and more intense realism. When Cormac became king the wolves, his foster-brethren who were fed with him at the same breast, shared his success and his glory. They were with him in Tara, and accompanied him when he went forth to war. The Irish bards would not allow their wolf-suckled king to forget his old chums. From those antique bard-inspired Romans sprang the Romans who conquered the world. But these Romans had no bards, only effeminate poetasters — bad poets — to amuse them, and stupid laborious triflers called philosophers to instruct them. Moreover, the base subject Italian population gained upon them and corrupted them. At last their mighty Empire, sapped and undermined at many points, tottered to its fall. In vain wise Roman generals enrolled legion after legion of the free warriors of the North. No help from without could arrest the decay which was in its heart and brain.

About this time Roman writers, like complaining sick people, began to write a great deal about the iniquity and cruelty of a barbarous nation called the Scots. But the Scots, you know now, were the

Irish. It was the children of the Red Branch heroes, and the children of Finn's brave warriors and hunters, about whose dealings with their Empire these degenerate Romans were complaining so loudly. So when you see in books of history, expressions which are only echoes of those weak lamentations, you will know what to think of them.

Here in this north-west corner of Europe the Empire was attacked, broken, and scattered by the brave and sturdy Saxons from the East, by the Picts and Irish of Caledonia from the North, and by the Irish of Ireland from the West. It was a great day for Ireland. For the great fighting races of the island a career was now opened both more noble and more profitable than that of contending with each other for glory or for mastery. The God of Battles whose eyes know not slumber nor sleep, whose just wrath no nation or Empire can escape, then, now, and for ever, gave over those rich and populous lands of Britain and Gaul to the Irish for a prey. They went forth from Ireland like eagles : the Romans and their slave populations cowered beneath them like partridges or hares, went out empty and came back full, laden with the rich rewards of their temerity and valour. At this time several Irish commanders gained great fame and great power and plunder by their foreign wars. The best and most famous of them flourished about the year 400 A.D. First he subdued all his Irish

Bush

rivals, then he took the Ard-Riship, High kingship of the Irish colony in North Britain, finally the sovereignty of the Picts, so making himself the captain of a great confederacy of war-like tribes, and indeed a sort of Imperator or Emperor, in these north-western regions. Nine kings in hand-fetters ever accompanied him as hostages for the fidelity of these their nations, that is to say the Irish of Ireland, the Dalriadic Irish of Caledonia and the nation of the Picts. His name was Nial which signifies "noble warrior," and his surname "of the nine hostages."

Nial was the youngest of half a dozen brothers, all brave and warlike youths. His father, who was also King of Ireland, wished to find out which of them was the best and ought to be his successor. He set fire to his chief-smith's forge, and bade the boys run in and save the smith's property. They did so, and came running out through the flames and smoke, one with the bellows, another with the tongs, others bearing other light and portable things ; but Nial the youngest came out deliberately bearing on his broad and strong shoulders the ponderous anvil. "Nial shall succeed me," said the king. When his subject kings rebelled, it was Nial who ever bore the brunt of the war. He was, as may be imagined, big and strong and like most of his race had yellow hair. Here are two stray verses of bardic song concerning this illustrious person, Nial of the Nine Hostages.

"A challenge of battle between Cerc¹ and Nial,
Whether near or far distant,
Fierce the tramp on every shore
Of Nial, the son of Eocha Moymodoan.

"When we used to go with Nial upon his hostings
As yellow as the flowering *Sovarchey*,²
Brighter than gold from the refiner's crucible
Were the locks that adorned the head of my hero."

Nial was slain on the Loire in Gaul by an arrow shot at him from the opposite bank of the river.

He was succeeded by his nephew Dathi, the last unbaptised king of Ireland. He carried on his uncle's work. He was slain by a flash of lightning while engaged in one of his predatory excursions on the continent, while crossing the Alps for the invasion of Italy, according to the bards. The officer who succeeded him in command of the army was Tomalta the Vehement. He fought twelve battles on his way home from the place where Dathi was slain. Tomalta brought Dathi's body with him. It was buried on the right bank of the Shannon in a great mound. His warriors set up a tall pillar over the mound and held funeral games around it.

¹ A Southern Irish King, who was foolish enough to dare the Ard-Ri. Wars at this time were of the nature of duels. The place and time were arranged and the battle fought.

² The St John's Wort.

*See one at *Bruaigh Tírann*

CHAPTER IX.

PATRICK SON OF CALPURN.

ONCE when Nial's people were plundering Gaul, they lighted on a handsome unprotected villa, in the neighbourhood of a city. Here they took captive a bright-faced boy and two girls, his sisters. All three were children of a Brito-Roman officer or magistrate, who held a command in the neighbourhood of Dumbarton on the Clyde. A little fragment of the Roman Empire, like a patch of snow, still remained in this place, surviving, no doubt, because it consented to pay tribute to Nial or to one of Nial's sub-kings in those parts. The children were at the time on a visit with relations in Gaul. Their father was here too. He seems to have been in the adjoining city at the time when Nial's men made this important seizure. I say important, for the bright-faced boy was Patrick, the great apostle of the Gael.

The plunderers, according to the custom of all these northern nations, resolved to sell the children as slaves. They sold Patrick to a chieftain in the county of Antrim, his sisters they sold in the county of Louth. Patrick was now charged with the duty of feeding the swine of his master. In

the morning he drove them into the woods to eat beech-nuts, and mast and grub in the ground there for pig-nuts and other roots. In the evening he winded his horn to collect them out of the wide forest. When he reached his master's dun, he penned them, and then came into the chief's great hall for his supper. Here, every night, the new slave was served like the rest, with a good hot supper. Probably he wore a collar round his neck, with his master's name or mark upon it, like Gurth in the famous story. At first, no doubt, he was very miserable, for he had been taken from riches, ease, and luxury, and had to live like one of his father's slaves at home ; he was taken from friends and relations, parents and sisters, and flung amongst strange people. Their language was probably not strange to him ; he must have learned it when he lived on the banks of the Clyde. Though he considered himself a Roman, and looked down on the Dal-Riadic Irish, he knew the Roman language very ill. His new life as a slave was very new and strange to him, but it was a good discipline nevertheless. It taught him to feel for slaves, and for humble people, whom a rich and high-born youth is sure to despise. But the boy Patrick was young and strong, and God, as the saying runs, tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. He was young and strong, and also a boy full of fire and animation. He was warm-hearted and affectionate besides. Many a poor Irish emigrant has felt as unhappy as he, yet has righted himself ere long,

Domes.

and found his new life and associates dear to him. The king, his master, was kind to him. There is nothing to show that the boy was treated with any harshness. This king's name was Miliuc. Of him, we only know that Patrick was his slave, and that he was a firm believer in the old gods, a resolute worshipper of idols. Patrick seems to have remembered him with affection and regard.

Now, for the first time, the boy began to think seriously about religion. As he lay alone through the long days, outstretched in the silent galleries of the forest, under the roof of whispering leaves, thought came and went, of life and death, and the life after death, of God and Christ, and the behaviour which would please them. Very earnestly he now prayed. The idolatry which was practised on all sides, and especially in the house of his superstitious master, compelled his thoughts more and more in the direction of his own faith. About that faith he had to keep silent, so in his soul, on account of his silence, it had a double power. When he waked in the night he used to go out into the darkness to pray, that the pagans might not hear him. This he did, even in snow and frost, kneeling in the cold snow and praying, for his heart was hot within him. In the king's hall at night, he heard much conversation about the state of Ireland, and the mutual relations of the kings, also of the relations of the kings with the Druids and with the great and powerful bardic class. He learned a great deal of knowledge,

which was useful to him afterwards, and kept a guard upon his tongue, for he was very wise and circumspect. What he learned he stored up in his mind. From the house of Miliuc, he seems to have been sold into the west of Ireland, to a chief who dwelt at a place called Focluti, now Killala Co. Mayo. Here he made new friends, and talked with them about religion. Paganism was not so fanatical in this place.

After many years he had a dream in which he saw a man come to him and bid him go home. The man in the dream was called Victoricus. He ran away from his master, and travelled two hundred miles before he came to the port which had been indicated by the man. From this port he sailed for the Continent.

Of his history now for many years we know little. But long afterwards, when he was now well advanced in life, his thoughts reverted affectionately to Ireland and the Irish. Then he had another dream. The same man seemed to come to him with a letter out of Ireland, and at the same time he heard the young men, his ancient friends who lived at Focluti, call out to him and cry,

“Come back to us, O holy youth, and walk amongst us as you used to do.”

He now determined to come to Ireland openly and boldly, and preach to the people. He had powerful friends somewhere in Britain or on the Continent, for he came to Ireland with followers,

any climate
of Chit.
are certain -
The Clyde!

and well provided with money. He was a man of note from his first appearance in Ireland, and worked a mighty revolution there.

The fact was that Ireland now for a long time had been undergoing a Christianizing process. All sorts of Christian influences had been stealing into the country for centuries ; thousands, tens of thousands of Christian slaves, for one item, many of them cultivated and refined, and many beautiful Christian maidens, who soon took captive the hearts of their fierce captors. The Pagan religion had been sapped and undermined. It had grown hollow, and heartless, and formal. It was now no longer the ardent worship of the gods, but the vain and ceremonial worship of wooden idols. As such it was a part of the social and political system. It was, of course, upheld by the Druids, to whom it was a business and a profession, but the kings did not believe much in the idols, and they were jealous of the great power of the Druids.

Shortly after the coming of Patrick, and owing to a strong impulse proceeding from him, a revolution broke out, the Christians and the Christianized chiefs rose against the Druids. At one of the great conventions in Tara the storm broke loose, Patrick and the Christians triumphed, and the Druids were slaughtered. In one day Paganism fell from its high place. The whole system was decayed and went down at a single blow. In this revolution Miliuc fell. His dun was burned over him and he perished there in the midst of his idols. Patrick

in the new order of things, became the most powerful man in Ireland after the Ard-Ri, and used his great authority with wisdom and circumspection. He was a truly great as well as good man, and as for his intellect, his whole mental power and force, if we had nothing else to guide us to an opinion but his glorious Hymn, the noblest ever made since the time of the men who made the Psalms, we would be justified in believing that this man, Patrick the Briton, was one of the master minds of all ages. He guided wisely the revolution which he brought about, and nursed skilfully the infant Christian Church of Ireland. He was not learned in books, with the exception of the one book, the Bible, which he studied deeply, and knew well. But he understood men, he understood Ireland and the Irish people. His mind was great and strong, and when he faced kings and stood up to speak in the great conventions, his presence must have been very imposing and authoritative. Nor was he a meek man at all, but proud rather in a noble way, and liable to be carried away by great storms of anger. We are told indeed that "he cherished the sons of life," but also that he did not hesitate to "exterminate the sons of death," or those whom he believed to be such, for he was filled with a flaming zeal for the cause of Christ, as that cause presented itself to his mind. But he never forgot his prudence or what he knew of the actual condition of the country. So we find him taking into his service the "sons of kings" and their warriors

to protect him in dangerous places, and even sometimes paying Pagan judges, in order that they should not in their decisions lean hardly against his infant Churches. Addressing one of these Churches he tells them frankly that on their behalf, and in this way, he had paid the value of eighteen men. This was bribing, no doubt, and whether right or wrong is a question I would leave to the casuists, but for the fact that I seem to see here the little rift within the lute, which in the end destroyed the music of Irish Christianity, a lack of straightforward, bold, and honest dealing, which afterwards became a notorious vice, so that many of our great saints were also great liars, and fell under the just scorn and contempt of those who had no religion at all but simply preserved the old instinctive Pagan abhorrence of falsehood and double-dealing.

CHAPTER X.

THE SOLITARIES.

PATRICK was no recluse. He lived and moved about familiarly in that half-Pagan, half-Christian Irish world, forming all manner of personal relations with the kings, the great men, and the people. But when he died Irish Christianity took a new form. Now monasteries began to abound, and all the most fervent young Christian men despised that Irish world, secluded themselves from it, lived in solitude, and devoted themselves entirely to religious thoughts and practices. A young Christian enthusiast would go off by himself, build a little wicker-house beside a running stream, cultivate a little patch of land there, live upon its produce, and devote himself altogether to bodily labour and to religion. He drank water from the stream which also supplied him with cresses to eat with his oat-cake or coarse barley-bread. Sometimes, like the holy Erc, one of Patrick's pupils who lived by the Boyne, he kept a flock of geese, and found half a goose-egg sufficient food for twenty-four hours. He would lie long hours in the cold water to cool his heated imagination and bring down his bodily desires. Beside his dwelling-house he built

another little thatched cage as an oratory. Here he set up his altar and lit his candles; here he used to pray and ring his little bell while he prayed. These recluses attached some mysterious meaning to the sound of the bell. As the Pagan kings or warriors passed by at night they saw the gleaming of the candles, heard the mysterious ringing of the bell, and the voice of the lonely monk raised in prayer or swelling with passionate notes as he sang his hymns and canticles. Then they muttered their own spells and incantations and rode swiftly away. They believed that these men were Druids and enchanters of a new and more powerful order. The Druids whom they knew were worldly men, proud and arrogant, loving feasts and assemblies, and all manner of good things and fine clothes, and the awe and respect of the people. But these new Druids, dressed in a single coarse garment, who shaved off their hair, and so made themselves ugly, who drank only water, and ate only goose-eggs and water-cresses and coarse bread, and shrank from the gaze of the world, had already achieved what to the simple Pagan mind was a great miracle, the conquest of all natural desires. So they believed easily that these strange recluses could exert supernatural powers, that their blessing would mean prosperity to those whom they blessed, and their cursing bring about awful consequences not to be described. By degrees then the recluses, although they did not look at all for that result, began to

exercise a great power over the minds of the simple kings, and as the reputation of the Druids and the respect of the people for their rites, spells, and magical arts grew less and less, so the influence of the recluses and the fear of them grew more and more.

In the meantime the poor recluse thinking nothing of these things, thinking only of his immortal soul, of his God, and of his Saviour, pursued his own way in his solitude. He often made friends with the wild animals of the forest and converted them into domestic pets. Ciaran of Saighar so tamed a fox, a wolf, a wild boar, and a badger. He used to call them his monks and himself the abbot of that little monastery. Once the fox committed a theft, Ciaran put him under a penance and the fox submitted to it as if he understood. They were fond of birds too and tamed them. It is told of Kevin of Glendalough that a blackbird laid her eggs in his hand and hatched her young brood there, which of course is only an exaggerated way of saying that he had blackbird pets.

Then when the holiness of the recluse began to be spoken about and when visitors became aware of his piety and goodness, another young Christian enthusiast would come and build his wicker house near to that of the recluse and become his pupil and servant. Then there would come another and again a third, and so on until the original recluse became the head and Abbot of a little monastery about which the cultivated patches grew more

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frequent. Then the Abbot would feel the necessity of sending out a little monastic colony and the neighbouring king with the consent of his chieftains would grant him a piece of land for that purpose. So things went on until the recluse or his successor became the head of a large monastic fraternity and a considerable power in that region, and the kings in self-defence or to secure their various political ends were obliged to cultivate the friendship of the Abbot, or Comarb, which was the Irish word. Thus all over Ireland many mere monks whose minds were set seriously only on religious thoughts, found themselves unexpectedly a great power in the land. So they were drawn into politics and great worldly controversies and their conduct in that new and strange sphere was far from wise and indeed brought about for Ireland a great calamity, the first and greatest of all her national calamities. The Comarbs became great politicians and by no means prospered in that calling, for which, owing to their manner of life, they were unsuited in an eminent degree. They forgot the divine saying "my kingdom is not of this world," and forgot also the vulgar proverb which recommends the shoemaker to stick to his last.

CHAPTER XI.

THE OVERTHROW OF TARA.

IN the dim twilight of the beginning of Irish history, one of the first things that we see clearly is the green hill of Tara crowned with many buildings of wicker work, or jointed timber, with brightly painted gleaming walls under their thatch of straw or rushes, and one of the first things that we understand is the peculiar and great meaning of that classic hill beside the darkly-flowing waters of the Boyne. From of old it was a sacred hill, endeared to the wild and warlike nations of Ireland by very ancient and sacred associations, the key to which it is now difficult to find. Famous kings and warriors, bards and druids, were buried there, although it was not one of the great cemeteries; famous women, too, amongst them Tea, wife of great Heremon son of Milesius. Here, no doubt, were temples of the gods. Here, on May-day was kindled the sacred fire from which all hearths were lit. Here were great halls as splendid with coloured drapery, bright bronze and pillars of carved red-yew as men could make them, halls in which the kings of Tara feasted their sub-kings. Thronged assemblies of all the notables were held here, rude

*Herē = a.s. army
Miles = L. swar.
soldiers*

Parliaments of the kings and their free-born kinsmen, and of bards, historians, and druids. Every Autumn, as Hallow Eve came round, a vast fair was held here for many diverse purposes, for the making of new laws, and the correction of old, the recitations of poems, for barter and exchange too, and also for games, horse-races, chariot-races, foot-races, and many forms of contest, while the atmosphere of religion hallowed all the place. To draw a weapon in anger here was death. No fine or eric was accepted for that wrong.

By degrees the king of Tara came to be regarded as the high King of Ireland, the king over all others; and then the notion began to prevail that all other kings should not only respect, but obey the lord of the sacred hill. No one was regarded as high king who was not king of Tara, and whoever was king of Tara, was regarded as high King of Ireland. The little wars became great wars, and the great wars revolved round Tara. In the reigns of Conn of the Hundred Battles, of his son Art the Solitary, and of his grandson, Cormac the Magnificent, these notions grew and prevailed in the minds of the people. Tara made another great step forward when, in the reign of Cormac's son, the powerful and warlike fraternity of the Fians was challenged, conquered, and exterminated by the king of Tara. In the great battle of Gabra Cormac's son Cairbre of the Liffey overthrew the Fians utterly. Not long afterwards Tara gained again by the overthrow of the Red Branch and the

* Has Cairbre no. Llanbedr, Bangor, any connection with the many Irish incursions & raids into N. Wales?

consequent burning and desolation of its northern rival Emain Macha. Finally when Nial and Dathi and other kings of Tara were leading forth the warlike youth of Ireland for the conquest and plunder of the Roman Empire, the fact that they held such high military commands, often for a long time, caused the kings of the sacred mount to become more and more powerful at home. Finally, when the Christian revolution broke the power of the Druids, the immediate effect was to release the Kings of Ireland, that is to say the Kings of Tara, from a rival authority which must have greatly shackled and hampered them as rulers of men. In Tara the Ard-Ri ruled now without the Ard-Druid. So, not long after the Christian revolution we perceive in Ireland a certain condition of things which proves that the High King had become very powerful indeed, and that Ireland was fast growing to be a nation. In primitive countries divided amongst many small nations and their kings and in which there was much war, all wrongs and crimes could be atoned for by payments. The injurer secured pardon and peace by paying to the injured person gold or slaves, or rich garments, cattle, or weapons, or, as in the days of Homer and his heroes, even brazen pots, tripods as Homer poetically calls them. During the stormy times of the Heptarchy, when the wise and valiant Saxons, little suspecting that that would be the issue of their fightings, were engaged in the creation of their own monarchy but had not yet succeeded, the same

laws or customs prevailed in Saxon land. It was not a foolish usage at all, but a very wise one. It prevented blood feuds, prevented families and tribes from exterminating each other by pursuing private vengeance to the bitter end. Now a real king governing a whole people would not suffer such atonement to be made for crime. He would not consider a murder justly atoned for by the payment of cows or swords. As supreme king he would regard all crime as an insult and wrong to himself and to the majesty of his office. All over Europe when the kings of the nations came up ascending grandly in their strength and glory and power, out of the storms and tempests of fraternal wars, they put down the system of the *Eric*, or wehrgeld^{*} as the Saxons called it, and themselves sternly punished transgressors. But kings had to be very strong indeed before they could do this. Now in Ireland after the Christian revolution and before the Comarbs of the monasteries became powerful, while they were yet true solitaries, we find crime, no matter where committed, punished by the King of Ireland and those private atonements of crime by the payment of cattle and precious things put down. Crime as an offence against the King's peace and the King's Majesty, was punished by him and could not be atoned for otherwise without his distinct permission. This proves that the King of Ireland, that is to say the King of Tara, was now not a mere taker of tribute, but a true king and ruler. The fact is most re-

* Have we here in the A.S. term wehrgeld the same root as in the W. gwer, in gverint?

markable and interesting because at this time over the rest of the north of Europe erics and wehrgelds were universally accepted as atonements for wrong and crime.

In the seventh century there ruled in Tara a most excellent king descended straight from Nial of the Nine Hostages. His name was Diarmid^{or} Dermitius. He, like his predecessors, would not permit eric to be paid for crime, but himself punished the criminal.

A glance at the map of Ireland will show the counties divided into small parts each with its own name. These sub-divisions of the counties are the baronies. They represent the kingdoms of the innumerable ancient kings. Each of these kings had a fortified palace surrounded by palisaded ramparts and ditches filled with water, and when a king had a good many of these kings under him, of course his palace was much bigger, and still more strongly fortified, with large ramparts and deep fosses. So all Ireland was dotted over with the strong places of these small kings, and consequently, relying on these great strengths, the small kings and their over kings often stood stiffly on their rights against the King of Ireland and defied his officers and lieutenants. Seeing this King Diarmid formed a wise and great design. He determined to compel these kings to pull down their fortifications which were so many checks and barriers to the free passage of his justice through the realm.

Dynamal

In the history of all Europe we find that as soon as the kings of the nations emerged, each of them almost in exact proportion to his strength and power, compelled his great nobles, that is to say his sub-kings, for such they really were, to dismantle their fortifications and allow his justice to pass into their palaces as freely as into the cabins of the poor. But a great many centuries passed before the kings of Europe were strong enough to make their Earls, Dukes, and Barons, pull down their fortifications. Several of the Plantagenet kings of England were not strong enough for that feat. Indeed, generally the European kings were unable to dismantle the fortifications of their nobles, until the cities, growing rich, populous and powerful, came to their assistance.

Yet in the seventh century the king of Ireland King Diarmid, made the attempt in a very serious and resolute manner, and would have succeeded too but for strong opposition proceeding from a very unexpected and unlikely quarter. In one of his parliaments held at Tara he procured the enactment of a law empowering him to make this change. It was of course violently resisted by the more powerful of the sub-kings, but the smaller kings and the people in general saw that the law was good. In fine the law was made in that parliament, and King Diarmid proceeded to execute it.

There was at the time in Connaught a king

who held many small kings there under his authority. He was a very good king in his way and the most generous and munificent Irish king of whom there is any record, and the most hospitable man who ever appeared in Ireland. His name was Guairé. When the king's officer came to Guairé's palace and bade him take down his ramparts and fortifications that the High King's spear, emblem of Ard-Regal power and justice, might pass freely in, Guairé not only refused but killed the officer. So Guairé in spite of the law made at Tara, though it was the height of justice and vitally important for the making of the Irish nation, went into rebellion against the King of Ireland in defence of his fortifications. Then King Diarmid summoned his warriors, nor did he delay to collect a great host, but with his own men marched westward and crossed the Shannon into Connaught. Many Connaught chieftains joined him, seeing that his cause was good. So the King of Ireland conquered Guairé and expelled him from his kingdom. That victory gave Diarmid's law great authority and far and wide the kings began to pull down their fortifications that the High King's spear, Ireland's spear, might pass freely through and into the inmost recesses of their palaces.

Guairé was now an outlaw. But he might return at any moment, and being extremely popular owing to his limitless hospitality and also very warlike, might raise fresh disturbances in

Connaught, Diarmid was naturally anxious to secure the person of the bold mutineer. Guairé fled first into Munster. There one of those holy recluses gave him shelter and sanctuary. For the recluses had become so much respected and feared that most men hesitated about invading their sanctuaries, even to pluck thence abandoned criminals. But Diarmid, pursuing a great policy of State, would not let superstitious fears stand in his way. He insisted on the surrender of Guairé "I am but a poor weak solitary," said the recluse to Guairé, "go to Ruadan of Lorrha. He is famous and powerful and moreover a very hard, stiff, stubborn and determined man, he will hold you even against the King of Ireland." Guairé went to Ruadan of Lorrha. Neither would Diarmid tolerate in the great Ruadan of Lorrha the right to defy his authority and withhold against him an insurgent vassal. Then Guairé fled to Britain. But Diarmid had State-relations with the Princes of Wales, and even there Guairé^{*} could find no protection against the long arms of the King of Ireland. Guairé returned to Ruadan who again gave him sanctuary. King Diarmid again denied the right of Ruadan of Lorrha or of any Comarb or Solitary to shield an insurgent vassal, and openly in the face of all Ireland plucked Guairé out of Ruadan's hands, and led him in fetters to Tara as a State prisoner.

This Ruadan of Lorrha was no doubt in his own

* Where it under what name, does this Serig Sel, appear in Welsh history? Also what was the Irish form of "Serig Wydel"?

sphere a pious and holy person, but of Ireland's secular wants and necessities he knew nothing and probably cared nothing. All that he saw was that his sanctuary was profaned, and that his right to shelter criminals, fugitives and distressed persons in general, was trampled under foot by a tyrant king. He was a strong, bold, stern and implacable sort of man, and in his wrath determined to bring even the King of Ireland to his knees, and to vindicate his own right to give sanctuary to whom he pleased. He went to Brendan of Birr, another famous Comarb, to Molaise in the islands of the West, to Kevin at Glendalough, to the young Columba now commencing his famous career. In short he drew all the Comarbs great and small, famous or not so famous, into his league. In fact, this bold and determined ecclesiastic found means to league the Church of Ireland against the King of Ireland in defence of that right of sanctuary which no wise king would ever permit and no wise subject ever demand. As allies and abettors, the Comarbs had of course all the great sub-kings and all the persons, who from one cause or another were discontented and mutinous, and who, with or without good reason, disliked the growing authority of Tara's King. As the spokesmen of a great multitude of mutineers, the Saints demanded the restoration of Guairé to Ruadan of Lorrha, and also for the Comarbs of monasteries a general right of sanctuary. In reply, Diarmid made a very noble, kingly, and even prophetic speech.

Church
v.
State

He explained to them the justice of his cause. He showed them how necessary to Ireland was supreme royal authority, and how that could not co-exist with an irresponsible and capriciously exercised right of sanctuary. He predicted the great evils, the wars, the anarchy, the shedding of fraternal blood, which would succeed the destruction of the King of Ireland's power. He prophesied, and truly, the invasion of their own rights and lands by the sub-kings when there should be no supreme king to control them. He said many wise and kingly words to them, but all in vain. The Saints would have Guairé out of his hands, and also unlimited right of sanctuary. Diarmid refused. The Saints fasted against him, a practise which was supposed to have great efficacy, they rang their bells against him, they prayed against him and cursed him. His friends fell away, all the poor ignorant people regarded him as lost. But Diarmid still trusted in his soldiers, and especially in his guards, a standing army of trained men called "the Twelve Pillars of Tara." But the Saints fasted against the army too, rang their bells against them and cursed them, and the army too fell away. Ruadan of Lorrha regarding, and rightly, the sacred famous and classic hill of Tara as the source of that regal authority which he desired to destroy, went round the hill ringing his bell, cursing it and cursing every King of Ireland who should ever afterwards dare to dwell there. King Diarmid having no recourse left sadly submitted and surrendered to

the Saints. The Irish monarchy was broken; Tara overthrown by the Saints.

“The harp that once in Tara’s halls,
The soul of music shed,
Now hangs as mute on Tara’s walls
As if that soul were fled.”

Every one knows these lines, but every one does not know who tore the strings of that harp and stilled the noble music. Every one knows that Tara is desolate, but few by whom, why, when, and how that desolation was accomplished. The feat performed by Ruadan and “The Twelve Apostles of Ireland,” was much celebrated by the monks.* How different it looks to-day!

But King Diarmid had not yet suffered all that he was destined to endure from the Saints. One year with a sorely diminished and fading authority he was presiding according to his duty, over the great annual fair of Tailteen. It was somewhat like the annual convention of Tara, only more concerned with horse-races and all manner of contests and amusements. The King and his men kept the fair. It was death to draw a weapon there or even to injure anyone going to or coming from the fair.^o On this occasion an irascible young man drew his weapon and killed another. He fled for refuge to the celebrated Columba. Columba thought that his own sacred person was as good as any monastery, that wherever he chose to stand, it was Sanctuary and a holy place. But the King thought

* Poor Ireland - she is ever under thy day
wades the iron heel of the Church.

^o This ancient custom has still its counterpart
in the Welsh *Entebrod*. where no ‘notharf’ must be slain.

not and caused the young man to suffer the usual and righteous penalty for homicide committed in the midst of the great peaceful assembly of the men and women of Ireland. Columba vowed vengeance and withdrew:

Again, Columba had a controversy with another Saint about the ownership of a book. The two disputants referred the case to the decision of the King Diarmid, who made a perfectly just award *against Columba.*

Columba, though a saint, was still a young man, very proud, passionate, and arrogant. He was also very high born, and had the strongest kings of Ulster for his kinsmen. These now he stirred up in rebellion, and as the monarchy was already half broken by Ruadan of Lorrha and his "twelve apostles" they succeeded in beating him.

After this Columba had the grace to be sorry for his bad passions, and the ruin which he had inflicted on his native land. He sailed away to Scotland, where he became the apostle of the Scots and Picts, the founder of the famous monastery of Iona, and grew to be a very great name indeed.

When Diarmid, after all these events, was murdered by a bad chief called Hugh Duff, or Black Hugh, Columba cursed Hugh Duff. All these saints, I observe, were awful at cursing, cursed on small occasions as well as great. If a man looked crooked at them they cursed him.

With Diarmid the history of the Irish Monarchy

loses its interest. Since the day that Ruadan and his twelve apostles went round Tara cursing it and ringing their bells, no king after Diarmid had the pluck to live there and the monarchy disjoined from Tara swiftly decayed. But the monasteries ; the monasteries sprang up almost everywhere, and indeed, it is a cause of amazement how the poor country was able to support such crowds of monks as flourished in these centuries, the seventh, the eighth, and the ninth. Vast numbers of students, Irish and foreign, congregated to the more famous of these monasteries, such as Bangor, Clonard, and Clonmacnoise. They came from all parts attracted by their fame. Many Saxon boys and young men, sons of the Saxon nobles, came and were very hospitably entertained. The monks charged them nothing for tuition or maintenance, and even gave them freely the necessary books. So says the venerable Bede, which was true, no doubt, in many instances, but it is incredible that the Saxon kings and nobles did not send rich presents to such hospitable seats of learning. The buildings being all of timber—even the churches were of timber—have of course long since disappeared. On the site of the most famous monasteries where there were at one time as many as three thousand students, the visitor will now find only the remains of one or two little stone churches and perhaps the pediment of a round tower, and these built long after the glory of the monastic period had passed away. Each student reared for

* Mark how the Cymry has named their great teaching Monasteries Bangor.

himself a little wicker shealing, ramming moss between the twigs and staunching all with clay. He set up his roof tree and thatched the roof. The son of the king of Northumberland lived in such a little wicker hut while he abode here searching for wisdom, which one hopes he found. He learned at all events how to make pretty poems in the Gaelic tongue, one of which may still be read. The students were taught the Scriptures with, no doubt, a copious monastic interpretation, were taught to read Latin authors and Greek. The Irish monasteries at this date excelled too in penmanship, so that skilful scribes and illuminators of manuscripts were held in very high honour. The Book of Kells which visitors may see to-day in Trinity College, Dublin, was their most wonderful work in this sphere of industry, and is certainly an appalling monument of misdirected labour and too ingenious toil. The monks too, like Dunstan of Glastonbury, worked in metals and with great skill. We are not told that like him they ever took the devil by the nose with their tongs, but this labour like others helped to banish evil thoughts, which, of course, is the meaning of that quaint old Saxon story. Where there were so many eager and ardent minds at work, new thoughts on many subjects were likely to be struck out. Even in astronomy the Irish made good guesses. I have myself seen an old Irish manuscript in which it is maintained by the writer, who gives sound reasons too, that the

which of them?

sun is bigger than the earth. Again, the Irishman Vergil, when he appeared on the Continent, strongly asseverated that the world was round and had inhabitants on the other side. This bold asseveration seems to have caused a great scandal in Europe.

Great numbers of Irish missionaries and scholars now began to appear in different parts of the Continent. The name of Ireland became very celebrated for learning and religion, and the *perfervidum ingenium Scotorum*, the very fervent genius of the Irish, began to pass into current literature as a phrase. Meantime, there was not so much war in Ireland as one might have expected, seeing how it was all divided into little kingdoms with no master hand presiding over the whole. The Comarbs of the monasteries laboured incessantly to secure peace, and to a great extent succeeded. There was a considerable population and considerable wealth. The monasteries on their side became extremely rich, and very well worth plundering. No one however, in Ireland, as yet dared to raise a hand against a monastery. The Comarbs sat at the right hand of kings in all assemblies. Their termons or monastic lands stretched far and wide. Their power, secular as well as religious, was very great. Each haughty Comarb was invested with something of the supernatural attributes of the founder of the monastery, and as for those founders, they became as gods in the eyes of the people, and quite as terrible as were Lu Lam-fada,

* Terra, w. the. land. ^E

the Mor-Reega, and the Dagda in the time of the Druids. Thus the founders, Ciaran, Kevin, Columba, Bridget, and many others, descended visibly into the battles of men, and gave or withheld victory. They were the Tuatha De Danan of a new and astonishing time when Irish Christianity became only a degraded form of Paganism with saints for its gods. The Comarbs seemed to have it all their own way—not a dog barked against them. But the avenger was coming, nevertheless, as though some just and terrible power had whistled for him, as long ago, according to the prophet, God whistled for the Medes. Far away in cold northern lands a nation was being prepared, which in due time would shake terribly, plunder and ransack, and turn upside down this monastic Ireland ; and her god-Saints, whom she worshipped, would not be able to save her. The children of Woden, the Ragnars and Olafs, the Ivars and Harolds, were coming, and there was a black day ahead for the poor monks and for the people of Ireland.

The people of Ireland were, in the meantime, only half-Christians, even outwardly. The monasteries, meant for recluses and students, did not teach the people. There were no men who went about amongst the people teaching them the law of Christ and his words, preaching to them and instructing them. Yet the people were not without instructors. There were men who went about diligently instructing them, but they were not monks

Bards.

or clergymen, they were bards. These men, with the ancient songs and stories, kept alive all the old traditions of Pagan heroism, kept alive the remembrance and the practice of the grand old Pagan virtues of simple truth, courage, hospitality, magnanimity, and of heroic friendship and affection. They did more than this, they pointed the finger of ridicule at the Comarbs, and at the whole bell-ringing fraternity, and the people laughed ; the finger of scorn at their physical weakness and their fastings, their double-dealing, their quibblings and general untruthfulness and unreliableness, and the people despised them while they feared. Through all the long period of the domination of the monasteries the bards kept alive the old secular spirit, and taught the people to look at things and men with their natural eyes and not through the stained glasses of the monks. We have still a great deal of this anti-monastic bardic literature ; very curious reading it is, and excites many reflections. We have also the literature which the monks themselves wrote, chiefly the Lives of the founders of monasteries, and they fully justify that fierce onslaught of the bards and their clinging to the old Pagan traditions of the land. These Lives of the Saints are hardly religious at all. They are written seemingly with the object of proving that the Saints were terrible Druids, who could work miracles whenever they pleased, strike men dead at a word, raise up nations to power or cast them down into infamy and ruin. The innumerable stories in

so Dafyds
ab Esgylwm
and
Twm is Ward

which they celebrate the power and glory of their Saints, though often clever, show that monastic intellect, in spite of all its reading of old books produced in other times and lands, was subsiding into dotage. The Saints themselves were no doubt superior men, but the monastic system, which they established in the long run, perverted the understanding of men who lived under it. Here are some examples : "A thief stole Patrick's goat. He denied the theft, Patrick made the sign of the cross, and the goat bleated from the thief's stomach." "Patrick and his followers were in danger from their enemies. He turned himself and them into deer, the youngest, Benignus, into a fawn, so they escaped. The fawn had a book-satchel on its shoulder." "At Tara a Druid dropped poison unawares into Patrick's cup of ale ; Patrick signed the cup with the cross. The ale became ice. He turned the cup upside down, the poison dropped on the table. He crossed it again ; the ale became liquid and he drank it off." Probably with a smile.

The great western Saint, Molaise, sailing from Rome met a leper on the high seas. The leper was sailing along joyfully on a big stone. "Change places," said Molaise. The leper changed places, and Molaise sailed on that stone till he came to Arran. Whoever doubts this can go to Arran and see the stone.

The bards said that the monks did not speak the truth. The Lives of the Saints support the

charge. We are told that though Adamnan would not himself lie he kept a monk to lie for him. Ruadan of Lorrha equivocated to his king. Moling, the great Saint of Leinster, quibbled and gained his point by ambiguous words. No, simple truth, honesty and plain dealing—the virtue that lies at the root of the happiness and greatness of a nation—was neither admired nor taught by the monks. It was taught, in season and out of season, perpetually, insistently, by the bards. Their heroes did not quibble or equivocate or keep men to lie for them.

The Comarbs and their monks were converting heaven and hell into a laughing-stock. With them it was not even Peter who kept the keys of heaven. It was their Saints. The Saints, the founders of the monasteries, kept the gates both of heaven and hell, and sent men indifferently to one or the other, not according to their deserts, but according as they had treated themselves, the Saints, or their monasteries well or ill. It was not Christ who would judge the men of Ireland at the last day. It was the Saints. And they would judge them with a very strict eye to the manner in which they might have behaved to their Comarbs and monasteries. A man who did a servile office to a Saint was sure of heaven. The great Columba gave heaven to the King of Ossory, because the king on a certain occasion pulled off his boots. Adamnan threatened to send Finnachta, King of Ireland, to hell if he did not at once rise from the chess-table

and come to him. Finnachta came. Though we hear a great deal of the wisdom and learning of the monasteries, and learned no doubt the monks were in the literature of *other* nations, Greek, Roman, and Hebrew, they did not themselves produce a single good book. Their only literary achievement of an original character was the Lives of the Saints, lives which no one can now read without a pitying smile. Collectively their greatest feat was the destruction of the Irish monarchy.

Such was Ireland when the Ragnars and Harolds, men with truth in their hearts and strength in the hands, the fierce, merciless, and destroying children of Thor and Woden, first cast their eyes upon Ireland and noted the vast wealth laid up in her monasteries. They did not fear that the Saints could send them to hell.

CHAPTER XII.

THE COMING OF THE NORTHMEN.

AT the close of the eighth century we find in the Annals one appalling entry, *Vastatio omnium insularum*. "The devastation of all the islands." What did that mean? It meant that the children of Thor and Woden had arrived in Irish waters, that they were slaying the monks, burning the monasteries, and bringing away into the north land all the vast treasures accumulated in the holy islands. The strongest king in Ireland and Great Britain would rather die than touch those treasures. The Norseman bundled them into his leathern plunder bags with a glow of satisfaction, and without any qualms. He did not fear the Saints. In fact the Saints could not hurt him at all, and the poor monks had placed all their reliance upon the Saints. The sacred bells were melted into brooches or swords, the altars stripped of their beautiful candlesticks, their cups and goblets and jewels of great price. The beautiful books, such triumphs of calligraphy and illuminating skill! books really beautifully written and adorned with bright pictures of the Apostles and evangelists were burned or "drowned"; the monks, and even the poor harmless

anchorites and water-cress recluses, were slaughtered. So were the nuns; but the young nuns who were still teachable, and the boys and girls on the termoms or monastic estates, were carried away into captivity and sold as slaves in the market places of Drontheim and other northern towns.

The monks of Ireland were confounded. They did not understand how those potent Saints of the islands, Columba, Molaise, and the rest of those potent insular divinities, did not come to the salvation of their shrines. Columba ought to have been a match for whole hosts of Pagans, yet Iona had been plundered. They began to fear that their own Saints would not be able to protect them. Now unceasingly from hundreds of monasteries rose to heaven the mournful litany, "*A furore Northmannorum libera nos Domini*," "From the fury of the Northmen save us, O Lord." They prayed to the living God now, but it was too late.

Then the storm fell upon Ireland. The monasteries had broken the monarchy. They had now no King of Ireland to protect them. They had no one to protect them. The protection of the Saints was found to be worth nothing just at the time when it was most required. The hundred or two hundred small kings could not combine to save the country even if they were inclined. Moreover, many of them were only too glad to strike a league with the Northmen and plunder the rich monasteries on their own account, the spell having

been broken. The monks had achieved the desolation of Tara, and now the desolation of the monasteries at the hands of the furious and implacable Pagans succeeded as the consequence and punishment of that great treason. These earlier Norsemen appear to have been religious enthusiasts even more than plunderers. Their object in coming to Ireland seems to have been as much the destruction of Christianity as any carnal hankering after treasure which there was no one to defend. When they found some famous shrine which, by its celebrity, was calculated to impress the simple minds of the people ; they set up there the statues of their own gods, and on the high altar placed a Norse priestess to deliver answers and oracles after the manner of the witch-women of the north. That half-Pagan Ireland which the monastic Irish Christians had left untaught now rose and joined them. The bardic class generally welcomed them. The Norseman had the power of the sea, could permit or stop trade, and so in a wonderfully short time he had Ireland under his control. Ireland, whose very Christianity was half-Pagan, either rose to welcome or did not earnestly withstand those whole-hearted Pagans, the valiant, upright, truth-speaking pirates of the Baltic.

At first the Norsemen came in many fleets, each under its own viking. Then one strong viking came and took the command of them all, conquered Ireland generally, and was acknowledged

as their high king by all the kings of Ireland. He was probably the famous Ragnar Lodbrog. The Irish called him Thorgils, or Servant of Thor, and the monks, shuddering as they wrote the dread name, Latinized it as Turgesius. Ota, the wife of Turgesius, sat on the high altar of the great church at Clonmacnoise on the Shannon and there prophesied. Nothing could show more clearly that the Saint-worship of the Irish was sheer idolatry, the worship of empty names, for under that high altar lay the remains of the Saint who was thought to be one of the most powerful in all Ireland, Ciaran, son of the carpenter. Over the remains of Patrick, in Armagh, another priestess from the Baltic sat too, and prophesied to the people. The old order was broken, and men's minds began to entertain new thoughts.

Markman

There was yet another form of Irish superstition which in one day the Norsemen dissipated. All the treasures held by "the dead hand" were not held by the dead hands of the Comarbs. The dead gods and heroes held much of it. When the Norseman had plundered all the monasteries within his reach, he reaped a second gold harvest by an assault upon the ancient tombs. Here were treasures which even the Christian revolution and the spiritual dominations of the Comarbs had suffered to remain untouched. Ireland, always half-Pagan, so reverenced and feared the tombs of the mighty Pagan dead, that no one before the Norseman dared touch those buried treasures. He,

cheerful, careless wight, digged his way into the big tombs and pleasantly appropriated all the gold and silver arms and armour discoverable there, leaving almost nothing for the researches of the Royal Irish Academy save stones inscribed with *Oghams* or secret writings, found in large numbers : now the theme of much learned disquisition.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE NORSEMEN.

THESE northern pirates were bloody men ; but with their great barbaric strength they had great barbaric virtues. They were not so unlike those elder Irish heroes who broke the Roman Empire, and whose memory was still preserved by the Irish bards. Their courage and hardihood have never been equalled. They had no fear of death, if death did not find them lying ingloriously in straw. Every viking longed to die in battle and go to Valhalla to Odin. To go to Odin, that was their most ardent desire.

Now why did they long so much to go to Odin ? Nearly everyone will answer at once "because they believed that they would feast there for ever, singing their war-songs and drinking mead out of the skulls of their enemies." That is not so. The Norse religion was far deeper and nobler than this.

In the beginning of the world, they said, Odin and Thor and the rest of the gods had conquered a huge brute giant of the dark elder times, and out of his body built up the beautiful world, making the green earth and the sea, the sky and the sun, moon, and stars. That giant was primeval chaos.

Other brute powers, too, they conquered and put to divine uses. But the brute powers, though conquered, were immortal. The gods could only tread them down into hell and chain them there. Under all the beautiful world these powers lay chained and struggling. One day they will break loose again. Of these powers the most terrible was the wolf, Fenris, now chained before the cave of Knipha. At the end of the world, Fenris will break his chains and rush forth to rend the earth and sky. In that great day there will be terrors and portents. From his rainbow-bridge, spanning the gulf between Valhalla and hell, the blind god Heimdall will blow the trump of doom announcing the end of things, and the uprising of all hell. The red cock upon the roof of Valhalla will sound his shrill clarion heard through the universe. Before the cave of Knipha, the wolf Fenris will bay terribly ; he will rend his chains and rush forth. Then Odin, armed for battle, will pass out from Valhalla to fight the wolf, but not alone or attended by gods only. His children slain in battle, brave men chosen by his valkyrie, the immortal maidens the choosers, all the heroes of the north will go forth with him to assist him in that great day. Therefore the Norseman longed inexpressibly to go to Valhalla to Odin, not in order that he might feast there for ever, and take his ease, but in order that he might help Odin against the wolf. "Let us praise famous men and our fathers who begat

us" ; and who in all history are more famous than our Norse ancestors ? We, the Irish, are largely descended from these men. Their blood runs in our veins. Within our souls the heroic soul of the north mysteriously lives and works for ever. Many of our best thoughts and braver purposes are derived in obscure ways from those fierce Baltic pirates. It is not right or wise that now, when we know what kind of men they were, essentially, how truthful, how courageous, how daring, how glorious, and powerful in their day over all the North of Europe, we, their children, should for ever keep echoing like dead walls the lamentations and curses of the monks. We are not descended from the monks, who were celibates and left no posterity, but we are descended from the Northmen. Moreover, the monks have bequeathed to us no literature worthy the name, but the Northmen have. The literature which they made, and in which we see as in a glass the great features of that manly brood of sailors and warriors, is inexpressibly nobler and better than that which was made by the monks. Whoever reads both, as I have done, will see at a glance that this is so. What are "the Lives of the Saints" compared with the grand old northern Sagas and Eddas ? Nothing, and less than nothing, poor, grotesque, absurd, and quite destitute of high ethical import. Ireland, too, I say, as distinguished from the monks, rather welcomed than withstood the Norsemen. The Irish thought that the Norsemen would make better kings and captains than those who had ruled

over them to this time. Nor is this very surprising, for the Northmen brought with them from the Baltic at least one grand virtue, without which there is no ruling of men. I mean common honesty and truth-speaking. The monks taught many curious things to the princes and sons of chieftains whom they educated, but they did not teach them honest dealing, simplicity and truth in speaking and in doing. The bards of Ireland charged the monks with falsehood. The monks themselves admit that the charge was just. Of one of their most famous and powerful Saints, Abbot of the great Monastery of Iona, they themselves relate that, while too clever to lie himself, he kept a man to lie for him.

Soon the Irish people became aware that though the Northman was bloody and destructive, and truly an awful and unconscionable robber, his word was more to be relied on than the oath of one of their own princes, though that oath was taken over the tooth of Patrick, or the ankle-bone of Ciaran. What the Northman said he would do, he did. What he said he would not do, he did not. His fair hair, blue eyes, and manly front and stand seemed the outward signs and tokens of an inner fairness of mind, of honesty and sincerity. The Norse conquest of Ireland was the triumph of truth over falsehood, of earnest and manly Paganism over a debased and idolatrous Christianity, of men alive and awake over men who were dead or dreaming. Ireland was taught then a great lesson and had to pay for it, and even to pay terribly.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHILDREN OF HARALD, REDDENERS OF SPEARS.

THE Norsemen, though rough and fierce in their ways, were by no means savages. The Romans when in the height of their power fought sea-battles with the Baltic pirates, and expressed great admiration, not only for their skill and courage, but for the excellence of their war-ships. In sea-fighting, in the building of ships, and in all manner of other arts, both of peace and war, they had been steadily improving. Their numbers, too, were very great, which shows that when at home they were a peaceable race. The great English poet, John Milton, attributes the descent of the northern nations upon the Roman Empire to the fact that they had not land enough in the north to support their numbers.

“A multitude like which the populous north
Poured never from her frozen loins to pass
Rhene or the Danau, when her numerous sons
Poured like a deluge from North.”

The outbreak of the Norsemen at the time which I am describing was caused, too, by pressure of population at home. There was a huge population along the shores of Norway and the Baltic, and

arts and industries of many kinds flourished there. The Norsemen were skilful workers in metals, and made very beautiful weapons and cups. They built excellent wooden houses. Their vikings, chieftains, and gentlemen were fond of splendid raiment. A young, handsome Norseman, dressed in his gala attire for an assembly, and bearing the splendid weapons which they made in those lands, was as beautiful a spectacle as Europe anywhere produced at this time. Their long ships, or warships, too, were exceedingly beautiful and of great size. They had ships which carried near a thousand men, and those ships clean and bright. The Norse love of splendour sprang from their heroism ; brave men will always love to go bravely. Our own century is commercial more than martial ; so we dress as for a funeral, and even our men of war sneak about in mufti. Like the Pagan Irish, they were very much devoted, not only to religion, but to history. They never forgot their ancestors and the brave men of old. At festive assemblies, their skalds or bards used to chant for them long hymns and songs in praise of their fathers, and of these songs they never tired. Like all noble races, they knew their history well, and from it derived three-fourths of their strength and power. The past was alive and real to them, filled with innumerable great and beautiful figures of men and women, who in their day had done well. A young Norseman, like a young Spartan, or a young Irishman of those times, who had not quite given himself

over as a prey to the Comarbs, could have passed a stiff examination in history.

They brought into Ireland, too, much of the old chivalrous spirit which the Irish themselves were forgetting. When an army of Northmen landed to plunder a territory, they often sent word round that they had come, and that they would give the people a fair chance of defending their country, and time to bring an army together for that purpose. They would name a place and time for the battle, and would not plunder the country, or molest the people, until the battle was fought and won.

Many stories, showing their generosity and amiability, are related. One of their vikings, having plundered Meath, was driving down to the sea an immense booty of cattle, which covered the whole country side. His name was Olaf. He was the most beautiful youth in all the North of Europe, and also the most accomplished. When his galley was going its fastest, he used to run round it on the moving oars, stepping from oar to oar. He was a wonderful swimmer and diver, could wrestle with, and drown any man in the water. Olaf now stopped somewhere on the banks of the Boyne, to rest his huge herd of plundered cattle. There an old man approached him. His cattle had been taken by the Norsemen, and he begged Olaf to restore them to him. "Gladly," said Olaf, "but we will have to start again in a short time, and you have no prospect of collecting

them out of this huge herd." "Indeed, O King, I shall have no difficulty," answered the old man. He called to him his dog, and said something to him. The dog disappeared amidst the herd, and presently reappeared, driving a horse before him. He went in again, and came out with a billy goat galloping in front of him; disappeared and reappeared again, driving forward a lively young heifer. In a very short time he had collected all the old man's animals.

The old man after that made Olaf a present of the dog, and Olaf gave the old man a massy ring of pure gold. The dog's name was Vick. ✓

When the Irish people begin to love their history, and pay proper attention to it, they will read a great deal about the Norsemen, too, and cease to regard them as mere destroyers. Remember that they conquered many other countries besides Ireland, and that from them sprang the Normans, and that our Burkes, Butlers, Fitzgeralds, and scores of other great Irish families draw their blood through the French Normans from that valiant and famous old race of men from the far north.

With these Norsemen, then, Ireland had a great deal to do for three centuries—the eighth, the ninth and the tenth. Truly, they gave the island a great shaking up and rousing which were badly needed. Then the Norsemen who settled in Ireland took Irish wives, and by degrees became Christianized. After the first fury of that northern storm had spent itself, even the schools and monasteries began

to revive, and Irish learning began to take a new and more vigorous form. During this Norse period many excellent scholars were produced in Ireland and went over to the Continent, where they were received with much honour, and did a great deal there to keep the lamp of learning alight in those dark ages. The most famous of these men was Scotus Erigena, an eminent philosopher, who got into trouble there owing to the independence and newness of his opinions. He stood up for reason and understanding as opposed to human authority and custom, and valiantly defended the rights of man against the secular and spiritual tyrants of the Continent. The manly stubbornness and hardihood which he showed with his pen were no doubt derived from the great inflow of Norse valour into Ireland before his time.

It must be remembered, too, that Ireland, from the time of St Patrick, had nothing to do with the church system of the Continent. The monasteries and schools of Ireland were quite independent. Indeed all the Irish scholars and missionaries who appeared on the Continent were a very independent race of men, and did a great deal to prevent the intellect of Europe from falling into a complete state of intellectual slavery to prevailing superstitions.

Scotus Erigena maintained that the bread and wine of the Supper of our Lord were emblems, and not the real body and blood of Christ. It is therefore not surprising that he should have had enemies,

but the King of France, Charles the Bald, protected him, and enabled him to say his say on this and a thousand other questions in the face of all Europe.

When the Norse deluge subsided, a new and brighter Ireland emerged. Now the slender, tapering, beautiful round towers rose in hundreds, and beside them hundreds of exquisite little stone churches. Commerce increased. At the mouths of the great rivers walled cities held much wealth and industrious populations. The northern storm greatly cleared and purified the atmosphere of Ireland.

CHAPTER XV.

BRIAN BORU.

ABOUT the same time that Alfred the Great, King of the West Saxons, flourished in England, there appeared in Ireland a hero king whose career and whose genius nearly resembled Alfred's. Alfred, when a youth, was overborne by the Danes and their English allies, and driven into wildernesses, where he wandered as an outlaw, suffering much hardship, but fixed and resolved in his mind not to submit to the stranger, though the whole power of the realm seemed his. Out of this weak and outlawed condition he emerged strong in mind, strong in body, waged constant war upon his enemies, conquered them, became King of England, and such a king that he has been ever since a cause of just pride to the English people.

About the same time Munster was governed by the Danes. Their capital was the strong walled city of Limerick, a city rich and populous, full of bold, intelligent, and industrious Norse traders and their men. Their war-galleys, issuing from the mouth of the Shannon, policed the seas of Munster, and chased away pirates. They had camps and military settlements all over the province. They

had hired soldiers whom they quartered on the people. Many of the chieftains and gentlemen of the province were partizans of the Danes, and the rest submitted to their rule. Not all, however. There was one young man who, remembering that his ancestors had been Kings of Munster, would not make terms with the Danes at any price. He thought that so disgraceful that he had rather die. The Danish officers drove him out of his lands. He took to the woods and mountains at the head of a little band of outlaws, and thence waged implacable war upon his foes, the foreigners, and their Irish allies and supporters. The name of this young man was Brian. At length his stubborn hardihood had its reward. Men began to talk of this brave youth whom all Munster could not put down, who, from his woods and mountain fastnesses, swept down upon the rich plains under Danish government, and returned laden with plunder, and driving before him flocks and herds, who continued with a rapidity like lightning to deliver blow after blow against the Government of the province. Wherever a bold and determined person appears, he becomes a centre of attraction. The strong draw towards him through sympathy, and the weak through fear, and in order to shelter themselves under his protection. Many men drew to this bold young outlaw—escaped captives, debtors, everyone who felt the pressure of the Norse tyranny, and crowds of young, daring, and adventurous men of all kinds. The outlaw grew stronger and stronger.

At last he took the field openly at the head of a regular army, with bright banners flying, trumpets sounding, cavalry, heavy infantry and light ; and at a place called Sulchoit, in Tipperary, met and overthrew the army of Munster. In one day he broke down the Danish power. He marched thence to Limerick at the head of his warriors and stormed the great fortress. All Munster submitted to him. The Norse war-fleets were now at his disposal and subject to his command. The Norsemen with all their various gifts and powers became his servants and lieutenants, and thenceforward gave him loyal services. The outlaw of the woods was now king of a great province, and one of the three or four most considerable men in all Ireland. But his career was not ended ; it was only just begun.

The King of Leinster and the Danes of Dublin waged war upon him. In the battle of Glenama, in Wicklow, Brian met and routed them. The Leinster king's son fled out of the battle to a little church in the neighbourhood, founded by Kevin, the famous Saint of Glendalough, and to make himself securer clambered into the branches of a yew tree planted there four hundred years before by the Saint's own hands. This was supposed to be a very sacred sanctuary indeed. Brian's men surrounded the tree. They could have shot him with arrows where he sat amongst the dark green boughs, but that was unlawful. At last Brian's son Murrough gave him quarter. He descended out of his sanctuary, Murrough took him

** The equivalent of the old British "Uchel-god," corrupted into Selwood.*

by the hand, and the two young men became friends and allies.

Afterwards Brian conquered the King of Meath, who enjoyed the title of King of Ireland, and then went into Ulster and received the submissions and tributes of the northern kings. So from an outlaw Brian became High King of all Ireland.

Brian built many bridges, fortresses, and churches, and encouraged learning in every way that he could, like the English King Alfred. His chief strength was a great fortress on the banks of the Shannon, at the lower end of the lake of Lough Derg, and just above the place where the Shannon becomes loud and white as it roars over the rapids at Killaloe. The name of this great fortress was Kincora. Thither from all quarters of the island came vast herds of cattle, sheep, and swine, pack horses and carts laden with gold and silver, beautiful cloaks, weapons, goblets, and all manner of valuable things paid to him as tribute by the Norsemen and the Irish. Of the quantities of wine, ale, and mead drunk there, of the large hospitalities of Brian, of his power, glory, and wisdom, many stories are told. Brian had many sons, who were captains under him, for the ruling of the men of Ireland, and amongst them two conspicuously brave, viz., Murrough and Donough. Eventually the Norsemen of the city and kingdom of Dublin, who were a rich and warlike people, determined to make a great attempt to overthrow King Brian. They were joined by

that King of Leinster who, after the Battle of Glen-ama, had climbed into the yew tree. They summoned to them the Norse Iarls of all the islands, of Man and the Hebrides, and of the Orkneys and Shetlands, and the Danish Earls of Northumbria, a huge and strong host, most of them armed in battle-dresses of gleaming brass. To meet them Brian and his men marched to Dublin and there fought the famous battle of Clontarf. So fierce was the battle that the two armies almost exterminated each other, and the fame of it travelled over all the North of Europe. Brian was slain in the battle, so was Murrough, and so was Murrough's son Turlough, a brave lad of fifteen, who surely ought to have been kept at home and at his exercises for a few years longer. Next day the body of the boy was found floating on the sea, his hands still fastened in the long hair of the Norseman with whom he had been contending. The monks of Swords came and took away Brian's body, chanting their mournful litanies. Then the monks of Armagh came to Swords and took the body away to Armagh and buried it there with great honour.

From Dublin Brian's other son Donough led home the broken and bloody wrecks of the great army. On their march they were attacked by the men of Ossory,* who were friendly to the Norsemen. Donough had to fight many battles with them before he could pass the Ossorian plains. In one of

* Ossory is now the County of Kilkenny.

these battles, fought at the ford of Athy on the river Barrow, Donough's wounded men had themselves tied upright to stakes, so that they might fight by the side of their companions.

Donough afterwards governed Munster out of his great fortress on the Shannon. Thither there came to him the sons of the famous Earl Godwin, after they had been driven out of England by Edward the Confessor. King Donough was kind to the exiles, made a league with them, and gave to one of them his daughter in marriage.

At this time the Normans of France were about to descend upon England, an event which turned out to be of great importance to Ireland in the long run.

It is a curious fact that most of our Milesian-Irish names were formed at this time. For example, the O'Briens are so called as descendants of Brian, the O'Kennedies as descendants of his father Kennedy.* All our chief names were formed then, and have remained unchanged ever since. There are two great name-forming epochs in Irish history. The first coincided with the Roman occupation of Britain. The second was in the age that succeeded the Battle of Clontarf. The names formed in the first period lasted to the second, and those formed in the second have endured ever since.

For example, in the first period a southern king called Cas originated the family name of Dal-cas, which means children of Cas; King Brian was one

* This is the equivalent of the Scotch Kenneth and the Welsh Cunedda.

“ Dal-cas = W. âl = people, generation; also enemy.

of this family, so his full name would be Brian Dal-Cas. For nine centuries this family had no other name. After Brian's time his descendants took the name of O'Brien or children of Brian. All over Ireland the same rule prevailed. The family names formed while the Romans were in Britain lasted to the close of the Norse period, and then gave way to a new supply of family names, which have lasted ever since.

It is an interesting question what were the peculiarities of these great name-making epochs.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GERALDINES ! THE GERALDINES !

WHEN Henry the Second, son of the Empress Maude, daughter of Henry I. the Fine-Scholar, son of William the Conqueror, was King of England, there appeared in Ireland a great warrior called Tiernan. He was a tall, gaunt, muscular man, with only one eye ; a man who was terribly active and vigorous in everything that he did. They made him King of Breffney when he was only eighteen years old. Immediately he began to wage war upon his neighbours, and never ceased fighting till he was quite an old man. His sword was never in the scabbard, his battle harness never hung upon the rack, his war horses never got a rest. Breffney was a little kingdom composed of the two counties of Leitrim and Cavan, but Tiernan went on conquering his neighbours and compelling them to submit to him till his dominions ran from one side of Ireland to the other, from Sligo to the mouth of the Boyne. I dare say his face and body were well scarred. It is certain, however, that he lost an eye ; and how he contrived to remain alive in the midst of such ceaseless fightings is a wonder. This fierce, gaunt,

one-eyed old warrior had a beautiful wife called Dervorgilla, of whom more presently.

At the same time Leinster was governed by a king called Dermot, who was also a great warrior, a man of a furious, headstrong, passionate nature and of gigantic stature. As Tiernan lost his eye in war, so Dermot lost his voice ; at least it was cracked and hoarse from perpetually shouting to his men in battle, and roaring commands. Unlike Tiernan, who was a mere warrior, Dermot, strange to say, respected learning and religious men. He built churches, was gentle with the weak, and hard and stern only with the strong.

In spite of their many wars, the Irish kings and chieftains of this date used to meet frequently in great assemblies, or at each other's houses ; for they were all cousins and relations, and when not at war with each other were usually friendly and cousinly. So Dermot became acquainted with the beautiful Dervorgilla, and admired her so much that he determined to steal her from Tiernan. Curiously enough, Dervorgilla's own brother agreed to that stealing. Presently an opportunity arose. A young Ulster king who never knew what it was to lose a battle, descended upon Tiernan, beat him about from post to pillar, stripped him in a few weeks of the dominions which he had won by a long life of hard fighting, and reduced him to half his little kingdom of Breffney. Tiernan, quite cast down, went on a pilgrimage, leaving his wife under guards on a fortified island in a lake. Dermot

and his men rode swiftly thither, overpowered the guards and seized his prize, while Dervorgilla's brother aided and abetted. That was a bad year for Tiernan. But it was not easy to keep him down. He was soon up again shouting his war-cry and battling furiously all across the waist of Ireland.

Tiernan was not able to avenge the stealing of his wife for a long time; but at last he became so powerful that he induced or compelled all the other kings to join with him for the punishment of the thief. So Tiernan, with the King of Ireland and the rest of the small kings, invaded Leinster, and though Dermot defended himself stoutly, they conquered him, drove him out of the country, and across the sea.

At this time all South Wales was filled with very brave Norman lords and gentlemen, perhaps the best of all the Norman race, high-spirited, active men, something like the old Norsemen, only more civilized and refined. When Dermot came to them to ask help they had pity upon him, because he was an old man and an exile, and because they thought it unfair and unchivalrous that half-a-dozen great kings should join together to attack one. Dermot, too, gave them much gold, and promised to give them lands in Ireland, if by their assistance he should conquer his enemies. To the greatest of them, the Earl Strongbow, he promised his beautiful daughter Eva in marriage, and that he should be King of Leinster when he

himself should die. Then he inflamed the minds of all the Normans with visions of glory and conquest, for he was an eloquent old king, his conversation like heroic poetry, and they were themselves filled with the love of war and the spirit of adventure. So the Normans followed Dermot into Ireland, determined to die there fighting against the kings of all Ireland or to conquer, and with Dermot for their leader go out into the territories outside of Leinster, and perhaps exalt the old king over all the rest, and themselves become great lords and barons under him for the government of the whole island. They were a very noble, valiant, loyal, and knightly race of men these Norman gentlemen of South Wales.

Besides Strongbow, there came a most admirable soldier and captain, Robert Fitz Stephen, perhaps the bravest of them all, for he came first and with a little handful of men, though he knew that the Irish kings would almost certainly conquer and kill him. He was a light-hearted and high-spirited young man, and almost as gay, cheerful, and alert in defeat and calamity as when on the top of the wave of victory.

There also came his cousins, the two De Barries*, from whom descend the countless race of the Irish Barries. These youths were Robert and Philip. Philip was the first knight knocked down in the Irish wars. As he was climbing on a ladder over the walls of Wexford, a Wexford man hit him in the mouth with a stone hurled from the ramparts,

* Barry Island in Glamorgan?

so that he fell off the ladder into the ditch that ran round the city. Though he saved his life, he lost his teeth from the blow and had to get artificial ones.

Another of Robert Fitz Stephen's numerous cousins was a very stout lad with long yellow hair and bright blue eyes, tremendously strong, and in spite of his stoutness very active: his name was Raymond le Gros. All his soldiers loved him exceedingly. He was not long in Ireland before he gathered great numbers of Irish warriors under his standard, who made him their hero, and said they would bear him on to victory everywhere. His voice rang out like a trumpet in the din of battle. Once by his own fierce sword-play and that voice of his sounding like a trumpet, he turned a great defeat into a great victory. From him descend the Irish Graces and the Irish Fitz Maurices. *Fitz-Maurice. Fr. G.*

Another of the same family was a sober-mannered, steadfast, but fiery-hearted old man named Maurice Fitz Gerald. From him sprang the Earls of Desmond and the Earls of Kildare, and all the Irish Fitz Geralds, a numerous and far-spreading race.

Many other famous Norman gentlemen came too to help the old king, all more or less related to each other, loyal to King Dermot, and friendly to Strongbow. At the same time it was really a desperate adventure on the part of those Norman gentlemen, for Ireland was apparently quite united under its King Roderick. Their invasion of Ireland was like the invasion of a den of dragons, for the Irish kings then were truly terrible fighters, and

→ Hence, possibly by ^G a like transm. the W. Morris

if they could have agreed together, Strongbow and his Norman chivalry would have been no more to them than a partridge to an eagle, or a lamb to a wolf.

Ireland at this date was, in spite of the frequent wars, populous and rich. In political organization the Irish were not so far advanced as were the Saxons at the time of their Norman conquest. In other directions they were far more advanced. In literature, for example, there are no Saxon books comparable at all to the "Book of Leinster." Their architecture though small was extremely elegant, extremely elegant too was their workmanship in metals, while in music they had no competitors. The country was rich enough to support not only a great fighting aristocracy and crowds of monks, bards, and harpers, but to spare money for building foreign monasteries.

The great need of the country was a single strong royal family and a central government, and this it was extremely difficult to bring about, for none of the great dynastic families were in the least effete, but producing generation after generation kings of heroic energy and pluck,—men who would rather be cut into little pieces than abate one jot of the royal pretensions of their sires. To such a country, ripe for the reception of its king, the Norman conquest ought to have been a great blessing, as it had been to the Saxons; but things turned out differently in Ireland, owing mainly, I think, to sheer bad luck, or to speak less profanely, to the over-ruling will of Him who lifts up and casts down nations.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE NORMANS IN IRELAND.

DERMOT with his own warriors and these allies stormed the great walled cities of Wexford, Waterford, and Dublin, conquered all Leinster, invaded Meath, and won battles there. The Norman-Irish party formed by the union of the fighting races of Leinster and the gentlemen of South Wales, resembled now a glittering wave of war threatening to overrun and submerge all Ireland. The King of Ireland was not at all a great warrior or ruler, and was a good deal hampered apparently by conjugal entanglements. The Pope gave him leave to have six¹ wives, but Roderick was not satisfied with that number, he desired a larger supply. Then it must be remembered, that he was not king of a nation, but a King of Kings, some of them as strong as himself. Old Tiernan was stronger and indeed every way a better man. And yet a better man than Roderick would not have prospered in such a struggle. Irish valour could no more have withstood the advance of the Norman, than English valour withstood the progress of William the Conqueror.

If nobody from the outside had interfered with

¹ Annals of Loch Cé, vol. i., p. 315. See Appendix.

these gallant Norman gentlemen from South Wales, they would have conquered all Ireland and set up here one of their own best men as King of Ireland, in the same way that this extraordinary race of men had conquered Normandy, England, Wales, and Scotland. But the splendid career of King Dermot's new friends was arrested almost before it had well begun. Henry II. knew very well that if one of his people became King of Ireland and had behind him such a rich and warlike nation as the Irish, he could throw all his Empire into confusion. He therefore resolved to stop the progress of Strongbow and his people. He came to Ireland with an immense army. The Pope, who said that he owned all the islands in the world, pretended to give him Ireland. The Irish Church, Comarbs and Bishops, submitted to him, and finally the Irish kings also agreed to be his subjects, and to obey him as lord of all Ireland. Henry built a palace in Dublin made of great upright posts and twigs after the custom of the country, and invited the kings to spend Christmas with him. There, we are told, he taught them to eat cranes, but we must hope that they learned something better than that from such a great and wise king. Henry had enormous dominions and a great number of powerful and rebellious subjects, whom with much difficulty he kept in subjection. He had need to be very clever and very active, and he was both.

The worst of King Henry's conquest of Ireland

was this, that he was afraid to make any of his men governors of the country for any length of time. He feared that his Irish Viceroy with such a nation behind him would become too powerful. His successors were equally afraid. Consequently the country was not in fact governed at all. Ireland was divided between many great lords who had no one to govern them, so that they in turn became so many kings. Henry gave Ulster to John de Courcy, a man who was a giant in stature, and as brave and noble as he was big. He gave Meath to Hugo de Lacy, the best, I think, of all these great lords. Hugo de Lacy covered all Meath, from the Shannon to the sea, with strong castles, and governed so well that his new subjects became very much attached to him. He was a little dark man, with a red scar across his cheek, very muscular and energetic, and as wise as he was brave. He had to kill poor old Tiernan before he could get peace in his new kingdom. From him sprang the Lacies. Henry gave Connaught to William Fitz Adelm de Burgo, a big and corpulent knight, but who had a big heart in his big body. From him descend the Irish Burkes. Henry, in short, divided all Ireland among great lords of this kind, whom, on the whole, the people liked very well, but then there was no one to govern these lords and prevent them from doing unjust things and waging war upon each other. This was the first wrong inflicted by England

Irish (bad)
government
hereditary

upon Ireland ; it sprang from the fears of the kings of England. They feared to give Ireland a real ruler, lest when he was strong he should turn against themselves, and lead against them a nation so warlike. It is a fact which I record with pleasure, for I never like to see kings written down in history as quite bad and black, that King John's Irish record is strongly in his favour. Alone amongst the Plantagenet Kings he had the pluck to give Ireland a great viceroy, and loyally to maintain him in his position, so that he might be able to serve the needs of the country. John was true to Ireland, and Ireland was true to John. When his great Irish feudatories revolted against him, Ireland rose for the king and chased them over the seas. John was made Lord of Ireland when he was a child. He spent his boyish days here, and I am sure felt himself responsible for the welfare of Ireland in a very peculiar manner. I am glad to say that the story told in a hundred books about how Prince John pulled the beards of the kings who came to do him homage, is quite untrue. It is a legend derived from a bad misreading of a certain passage in a dubious authority. King John's English record may have been as bad as it is represented. Upon that it would be improper for me to express an opinion. At the same time I cannot think that his barons who called in foreigners against their own king, and gave the crown of England to the King of France,

can have been such virtuous and patriotic persons as we are told that they were. But I do say that King John's Irish record is distinctly, conspicuously, and uniquely good. Will it be believed that the average term of the early Viceroyalties was less than six months? So greatly did the Plantagenets fear that an Irish Viceroy might lead Ireland against them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE NORMAN-IRISH SETTLEMENT.

THESE great lords set up by King Henry had kings under them as subjects, which seems curious. So Hugo de Lacy had amongst his barons two Irish kings who were recognised as kings by him, and yet they obeyed him and were very faithful and loyal to him. But in those days the title of lord was a very high one, so much so that the Plantagenet kings were satisfied to be only lords of Ireland. Henry VIII. was the first King of Ireland.

The age of the Crusades came on now, when so many of the nobles and gentlemen of Europe went away to fight the Saracens. Few Irishmen shared in that great and noble movement. The reason, I think, was that inasmuch as the fears of the English kings prevented them from permitting any one to govern the country, Irish gentlemen were obliged to stay at home to defend their estates. Now too began the age of chivalry, which was practised a good deal in Ireland as well as in the rest of Europe. Indeed the root of it had been in the country ever since the age of the heroes. Now it was regarded as disgraceful to insult a woman or a

bard. In war it was not allowable for men to take a shabby advantage of each other, in attacking an enemy when he was not ready, or by night, or by stratagem, or with greatly superior numbers. In a thousand ways, which it is difficult to describe, this new spirit affected the minds of the gentlemen of Europe, and caused war to assume [more refined and beautiful] forms. It prompted young men to do very singular things. For example, a young Irish prince of the West of Ireland heard that a Norman noble, whose chief castle was Belfast, had the most beautiful wife in all Ireland and the swiftest horse and the best hound. "I will have all these for my own," said this young prince. Then he collected a little army, marched swiftly across Ireland, descended upon that Norman noble, beat him in fight, and took all those three desirable things into his possession. When the lady bade him be satisfied with that proof of his gallantry, he consented, and restoring all three into the hands of their rightful owner, marched home again "striking the stars with his sublime head." By ✓! such feats young men sought glory in those singular days.

When the Normans invaded Ireland only the kings and great men wore armour. The rest did not. It was regarded as a dastardly and unchivalrous way of fighting. The later Norsemen tried to introduce the custom, but failed. So the Irish historian of the Battle of Clontarf relates scornfully that the Danes brought a thousand bodachs,

[✓] Thus, as in the case of the Vikings & the Romans, and subsequently, of the Vikings & the Saxons, who were arrow-clad, defeat was inevitable.

churles, villains, or, as we now say, cads, dressed in brass into the battle. The Danes themselves had to yield to this point of honour and fight in wool or leather. The Irish excused their kings from going to war in this unprotected state, or rather, indeed, they compelled them to wear armour, the life of kings being so sacred.

Now the Normans, owning a different code of honour, entered Ireland in glittering suits of ring-mail, and were at first regarded with extreme contempt by the big Irish warriors, in their shirts and mantles, or wearing only buff doublets. But the Normans could not be laughed out of their ring-mail, and no doubt the ring-mail contributed a good deal to their early successes. Presently the Irish, partly in self-defence, and partly no doubt because the tide of fashion set strongly that way, especially after the advent of Henry Fitz Empress, took to ring-mail too, and gave many a Roland for the Norman Oliver. For example, Donald O'Brien, King of Limerick, having clothed his knights in steel rings, and put hauberks on his infantry, in the battle of Thurles, Co. Tipperary, a pitched battle, overthrew Strongbow utterly, though he was then Viceroy of Ireland, and brought into the battle all the available Norman and Norman-Irish power in the realm. Thenceforward the Irish wore ring-mail as well as the Normans, and when plates superseded ring-mail, they took to plates.

Touching the Church, it is to be remarked, that

at the time of the Invasion the Church was poor and weak. The Comarbs did not now give Heaven to kings who pulled off their boots, nor did they send to Hell kings who did not rise up before them and do them reverence. The Norseman had changed all that. The Comarbs were weak and depended on the kings. They were weak, and they looked to the Popes for succour and countenance. In fact, they were so weak and unhappy that they were the first to welcome Henry Fitz Empress and the Norman regime. They thought they might get better terms from the strangers than from their own haughty kings. In this, they were disappointed. The Normans used them, and then cast them aside. They brought in a variety of strange foreign orders of monks black, white and grey, and the poor Irish Comarbs were quite extinguished.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RETURN OF THE TIDE.

By degrees these great lords appointed by Henry disappeared and an immense number of small lords, like the little kings of old times, took their place. It was just as when the woodman cuts down the big forest trees, then the little trees in great numbers shoot out vigorously. All the men like Hugo de Lacy disappeared, and small men took their places. At the same time nearly all the old kingly families by the side of the new Norman-Irish ones began to show out once more and become strong.

Here is an example of the revival of one of the old families, one out of a hundred. The Kingdom of Leix, which is now the Queen's County, was part of Strongbow's huge domain. In process of time the line of Strongbow and his Irish wife Eva came to be represented by several sisters, each of whom got a county of Leinster as her marriage portion. The lady who got Leix married a great English nobleman who had so much to do at home that he had no time to come to Ireland, consequently he appointed one of his barons there to govern Leix as his lieutenant. But the strongest and most warlike of his barons was the head of the family which

in old times had been Kings of Leix, viz., the O'Moores, a family sprung from one of the great heroes of the Red Branch. Now, as O'Moore had to do all the hard work, all the fighting and government, while the great English nobleman did nothing at all, by degrees O'Moore became real lord of the territory, and the rights of the English nobleman vanished, naturally and justly. Presently we look in again and find O'Moore = *Mawr*
captain of Liex, and owning allegiance apparently *great*
to nobody. In such ways the old royal families *big*
emerged once more, but by the side of many new Norman-Irish ones, for a good many Norman lords stood by their estates like men. So when the Tudor dynasty of England succeeded the Plantagenets, Ireland was all divided between some sixty families, Irish or Norman-Irish, who inter-married with each other, spoke the same language, *✓*
the Gaelic, and observed the same laws and customs. The heads of these families governed their subjects like kings. They were called lords, captains, or chieftains, but were really so many kings. Some of them like O'Neill in the North, and the Earl of Desmond in the South, became so great that they had many minor lords under them. O'Neill and O'Donnell were the great lords of the North; the Earl of Kildare, the great lord in Leinster; Munster was divided between the Earl of Desmond and M'Carthy More; the captains of Connaught were the two Mac Williams, chiefs of the High Burkes and the Low Burkes, children of *Mawr*

William Fitz Adelm de Burgo, known in the West as William the Conqueror. There was no great lord in the old Kingdom or Province of Meath, only a number of small lords who generally looked up to the King's Viceroy as their captain. Altogether there were from sixty to one hundred lords, small and great, who governed their subjects like absolute kings, for the minor lord, though he paid tribute and homage to the great ones, could act much as he pleased to his own people. When at home he was himself a great man too, and had a gallows on his lawn.

During this period a very great Englishman appeared in Ireland. This great Englishman was Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York. He was here ten years. All his heroic brood were educated here, Edward, Richard Crook-Back, George, and the boy called Duke of Rutland. It is a rather amusing fact to learn that Richard Plantagenet who was presently about to strike for the Crown of the Anglo-Irish Empire, had to fight while he was in Ireland with a small West Meath chieftain in defence of his estates there, for by his mother he had inherited a portion of Hugo de Lacy's big domain, and also that the West Meath chieftain got rather the better of Richard Plantagenet. This chieftain's name was M'Geoghegan. In one day he burned thirteen of the Duke's towns, and afterwards signed with the Duke an honourable peace. Whether they slept together after the peace we are not informed, but I can assure the

reader that this was the ordinary conclusion of a treaty of peace between Norman and Irish lords in those curious times. The greatest peer of the Plantagenet Empire in the 13th century slept in the same bed with the titular King of Connaught after a tremendous war, nay, according to the annalists, slept together, "amicably and cheerfully." Facts like this show that in the middle ages there was no real difference between the Norman baronage and the Irish chieftainry. They were essentially the same sort of men.

Richard Plantagenet and his sons became extremely popular in Ireland, and led after them vast numbers of Irish gentlemen to the English wars of the Roses. I am glad to think that Ireland on this occasion took the right side in a great controversy. The white Rose represented "England a Nation," England governed not by great lords but by one sovereign king. Ireland went thoroughly with the White Rose in that controversy.

I may mention here that the celebrated Jack Cade, who went so near to upsetting the state of England, and the inauguration of a commonwealth some centuries before its right time, was a half Irish cousin of Richard Plantagenet. He was the son of his uncle Mortimer, who had been Viceroy of Ireland, and who had fallen in battle fighting against the O'Conors of the King's County. Mortimer by an Irish mother begot John Mortimer, known and caricatured in English History as Jack Cade. Now that the English people are

coming into power it is high time that some English historian should tell the true story of Jack Cade, who he was, and how he became so successful. Hitherto all the English histories, so far as they deal with Cade, seem to be mere echoes of Shakespeare's caricature.

It is very difficult for a person living in this nineteenth century, in the midst of newspapers, politics, policemen, standing armies, judges, and law-courts, open cities, undefended houses, books, pictures, &c., &c., to understand those singular centuries which intervened between the Norman Conquest and the next great epoch in Irish history, viz., the age of the Tudor Princes. One might write many books about these centuries and still they would be dark or ill-understood. There was no government in Ireland to begin with, and men did that which was right in their own eyes. One might imagine that civil war and mutual fratricide would have quite eaten up the people, but they did not. The country got on fairly well without any government, without law-courts, or police. Small lords, such as M'Geoghegan, who waged war with Richard Plantagenet, existed side by side with great ones, and passed on their estates from generation to generation, as if a strong government protected men in their rights. Wild anarchy engendered a certain iron conscience, so that men like the O'Neill, or the Earl of Desmond, no more thought of doing gross injustice to small lords like M'Geoghegan or the Fox, than a strong man to-day would think of

hurting a little child or a poor cripple. When one lord conquered another he did not wipe him out, he only exacted reparation for alleged wrongs. All these lords were cousins and to a great extent cousinly. They had their wars, as we have our quarrels and our law-suits, but they made friends again. Nor were their wars very destructive. They were often of the nature of duels. Two lords had a dispute, and, as there was no government, they had to decide the matter by war. A challenge was given and accepted, and on some smooth plain, like the Curragh of Kildare, they met and fought it out like gentlemen and men of honour, and the loser paid.

When so much valour abounded, big wars arose out of small causes. Young de Birmingham of Dunmore^x came to a Parliament of the men of Meath in Trim. Some one here, in the heat of controversy, filliped him on the nose. Young de Birmingham said no word, but that night left Trim, marshalled all the race of Ferris, the first of his line, and their Irish allies, invaded Meath, swept over the Palatinate with fire and sword, and amply avenged that unknightly and ungentlemanly deed, exacting the biggest eric known for a fillip on the nose.

Hospitality was limitless, and took singular forms. Margaret, queen of Ifailey, and wife of the O'Conor, invited all the professional men of Ireland and Scotland to her castle, gave every one of them not only an excellent banquet, but a

H

W. form is Dui-e-fau, Dun-eos. Big nose,
and Toe-wid.

valuable present, she herself resplendent in cloth of gold and surrounded by her ladies, smiling queenlike over that happy assembly. One of the O'Neills used to feast the same classes of men every Christmas,—physicians, poets, historians, harpers, astrologers, scholars, all were welcome at the table of O'Neill.

Some lords delighted in castles with walls six feet thick; others preferred crannogues, fortified islands in lakes, others, like the Savages of the County Down, declared that

"A castle of bones
Beats a castle of stones,"

and would not fortify or protect themselves at all. Duelling of course was almost a pastime. The gates of cities and church doors were common places of battle. When two gentlemen fought, all the gentlemen of the country side assisted, every man with his armour on in full warlike array, for it was a great martial solemnity.

Irish gentlemen were perpetually going to the Shrine of St James at Compostella in Spain, on pilgrimage. When an old lord found his battle harness too heavy for him, he retired to the family monastery and put on a monkish habit. Chieftains shot to death with arrows or otherwise mortally wounded, were by their followers brought into church to die there. An O'Neill died so before the altar of the great Church in Armagh.

It would require the genius of Sir Walter Scott

to do justice to all the wild virtues, the revelry, humanity, happiness, and adventures of these strange times when Ireland had neither king nor law, and was governed only by codes of honour and fair play.

CHAPTER XX.

IRELAND AND THE MONARCHY.

A GREAT but slow revolution now began to take place over most of Europe. The nations resolved to support their kings against the great lords who had previously governed them. The nations said "We are done with great lords. Their day is over. They are now a nuisance. We will be governed by our kings henceforward." The walled cities now growing rich and powerful supported the Crown in that great strife. Eventually the kings triumphed, the great lords had to take down their gallows, dismantle their fortifications and become subjects. The English people destroyed their great lords in the Wars of the Roses, and made their kings supreme. So when Henry VIII. came to the throne he was the real head and captain of the English people, and none of his nobles could stand up against him.

Henry was "Lord" of Ireland, yet in Ireland he had no power at all. Ireland was governed by many lords and captains, and the title of Henry was only one of honour. Now, the same causes which had led the rest of Europe to put down great lords and lift up kings were affecting the minds of the Irish people also. Here in Ireland

too men longed to be governed by one strong king who could establish law and enforce order, and not by a great number of small kings. They longed ardently to escape from the control of kings who lived on the other side of the way. We may then imagine the expanding genius of the age addressing thus the Irish nation : " You want a king. Very well. Take your choice. Select on the one hand your own best, wisest and bravest. Take an O'Neill or a Fitzgerald ; either would make a good king. Strengthen his hands against all the rest. Loyally support and follow him until you and he have trodden down all these petty kings under your feet, and so raise up on high the Irish monarchy and make the Irish nation. If you do not like that plan, then support your lord Henry and make him a real king instead of a titular one."

The Genius of the age, or indeed, more properly speaking, the divine Wisdom which governs mankind, put that question to Ireland early in King Henry's reign, and continued at intervals to put it all through the century, and Ireland again and again and many times continued just as steadily to reply : " We will have none of our own lords to be our king ; the House of the Tudors must furnish our kings." One after another, the greater captains of Irish territories stept out to fight with the Crown, and to challenge the support of Ireland. The House of Kildare and the House of Desmond, the O'Neills, the O'Donnells, and the de Burgos of

the West, stood out against the Crown, wrestled fiercely, strenuously, often victoriously, with the Tudors, but in vain. In each fresh insurrection, Ireland flung her weight into the scale of the House of Tudor. When any of these great lords waged war upon the Crown, the Crown called out and sent against him the feudal array of the rest of Ireland. Nor was this all; such was the temper of the people that the Crown was able to draw into its service for the war as many warriors of the fighting Irish races as it required. The English soldiers, who were sent into Ireland at this time, were quite useless. They were pressed men, the dregs of the English people, and very like the ragged recruits with whom Sir John Falstaff was ashamed to march through Coventry. The Mayor of Chester, writing to Queen Elizabeth about certain drafts whom he had recently forwarded to Ireland for the wars, said, "most of them were naked, many diseased, and many mad." The consequence was that all the fighting on the side of the Crown was done by Irish soldiers. For the island quite teemed with men trained to war from their childhood, eagerly seeking employment, and seeking it especially in the service of the State. Of the loyalty of Ireland to the Tudors, we have this proof and want no other. Queen Elizabeth not only permitted, but compelled the Irish to carry arms, and be expert in their use, that they might fight for her in her hour of need. Queen Elizabeth bade us arm, and we destroyed

How little
the Ireland
of to day!

her enemies from before her face. Queen Victoria has disarmed us. In the height of one of the great wars, the President of the Province writing to London, says : "there is not an English soldier in the army of Connaught." The Government thought it would be desirable to put some hundreds of those pressed Englishmen into that service. These men did so badly that the Governor of Connaught stript them of their arms, and gave the arms to Irish recruits.

The Crown, I say, had always the feudal array or "rising out" of Ireland on its side, and an inexhaustible supply of first-rate Irish soldiers for the regular army. As for the cities and walled towns, not one of them revolted, while the Crown and Ireland were warring down the great lords.

And yet if Ireland had determined to have an Irish king she had an unlimited choice of good material for the purpose. Any of those great dynastic families would have furnished a line of excellent kings, for the great Irish families were anything but effete ; on the contrary they were in the full flush of heroic and abounding life. Some of them in spite of the hostility of Ireland went near to triumphing.

Shane O'Neill conquered all Ulster, and at one time seemed about to conquer Ireland. He governed Ulster so strongly and so well that crowds of farmers fled to him, even out of the Pale, to enjoy the good peace that prevailed there. Even if Ulster alone had remained faithful to him

he might have triumphed. He was a big handsome man, and so proud that he was called Shane the Proud. Once talking to the Queen's Commissioners he said, "I will not be an Earl, but something greater and better than an Earl, I keep better men than your Earls." Then striking the hilt of his sword he cried, "Ulster is mine and shall be mine. With this sword I won it and with this sword I shall keep it."

Again when Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, made a confederacy of the lords of Ulster, Queen Elizabeth was unable to subdue him. Year after year he rolled back from the frontiers the strongest tide of invasion which she and Ireland could urge against him. In the end he actually beat the Crown to bankruptcy, the Queen, for the first time in her reign, being compelled to issue base coin in Ireland, so mightily had Hugh O'Neill disorganised her resources. This O'Neill was very unlike Shane. Hugh O'Neill was very wise and prudent. He was a statesman as well as a soldier, and perhaps on the whole the ablest man of action that Ireland ever produced. While Ulster remained true to him he could not be conquered, and nothing but the hostility of the rest of the country prevented him from conquering Ireland. But the chieftains and the people, even of Ulster, finally broke loose from his control and sided with the Queen, so that he was obliged to make peace. Afterwards in the reign of James I. when the Crown pressed hard upon him, Ulster refused to go to war again in his

defence, consequently he, in company with the Earl of Tirconnel, had to fly. This event, which took place in 1607 is called "the Flight of the Earls," and marks the end of the huge struggle between the Crown and the great feudal lords of Ireland. The nation and the Crown combined had overthrown and exterminated the great lords, but at the cost of wars and fightings which had lasted through three generations. The fact that the Irish nation supported Queen Elizabeth against the great lords is the more surprising when we remember that the Queen was the head of the Protestant party in Europe, and that Ireland was quite Roman Catholic. There was at this time hardly an Irish Protestant in the island.

The Queen, however, did not require the execution of religious laws in Ireland more than to prevent the public celebration of mass. The nobility had their chaplains, and the people their priests, and used their services without molestation. Otherwise she probably would not have been able to hold Ireland for a day. An Irish army at this date consisted of (1), heavy-armed footmen, wearing complete armour and fighting with battle axes; (2), light foot armed with casting spears, bows and cross-bows; (3), musketeers; and (4), cavalry in complete mail riding on enormously big, strong, and spirited horses. There was no difference between the Queen's armies and those of the insurgent lords.¹

¹ For a fuller account of the Elizabethan period, see the Author's "Red Hugh's Captivity;" also, "The Bog of Stars."

CHAPTER XXI.

CROMWELL IN IRELAND.

AFTER the flight of the Earls, King James I. and his advisers committed what seems to have been a great wrong and imprudence. They confiscated all Ulster, and gave the greater portion of it to their English and Scotch friends. This they were able to do because the mass of the Irish people were so devoted to the crown, and so hostile to their own chiefs and great men that they raised no objection. But the gentlemen of the North had refused to stir in defence of the Earls, and it was most unjust to convert the assumed treason and the flight of those Earls into a pretext for the confiscation of the country. In fact, the Irish people, from this time forward, began to be absurdly and even stupidly attached to the crown ; although the crown was growing every day a worse instrument of government, every day more and more tyrannical, unjust and rapacious. In England, the crown was doing many unjust things, similar to this confiscation of Ulster, taking away men's estates from them by quibbles of lawyers ; devouring the people by monopolies ; persecuting them in matters of religion, and becoming every day

more and more a tyranny. The crown had done all its useful work in the making of England and the strengthening and unifying of the English nation, and was now fast becoming a nuisance, and even an unendurable nuisance. But the Irish people would not see things in the same light, and because the crown had been their leader against the great lords, they imagined that their fealty was due for ever and ever to the crown, as if it were in itself something sacred and divine. So when the Parliament of England and the English people rose against the king, the Irish people rose to defend him. This, too, happened at a time when not only were the English people dreadfully in earnest, with their blood boiling at the wrongs which they had endured at the hands of their kings, but when they had for their captain one of the ablest men that ever lived, a most sagacious ruler and a most valiant soldier, Oliver Cromwell. In their folly the nobility and gentry of Ireland leagued together under Ormonde, to resist Cromwell with such an England behind him.

Cromwell made short work of the Royalist Irish gentry. He landed in Ireland at the head of an army very different indeed from those poor wretches who were driven hither and thither in the time of the Tudors, and who had no soldierly instincts at all. Cromwell's soldiers were of the very best kind, as good soldiers as ever fought anywhere, representing in the highest form the fighting man-

hood of England, veterans, and with their hearts hot in the work which they had undertaken.

Cromwell, from whatever point of view we may regard him, was a great Englishman, who, as it were, stamped his image, certainly in a very remarkable manner, upon this country.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE STORMING OF DROGHEDA.

CROMWELL as to his personal appearance was five feet ten inches in height, strongly built and massive in his proportions. His hair originally brown was now well grizzled, his age being at the date of the Irish invasion just fifty years and four months. His eyes were large and grayish-blue in colour, the eyebrows strongly marked and somewhat arched, complexion well bronzed, inclining to ruddy, from age and much exposure to all weathers —for he had been a farmer before he became a soldier, and he had been soldiering now for eight years. His nose was aquiline, eminent, blunt at the extremity, with wide nostrils. His mouth large, and suggestive as much of tender emotions and sensibility as of power. In the National Gallery there are two engravings supposed to represent him. One of these shows a quite distracted, insane face, not a bit like Cromwell's. The other, which represents him in company with Lambert, is, I think, too feminine and refined. There is also an oil painting of him in a dark corner, which shows a very morose person suggesting not at all the bold, frank, and intellectual physiognomy which was Cromwell's. In tempera-

ment he was exceedingly choleric and fiery, but the fire though frequently leaping forth, was, as a rule, well and sternly repressed. In his speeches to his refractory Parliaments, we feel the presence and heat of this internal repressed fire burning through the oratory, and see it blazing out, too, sometimes, in a manner which must have been very impressive to his audiences. For example, "If any set himself to undo this—I am a plain man; let him bring round the buckle, of his belt," *i.e.*, get his weapon in readiness. "Before I fling away this" (the Protectorship) "so testified to by God, so approved by man, I will rather be rolled into my grave and buried with infamy." In some of these harangues the fire seems to blaze along every line, while we notice, at the same time, the man's great self-mastery and strong self-control. Enough here for the personality of this remarkable figure which in the autumn of 1649 projected itself into Royalist Ireland, and so speedily reduced Ormonde, Castlehaven, Inchiquin, and the O'Neills to such a wrecked condition, in the space of a few months.

Cromwell, as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and Lieutenant-General of the Commonwealth's forces, landed in Ireland on the 15th of August, probably at Dalkey, and while *en route* for the Castle stood up in his carriage, and, holding his hat in his hand, delivered a vigorous harangue to the people. He was by no means an "inarticulate" hero, but had a very great talent, indeed, for speech, ever prompt

with tongue and pen, and was as voluble a talker as he was an active doer. Another false notion concerning the Protector is that he was a sombre-minded and melancholy man, full of "sorrow," and so forth. Men of active habits, prompt of speech, and prompt of action, are not, in experience, found to be melancholy, and, certainly, Cromwell was no exception. Baxter, author of "The Saint's Rest," who knew him personally, and had long colloquies with him after he became Protector, and while he went about in daily apprehension of assassination, confirms the opinion to which all rules of probability would conduct. He tells us distinctly that Oliver Cromwell's ceaseless flow of spirits, his resilience, vitality, cheerfulness, and general hilarity and animation, were of such a kind that in any other man they would cause a suspicion "that he had drunk a cup too much." Now this singular testimony furnished by the pious Master Baxter to an interesting and important aspect of Cromwell's many-sided personality has been ignored by Carlyle, the authority from whom most men nowadays derive all they know about Cromwell. I find it difficult to believe that Carlyle did not read this passage in Baxter. At all events he has not quoted it, and it certainly would harmonize very ill with his portrait of Cromwell.

As soon as he was established in the Castle Cromwell's first step was to institute a vigorous "purge" of the Irish Army of the Commonwealth.

Cromwell's idea of what an army should be was very high, yet this army, which he now purged so copiously, had a short time before, viz., in the battle of Rathmines, or rather of Baggot's Rath, inflicted a signal defeat upon a great Royalist army, commanded by the Marquis of Ormonde, and representing most of the fighting strength of the Royalists in the three southern Provinces. For Ireland was now pretty well in general agreement and apparently determined to show a united front to the Puritans who, indeed, only possessed two strong places in the Island, viz., Dublin and Derry.

Ireland was indeed united, for once, but not until she had exhausted some four-fifths of her fighting strength and financial resources in the most appalling, confused, and self-destructive civil wars. Had Ireland in 1641 united under any of the then parties, and organised her really very considerable and even excellent military resources, I believe the Commonwealth would never have dared even to make an attempt at invasion. The Irish soldiery of the day were first-rate fighting men. Man for man the Puritan warriors were, I have no doubt, better, but Ireland had a practically inexhaustible supply of born soldiers, a military caste, almost gentlemen, and led and officered by their own gentry and noblemen, who were also the kinsmen of the rank and file. But the Irish wasted, as I have said, some four-fifths of their strength in a bloody chaos of awfully embroiled civil wars and mutual plunderings, destruction of

property, and drainage of all the springs of industry and wealth. And we had been many years at that miserable work before the complete triumph of the Commonwealth in England and Scotland, and its offensive designs against this country, led to the formation, under Ormonde, of a new league of all Ireland to resist the Puritan invasion. The bishops and priests, the Irish Army of the North under Owen Roe O'Neill, Ormonde and the sincere Royalists, the Catholic nobles of the Pale, the old Irish party, the Protestants in the North-East, and the nondescript Munster party, led by Inchiquin, had, for a wonder, all united to repel the Puritans. Had they succeeded, had they crushed Cromwell, of course, all these parties which had so much of each other's blood upon their hands would have flown at each other once more. If a patriotic reader will pardon such an illustration, the great historical tableau then presented by Ireland was not so unlike a wild battle between half-a-dozen combatants, every man fighting from his own hand, but all combining for a moment against the policeman with the full resolution to "have at" each other again as soon as that spoil-sport could be driven off the green. Had these raging parties succeeded in beating Cromwell we can hardly imagine any other issue for the afflicted country than general ruin, for none of the parties were strong enough to subdue the rest, and all of them, or nearly all, were strong enough and stubbornly brave enough to continue fighting.

As a soldier and a statesman the new Lord Lieutenant was well aware that he would conquer Ireland soonest by bringing his own army into perfect military discipline, and by imperatively forbidding all licentiousness of the soldiery towards the persons and property of the people whom he desired to bring under his government. Accordingly he printed and published a declaration in restraint of all such excesses under the severest penalties; "all officers and soldiers" were warned "not to abuse, rob, or execute cruelties upon the people of the country unless they be actually in arms or in office with the enemy, or to meddle with their goods without special order." "Otherwise they shall answer at their utmost perils." For the Lord Lieutenant declared that "by the Grace of God he was resolved to punish all that shall offend, very severely, according to the articles of war."

The reader will observe the clearness and force with which this so-called "inarticulate hero" is able to express himself, when the occasion requires it, and when he is not discoursing upon religious mysteries. As another example of this inarticulate style, I beg here to reproduce his letter to the Royalist Governor of the Castle of Cahir—a castle which still proudly overlooks the silver waters of the Suir, in the county of Tipperary, as it has done for many centuries. All his letters concerning business are in the same vein, and as plain as the point of a pike:

“Sir,—Having brought the army and my cannon near to this place, I thought fit to offer you terms honourable for soldiers :—that you may march away with your baggage, arms, and colours, free from violence or injury. But if I be necessitated to bend my cannon upon you, you must expect the extremity usual in such cases. To avoid blood this is offered you by your servant,

“OLIVER CROMWELL.”

If such letters be inarticulate it would be desirable that letter-writters in general should endeavour to drop into a similar confused method of conveying their meanings.

Cromwell's forcible declaration addressed to the army, which he had already purged, was, as may be imagined from its style, very necessary. Hitherto a state army campaigning in Ireland was very like a horde of banditti, and, like lawless and irresponsible banditti, they ate up the friends of the State as well as its enemies. As to “cruelties,” it will be enough to mention that even a Parliamentary general, a scoundrel called Coote, while waging war upon the gentlemen of Wicklow, then in arms, had a short time before, not only pillaged the poor country people mercilessly, but had killed great numbers of non-combatants, including women and children. “With the grace of God” Cromwell was determined to end that method of waging war in Ireland. The Elizabethan Generals slaughtered the non-combatant tenantry of an insurgent gentleman, with as much satisfaction as they did his cattle. Consequently

they had little success, and were beaten from post to pillar by Hugh O'Neill, and their memories will for ever be loathed in Ireland. Cromwell conquered Ireland with amazing rapidity, and bold as the prophecy may be, I predict the coming of a day when his memory will be dearer to Ireland than that of the greatest Irish worthy that we can furnish down to date. He was, to go no farther, the first fighting man who waged war in Ireland with any approximation to civilised methods.

While Cromwell was in the Castle purging his army, issuing salutary declarations, and hanging English soldiers who had misconducted themselves towards the inoffensive gentry and farmers of the country, he several times endeavoured to draw into religious discussions the Catholics, who for one reason or another, probably bad reasons, frequented his rude and simple military court. These attempts to draw were certainly made over the convivial glass and under the genial influences of claret, nor should I be at all surprised to learn that Oliver, in order to draw his men more effectually, even indulged in whiskey-punch, were I not aware that the Irish gentlemen of the period had an unpatriotic preference for the juice of the grape. Here once more Carlyle's treatment of his hero has to be criticised. Cromwell was a wine-drinker. I have read Parliamentary speeches of his in which he stated the fact, and expressed approval of wine-drinking as an ex-

cellent thing for man, and as enjoying the approbation of the founder of his religion. The Royalists hinted that he was a drunkard, and declared that his nose was red. If Cromwell was a drunkard, I only wish that modern British statesmen, contemporary British statesmen, could contrive to secure the same variety of wine and drink plentifully of it. Cromwell, I say, endeavoured to draw the Dublin Catholics, who came to his court, and embark with them upon the illimitable ocean of Christian mysteries; but even under the inspiring influences of the new Lord Lieutenant's claret, they refused to be drawn. "They left all such matters," they said, "to their priests," just as the loose-talking Jacobite, Oliver Goldsmith, more than a century afterwards, said, "As I take my boots from my shoemaker, so I take my religion from my clergyman."

One can easily imagine how disgusting was such a reply to a man who loved religious discussions infinitely more than our young men of light and leading love to discuss the mysteries of Browning or the incomprehensibilities of bimetallism. All the time that he was in Ireland he received no other rejoinder from Roman Catholics, whom he desired to lead into the consideration of religious mysteries. As a Protestant, he was naturally disgusted with such an appalling abdication of the first rights of man, and as an *independent* Protestant still more disgusted. He

refers somewhat bitterly and sarcastically to the fact in his controversial declaration addressed to the Hierarchy and priesthood written a little later on in Youghal, and where for a short time he paused in his war-labours, or rather as it were, dropping his Puritan pike, took in hand his Puritan pen. After a very short stay in Dublin, Cromwell pulled himself together and marched for Drogheda. Ormonde with the Royalist army lay on this side of Trim, but did not venture to attack him. It is singular that though they often outnumbered him, the Royalists never once anywhere dared to fight Cromwell in the open.

On Friday, August 30th, Cromwell rendezvoused his army on the north side of Dublin, and on Monday, the 2nd September, marched to Drogheda, where he immediately began to open his trenches and construct his platforms. On the 9th, all being ready for battering, he summoned the Governor, Sir Arthur Ashton. The letter of summons is not extant, but we know its terms. Cromwell offered the garrison "mercy" if they surrendered the fortress, otherwise "the extremity of war." Ashton refused, and the batteries began to play early next morning. Drogheda, always called Tredagh by Cromwell, must have been a very beautiful city, girdled with its lofty zig-zag walls, machicolated, and rising here and there into towers. The east port, with its grand gate-tower, is still intact. Whoever has contemplated this gateway and tower and aids his imagination by studying the plates of

Pacata Hibernia, which represent the contemporaneous cities of Munster, may form for himself a fairly adequate conception of the strong and proud city upon which Cromwell bent his cannon that September morning. I believe there was a town here from the remotest ages. Drogheda, under the name of Inver Colpa, figures in the great epical legend of the Milesian invasion. "Colpa the Swordsman," son of Milesius, gave his name to the place. In the fourth century, as we learn from the Annals, it was a flourishing mart. The Danes, of course, utilized such a desirable place for tapping the commerce of Meath. The Normans girdled it with walls and towers, and held Parliaments here. It was probably the Norman walls that Cromwell now burst through ; for when the Normans built a wall it did not require to be rebuilt. Ireland, I may remark, was at this date magnificently defended with strong cities and hundreds of castles almost as strong as cities. Some counties, Tipperary, for example, and Kilkenny, were filled with "fenced cities." Places which are now straggling villages were then walled and towered, and as beautiful as they were strong. If Ormonde and his Royalists were worth anything, and their cause worth anything, they should have been able to hold such a country against Cromwell and his small Puritan host, for it was small. Cromwell had not 20,000 men in the country, and when the war was over 45,000 Irish soldiers embarked for the Continent. But Ormonde was a poor leader,

and the cause for which the foolish country now embattled itself one of the poorest ever known. The man for whom all these Catholic noblemen and gentlemen were fighting was just now on his way to Scotland to stand out there as the "Champion of the Kirk," with what sincerity we all know. Here was all Ireland embattled for a king who, so far from being kingly, was not even moderately honest. Ireland's cause was so bad that it could hardly have been worse, and her fighting in that bad cause was worthy of its extreme badness, the poorest fighting of which I have read anywhere, considering the quality and the numbers of the Irish soldiery of that day.

At five o'clock in the evening, the culverins having been going all day, the breaches were considered assaultable, and the Puritan forlorn, with reserves behind, firing as they went and fired upon, wrapped in clouds of smoke shot with flames plunged through the breaches. Within they found that the Royalists had in the meantime flung up lines of earthworks, from behind which they fired on the stormers. The Puritans advanced to carry those works, but could not, so stoutly were they held. Before these works and the fire that broke from them, the Puritans wavered, recoiled, and, at last, smitten by panic, ran. Through the breaches by which they had so gallantly entered the city, they now came back running in wild crowds, with Irish pikes and swords flashing in their rear. Had any one else but

Cromwell presided over that storming business, the Puritan cause might have ended here. Foiled at Tredagh, the army of the Commonwealth, caught between the victorious garrison, and Ormonde, who was hanging about in the neighbourhood, would in all probability have been destroyed, and Prince Charles would have bent his course to Ireland, been crowned in Dublin, and have exhibited himself as a devout Catholic. But Cromwell was there, and the rout of his forlorn soldiers was soon converted into victory. Cromwell, putting himself at the head of the reserves, led his men up to the breaches, stayed the panic, rallied the flying, passed the walls, carried the earthworks, got in his cavalry, at their head charged the Royalists, and broke them utterly. The rest was slaughter. This was unlucky Ireland's first experience of "the curse of Cromwell," and certainly a terrible experience it was. Save a few score of soldiers reserved for Barbadoes, Cromwell, by fire or sword, slew there every man "with arms in his hands." A murder "grim and great," surely, in contemplation of which the mind stands verily appalled.

Yet this, too, must be remembered. Cromwell, in the face of all Ireland, challenged his enemies to prove that he had ever slain non-combatants. "Come," he said, "give me now one instance."

The Royalist Irish gentry could not stand before these men. They did not even make a brave and resolute resistance. They would not fight in the open. They flung themselves into castles and

walled cities where Cromwell stormed them and killed them, catching them as if in so many traps. It would have been better for Cromwell's reputation if he had shown more mercy, but it must be remembered that he himself did not look for mercy. He made the war one without quarter, and had he been beaten, he certainly would not have got quarter. Then when he subdued any region he governed it well, and his soldiers paid for provisions and everything they got at market rates, while the Royalist captains were behaving very differently when they had power. So the common people were on the whole more willing to be governed by him, and as the Royalist gentry fought wretchedly Cromwell and his generals overran the whole country in an inconceivably short space of time.

Then the Parliament confiscated the lands of the Royalist gentry and set over most of the country a new race of landlords, who were English and Protestant, and the Catholic Royalist gentry were reduced very low indeed, and confined mainly to Connaught, where they were not likely to exert much influence over the affairs of the island. This was a very thorough conquest indeed, and very ruinous to the Irish nobility and gentry. But the common people and trading classes so far from suffering under the new system rather flourished, and the wealth and population of the island rapidly increased under the stern but wise management of the Puritans. It was the warlike,

land-owning aristocracy, and by no means the Irish people, whom Cromwell drove across the Shannon.

Cromwell, like Queen Elizabeth, allowed the Irish Catholics to worship after their own manner, but did not permit the public celebration of the mass. He also quite suppressed the use of the liturgy in the Protestant churches. He considered the liturgy to be a kind of idolatry, and an example of those vain repetitions so sternly condemned in the Bible. Cromwell's clergymen used to read the Bible aloud to the people, expound it, and pray, but not according to any set form.

When the Restoration took place, of course the use of the liturgy was resumed in the churches. The Royalist gentry too recovered a share of their former estates, but by no means as much as King Charles II. ought to have given them, seeing that they had lost all for his sake, fighting against Cromwell and the Parliament. But the Stuarts were never grateful, and indeed kings generally are too apt to regard all services rendered to them as their due, and not entitled to any return. One might imagine that the Irish gentry were now sick of kings, but they were not yet.

During the Cromwellian confusions the Pope made a great effort to win Ireland from King and Commonwealth. To achieve that end he sent his legate Cardinal Rinnuccini to Ireland.

The following anecdote will show what manner of man was Rinnuccini. When he first arrived he

signed a certain arrangement with Ormonde and the Royalist gentry of the land. Then he wished he had not signed it, but some other arrangement of a different kind. He asked the Keeper of the Records in Kilkenny to lend him the document. The Keeper did so, and the legate wrote out and signed a new and different treaty which he returned to the Keeper, retaining the old one in his own possession. Rinnuccini relates all this in one of his own letters to the Pope, published in his memoirs, and tells the story with much humour.

Ormonde and the Royalist gentry never learned this, but being gentlemen and men of honour, they felt that the Italian was not an honest man. Finally they turned against him and drove him out of the country. This legate and this Pope remind one strongly of the successors of the Irish Saints. Surely it was better for the deeper interests of Ireland that she should have fallen under the dominion of Ireton, Fleetwood, and young Henry Cromwell, than of this jocose forger and ecclesiastical liar. The Puritans were able to conquer Ireland for much the same reason that the Norsemen, and afterwards the Normans, were able to conquer it. They were bolder, sincerer, more true-hearted, more upright, and more united than those whom they overthrew.

CHAPTER XXIII.

RIG SHAMUS A-BOO.

PRESENTLY when the English people rose against King James II., and drove him out of England, the gentry and people of Ireland resolved to support him. The enthusiasm with which they adopted his cause is most astonishing. We can still see that enthusiasm reflected in the Jacobite ballads and songs which were then made, many of them very beautiful and touching. Here is the substance of one of them.

Erin lies awake at night in her bed. Without the storm is raging and the rain falling in wild torrents. The wind crashes howling through the forest, coughs and roars down the chimney. The big rain-drops fall hissing upon the embers on the hearth.

Erin hears a tapping at the door. "Who is there?" she cries. A voice answers, "It is I Shamus, son of Cathal (James, son of Charles), I have been driven forth by robbers from the home of my ancestors. Give me shelter, I pray thee, from the fury of the storm."

Quickly Erin unbars the door and brings in the hapless fugitive. She removes his dripping cloak, gives him dry clothes, puts fresh timber on the fire,

supplies him with supper and shelter, and takes him to her heart.

Indeed the ardent loyalty and affection which the Stuarts all through inspired in so many simple hearts and in all three countries, is very touching and not unnaturally a pleasing theme to the writers and readers of romance.

The Jacobite revolution for a while carried everything before it in Ireland. The Williamites were swept into corners, but of these corners they made strong fastnesses and defended them, with a gallantry which must never be 'forgotten. The prowess of the Enniskillen men and the determined endurance of the men of Derry, form together a very noble chapter in Irish history.

The Derrymen were not strong enough to take the field, but they held their city against the Jacobites with great skill and courage, and a truly heroic power of stubborn endurance. Though they died by thousands from famine and the fevers that always accompany famine, they fought on and starved on with a desperate determination, which recalls what one reads of the manner in which the ancient Iberians and Celtiberians of Spain used to hold their cities against the Romans. The Derrymen, too, we can well believe, would rather have fired their city and perished in the flames than have surrendered. Latterly, too, their spirits were raised by the presence of King William's fleet at the mouth of the Foyle, though the strong boom which the Jacobites had drawn

across the estuary, and the cannon which defended it, for the present forbade communications. At last, when the wind one day blew strong from the north, a Williamite sailor, Captain Kirke, bore down with three ships on the boom, regardless of cannon shots and musketry fire, burst the boom victoriously and sailed up to the starved city, whose lean and yellow heroes poured forth to meet him with cries and tears of joy. The blockade came to an end that day.

In the time of Queen Elizabeth there was a great military caste of the Irish people. This military caste survived down to Cromwell's time, but after the Cromwellian conquest, the altered social conditions of the country led to its dispersion and degradation. During the Protectorate 45,000 men of the military order passed over to the Continent and thence to the time at which we are now arrived, a constant stream of such military emigration had been flowing to the Continent. The infantry of King James' army was now composed of peasantry, good material, no doubt, but needing time to convert it into a finished and effective soldiery.

It was utterly absurd to expect that such an army as that of King James could stand before such a military force as Great Britain and Holland now united and under the command of such a man as the Prince of Orange were in a position to despatch against it. All that Jacobite Ireland could really do was to fight bravely and fall with honour, and this it did.

For it is a fact that the Jacobite Irish, both the common soldiers and the gentlemen, throughout these campaigns did their war work not only well but remarkably well. They were beaten, but without loss of honour. Badly armed, without artillery, compelled to forage for food, without pay, becoming in consequence more and more disliked by the industrious classes, badly governed by a stupid king, whose heart was not even hot in his own cause, they fought nevertheless a most gallant fight, and their remnant did not relinquish the struggle till they had by dint of fighting forced good terms from the generals of King William. If this army had been properly financed and led, it might well have held Ireland against King William, and if it had done that it would certainly have provoked a counter-revolution in England and Scotland and re-established the Stuart tyranny. But fortunately for the cause of freedom, King James had no money and the King of France would give him none, and he himself was a very poor and dull creature as all men acknowledge at the present day.

William first sent into Ireland against James one of his generals, at the head of a great and well equipped army.

Schomberg, though eighty-one years old, was an active old man and a first-rate general. Yet even with such an army, and though he had Ulster under his control and enjoyed the co-operation of the Ulster Protestant-Irish, now flushed with a

whole series of successes, even he could make nothing out of the situation. The Jacobite Irish flung themselves in his way, cut off his loose detachments, checked his advance and finally pinned him to his fortified camp, where he lost half his army by sickness. This shows that King James' Irish army was by no means a bad one. Indeed, considering the immense difficulties under which it laboured throughout the whole war, we may say that the efforts made on his behalf by his Irish subjects deserve the highest praise.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ON THE BANKS OF THE BOYNE.

THE Battle of the Boyne is one of the famous battles of the world. The defeated army lost only about five hundred men killed ; yet the battle of the Boyne is famous and most famous. On the whole the world's verdict is right. The battle of the Boyne proved that the Stuart dynasty could not be sustained by Irish loyalty and valour, proved that the House of Stuart was doomed.

But more than the Stuart cause was lost on the banks of the Boyne. Some one has said or sung that from the hill of Donore—fort of gold—where he stood, high up above the river, King James' Crown sprang from his august head and rolled and leaped down the steep and green incline till it plunged into those dark still waters, for one moment annoying the noble river which a moment after flowed dark and still as before. But the imagination which does not confine itself to things merely Irish and English, might see as in a vision more crowns than one tumbling that day into the bosom of the Boyne, crowns upon crowns, whole troops of them, the diadems of all manner of hoary old tyrannies, rolling merrily down Donore

Hill that day. The kings of the world lost then their brother of England, which was an irreparable loss to the kings of the world, and so the French Revolution and a great many other things became possible. To the eye it was a skirmish, but in fact it was one of the decisive battles of the world.

James pretended that he was going to fight here. He had, in fact, no intention of fighting at all. His Irish officers had, and with very good reason. For example, a little to his rear lay the rich domains of the Prestons, lords of Gormanstown. The Preston would not consent to the loss of his Meath estates without striking a blow. Neither would the Talbots, nor the Nugents, nor the Flemings, nor the Kavanaghs, nor any of the gallant gentlemen of Meath or Leinster, who risked life and fortune in his cause. They were resolved to fight, but James was determined to retreat, after a mere show of fighting to please the gentlemen of Meath and Leinster. From the steeple of Donore church, he could see the Williamite host pouring in from the north, see the dust and steam of the army rising there as his rival advanced. On both sides the country runs steeply down to the Boyne, and such a country! so clothed with rich, living green, through which winds the still dark and majestic Boyne. No one who has not been there can realize its beauty. The shores of the Boyne are like an enchanted land, like a "lond of Faery." Using the Boyne as a connecting thread, let us take a rapid backward glance over our story of Ireland so far.

This beautiful valley was the fabled seat of the gods, with whom our story began. Recall the old legend telling how the Boyne was once Nectan's enchanted well, till it rose against the too-enquiring Danaan lady and broke forth as a river. Here dwelt Angus Ogue, and the Dagda, and Nuada of the Silver Hand, gods and fairies and genii innumerable. The chariots of Queen Meave and her horses churned these dark waters to foam. Cuculain did his first warlike feat on its shores. Cuculain executing thunder-feats, shooting thunder-bolts, drove the hosts of Connaught down those steep northern banks into its waters, so that the Boyne ran red to the sea. To-morrow engines less legendary will shoot bolts here such as the bards never saw even in vision.

The Boyne's quiet waters felt the quiet keels of the first Patrician evangelists. Upon the Boyne's banks Patrick kindled his first paschal fire, seen afar with amazement and alarm by the druids of Tara. Upon these shores rose the painted and glittering city, the seat of sovereignty till Ruadan of Lorrha, and the Saints overthrew it and rent the monarchy, but saved their right of sanctuary. Here Hugh de Lacy's stout baronage raised their massive stone castles above the stream, on the north bank the Fleming, on the south Jordan de Exeter. Here the Pale-Irish fought many a fierce battle with the warlike lords of the North. Here, a little lower towards the sea, Cromwell and Ireton storming Drogheda and slaughtering the garrison

announced terribly to all Ireland that the men who had trampled down the Kings and Prelates of England, had arrived and taken in hand the same work here. And now, our long story running down through so many diverse centuries, so many strange things and men, reaches a time and an event newer and stranger, the last phase of the war between the liberties and aspirations of peoples, and the tyranny and divine right of kings.

With this glance at the past and its relation to the present, let us now fix our attention on the great duel between the anointed king and the king who was only the elected captain of the people their chosen war-leader, and who boasted no unction from on high.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BATTLE OF THE BOYNE.

WILLIAM led to the banks of the Boyne the finest army that was ever seen in Ireland, some 45,000 veteran soldiers splendidly furnished and equipped, with fifty pieces of field artillery besides mortars. Its paper strength was 51,000. On the 31st of June, the army encamped along the north shore behind the highlands which here bordered the Boyne. On this day, William was slightly wounded by a cannon ball, while observing the enemy from the high ground which lay in front of the principal ford called Old Bridge. From this high ground the road to the ford descended by a deep ravine. The wound was of no consequence. He laid his plans that night, and executed them next day.

Early in the morning, he bade young Schomberg lead the right of the army up the river and cross at Slane, taking the Jacobites in flank. The only resistance met with by Schomberg was from a regiment of Jacobite horse commanded by Sir Arthur O'Neill who continued to drive back Schomberg's men into the Boyne till he himself, was compelled to retire before William's cannon, which eventually had to be brought to bear upon

him. Why did not James answer that cannonading which repelled O'Neill and enabled Schomberg's men to cross? The answer is suggestive. James had only twelve pieces of cannon to meet William's fifty, and of these twelve pieces he had on the previous day sent six to Dublin. Why? He had no intention of fighting at the Boyne at all. His purpose was to make a show of fighting, and having gone through the show, then to fall back. The army wanted to fight, but James did not. So James and Lauzun delivered no blow at all upon young Schomberg, but, alleging a variety of reasons, retreated as fast as they could to the pass of Duleek in their rear. The battle of the Boyne was lost before it was fought.

When William heard that his right was over the river, he descended with his centre and left down that ravine which intersected the high ground upon which he had been wounded, and on the low ground which bordered the river extended his line preparatory to crossing. His men were still beyond musketry range. Cannon, indeed, would have played upon them with destructive effect, as in serried masses they descended the ravine, but the Jacobites had no cannon. Half their twelve pieces were now trundling away southwards and already near Dublin, the other half which were here yesterday and had wounded William were now in the Slane region. James and Lauzun had brought them away.

While William's men descended and spread

along the green shores of the Boyne, his numerous cannon from the heights were playing upon the Jacobites on the south shore, who could make no reply. The Boyne here was fordable everywhere, and every ford was shallow. The river was hardly a defence at all, as any one can perceive who looks at it with his eyes and not at its picture on a map. A man can walk across the Boyne at Old Bridge in summer without wetting his knees, and the weather had been noticeably fine and dry of late. From Old Bridge down the river towards Drogheda there were half a dozen easy fords. William with his left of cavalry passed by the last of these fords. The centre of infantry under the command of old Schomberg, crossed by the numerous fords about Old Bridge. By the first went the Dutch Blue Guards, by the second the Huguenot refugee regiments, by the third the Williamite Irish, and after them the Danes, Hessians and William's other veteran mercenaries. There is no mention of English at this point. The English regiments were with young Schomberg. The southern shore here was held by Tyrconnell's regiment firing from behind recently constructed walls and defences, and from the houses of the village of Old Bridge. Behind them in reserve lay seven battalions. The Duke of Berwick, son of James, had the chief command here. The Jacobite horse lay further down the stream watching the motions of Williams and his left of cavalry.

Steadily but swiftly Schomberg's infantry in their different divisions crossed the green meadows bordering the river under cover of their artillery playing from the heights, stepped into the cold Boyne and in spite of the firing of Tyrconnell's men, reached the other shore and beat the latter from their defences. These last did all that brave men could do, and did not leave their works till they had lost one hundred and sixty men killed, and I suppose three times that number wounded. Berwick now ordered down his reserve of seven battalions, and these fresh men for a while held the battle even. But meantime Schomberg's infantry in ever-increasing masses were crossing the Boyne, and being all excellent and proved soldiers and greatly superior in numbers, not only overwhelmed the Jacobites, but threatened to surround them and quite cut them off. Seeing the danger, Berwick ordered up the Jacobite horse who were further down the stream watching the movements of William at the other side. Presently the Jacobite horse came thundering in upon the flank of Schomberg's men, and charged and recharged till they had extricated their own foot and greatly disordered Schomberg's infantry. Schomberg felt that his own presence was needed to restore the battle here—the gallant old veteran, on whose face time and war had scored more lines than he had seen years. There is a fine portrait of him in the National Gallery in Dublin.

Schomberg with his reserves crossed the river.

Yet what havoc the Jacobite horse were making at this point, is shown by the fact that in the village of Old Bridge, Schomberg's own guard was overpowered by them, and he himself cut down, falling by the hand of a certain Jacobite cavalier, Sir Cathal O'Toole, scion of a famous and ancient family of Leinster. It was no stray shot from a distance that killed the gallant old veteran. His guard was cut up and overwhelmed in one of these fierce charges of the Jacobite horse.

But meantime, William, whom there was nobody to meet, had crossed the Boyne by the last ford, and was rapidly advancing up the bank, at the head of eighteen squadrons of fresh men and horses. Berwick had to recall his victorious cavalry to meet the new danger, and William's broken centre of foot found time to rally and reform. With horse and foot William now pressed upon the retreating Jacobites, who fought only to make good their retreat, which, owing to the great preponderance of the enemy, was no easy task. The Jacobite horse had now to cover the retreat of the foot, and fight against horse and foot. They charged again and again. Ten times in all the Jacobite horse charged in defence of their broken infantry, and with the tenth charge accomplished their work. After this last charge, Berwick completely reformed his lines, and facing about presented a steady and lowering front to the pursuers. Berwick was enormously outnumbered. His assailants were the best infantry in Europe. He

was honestly beaten, but held on his course undismayed, and still presenting a serried and unbroken rear to all comers. William did not like the look of that lowering Jacobite array. He knew it was in retreat, that owing to events taking place up the river, it must retreat. He did not wish to peril all by risking a new engagement with men in such a mood, and whose valour he had tasted sufficiently to know that it was dangerous to provoke it anew without good cause. In short, he declined the challenge, and permitted Berwick to march leisurely "au petit pas" after James and Lauzun to the pass of Duleek.

Such in its main features was the Battle of the Boyne, of which eminent historians pandering to popular prejudices have given accounts quite untrue. The Jacobite infantry did not "scamper to the mountains." There were no mountains to which to scamper. The Jacobites were fairly beaten by vastly superior numbers as the bravest soldiers often must be, but they retreated in perfectly good order. With the relief afforded by those splendid horse-chargings they reformed their ranks, repelled the pursuing Williamite host and retreated on Dublin presenting always a rear so solid and minatory that the victorious Williamites did not dare to attack it at any point.

NOTE TO THIS CHAPTER.

All the available authorities for the Battle of the Boyne will be found collected and arranged in the notes of *Macariae Excidium* published 1850 by the Irish Archæological Society. The charge of cowardice brought by Macaulay against the Jacobite Irish Infantry is founded on the irresponsible chatter of two unknown French officers writing to their friends, and of course with Gallic vanity and levity laying the blame upon others.

“Had we the French been at Old Bridge, how we would have carried all before us,” &c. &c.

Macaulay uses these letters as if they were historical authorities, ignoring the contradictory accounts implied in the memoirs of James and strongly expressed in those of the Duke of Berwick, and the letters of the French general Lauzun. It is singular that Macaulay should pass over the direct testimony of Berwick to the bravery of the Jacobite foot, an illustrious Englishman, a much experienced and far experienced soldier, one of the great gentlemen of Europe in his day, supported as it is by the letters of Lauzun which are State Papers of France, and urge such a charge upon such an authority. I think Macaulay was here a victim to his famous black and white style, and as the behaviour of the Jacobite Irish horse was conspicuously white on this occasion, he, seeing his chance, and having got something that would look like justification, determined to paint in blackest black the behaviour of the foot. Reading his brilliant narrative we can see that he is a little ashamed of himself and anxious to make amends, but he gave currency

to a lie, and a lie minted and stamped by Macaulay is not easily retired from circulation.

As to the numbers on both sides, Berwick puts William's army at 45,000. He and James put their own army at 20,000 and 23,000 respectively. The lower figure seems to be correct. Two grave Williamite authorities represent the victorious army as 45,000. Macaulay is silent about the disproportion of the artillery, viz., six pieces to fifty odd and mortars. Had the armies been at all equal, it is not credible that James would have sent away half his artillery before the battle, which he did obviously because he only intended to amuse his army with a mere show of fight, while really pursuing his original intention of retreating in the hope that William's army might waste away like Schomberg's in the previous campaign.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FLIGHT OF THE KING.

EARLY that morning King James descended from his lofty perch upon Fort of Gold, and leaned away up the river towards Lauzun, and the five thousand French foot with whom he thought he would be safest, drawing after him his six pieces and a succession of battalions from his centre and right. Then with excuses and explanations he executed the retreat on which he had formerly resolved, and drew back upon the pass of Duleek. Here he lost his head in a metaphorical sense, and made off for France as fast as he could go.

According to a humorous Irish tradition, James ran from the Boyne in such haste that he would not stop for a rest at Dublin. He ran past Dublin. Lady Tyrconnell, from the castle battlements, cried out to him, “Is that you, James? Where is your army from you? Wouldn’t you turn in, James, and have some lunch?” But James only waved the back of his royal hand, as much as to say, “No more now, dear lady, I’ll tell you all about it at Versailles, if I ever get there,” and never stopped running. Through all Leinster he ran with the swiftness of a hare, as fast as ever he could lay

foot to the ground, and never stopped till he sprang on board a French sloop at Waterford, and then up sail and away with him to France.

That is the Irish popular tradition concerning King James' flight from the Boyne, and it is truer than most traditions. By day and by night, under the sun, and under the moon and stars, without closing an eye, or taking an honest meal, breaking the bridges behind him, placing guards at every defensible point along the way, through all Meath, through all Leinster, ran the last of the Stuarts. "I am going to France for succours," he said. "No, I am going to France to make a plunge for England now that this dreadful Prince of Orange is out of it."

Farewell for ever to King James.

"Lo ! anointed by heaven with the vials of wrath,
Behold where he flies on his desolate path,
Now in darkness and tempests he sweeps from our sight."

It is all over with the Stuarts.

The Irish Royalists, however, in spite of a hundred disadvantages, fought on with signal bravery, and even with occasional success. There is not in history a finer example of military heroism than the manner in which they held, against King William's army, the bridge across the Shannon at Athlone, while their defence of Limerick rivals, and in some respects out-rivals, the defence of Derry by the Williamite Irish. Their commander in these later stages of the war was Patrick Sarsfield, a most noble, brave, and chivalrous gentleman, tall and

handsome, respected by his enemies, and passionately beloved by his own soldiers.

But the cause of the Stuarts was doomed. No Irish valour could save it against such power as King William, by his command of Great Britain and of more than half of Ireland, was now able to direct against Sarsfield. Sarsfield having done all that a brave man could do, finally concluded a treaty with the Williamite generals, by which he stipulated for fair terms for the Catholic Irish. The violation of this treaty, and the subsequent enactment of the penal laws, is one of the most disgraceful chapters in the history of Protestantism, a shameful business which no upright man should dare to defend.

After this Sarsfield and his army sailed away to France, where they were incorporated in King Louis' army, as the Irish Brigade. From that time forward, every young Irish Catholic gentleman of military aptitudes sought service on the continent. What a splendid race of men were these old Celtic and Norman-Irish Catholic gentlemen of Ireland, is proved by their deeds on the continent. Some of the greatest names in the military histories of the nations of Europe, during the eighteenth century, are the names of these Irish soldier emigrants. Amongst many others, we find in Russia, Marshal Lacy, in Austria, Marshal Brown, in France, Lally Tollendal, all men of first-rate military or administrative genius. The Irish Catholic aristocracy chose to identify

themselves with a doomed and desperate cause. They stood by the Monarchy, when no power could save the Monarchy. It fell, and they were crushed under its ruins. They were unwise, indeed could not understand the signs of the times, and terribly did they suffer for their error, which was one of judgment and not of the heart. They fought for kings against liberty. The tide which swept away Sceptre and Crown, and the spiritual tyranny of prelates and priests, swept them away too, swept them away utterly. They were a valiant, high-spirited, gay-hearted, chivalrous race, who erred in judgment, and were destroyed for their error. They perished fighting against freedom. The Irish and the Norman-Irish aristocracies perished together, in this mad business. They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided.

And yet it must be remembered that in those times it was difficult for a gentleman to be a Whig. Men born in a certain rank of life were Royalists, as a matter of course, and in most cases could be nothing else, without loss of honour. Nearly all the gentlemen of England were Jacobites, but their ardour for the royal cause was restrained by the Whig masses of the people.

Robert Burns, the great-souled Scotchman, was a Jacobite, so was Goldsmith, so was Dr Johnson. The cause, which was regarded with affection and regret by such men, may have represented something nobler than appears on the surface of history.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE NEW ARISTOCRACY.

A PROTESTANT aristocracy now owned the land, and governed a Catholic peasantry. That was no difficult task, for the people were very humble. They were made humbler by cruel penal laws passed in violation of the treaty signed between Sarsfield and the Williamite generals. The Protestants passed these laws, for they were afraid that the people might rise against them, but inasmuch as they possessed all power, and were a strong, self-confident, and warlike race, they ought to have had more pluck. It is only fair to state, that as the people showed no signs of mutiny, the penal laws were by degrees suffered to become a dead letter.

This new Protestant gentry for some two generations did nothing that calls for any notice. They lived in very rude houses, almost cabins. They hunted, and drank great quantities of claret, and gambled a great deal, and were very ready with sword and pistol, being a high-spirited, fierce and combative race of men, and also rather barbarous. They did not try to improve their estates or their tenants. Squalid wildernesses, instead of beautiful

demesnes, surrounded their rude homes. They were quite illiterate and gross in their tastes and habits, but hospitable and kindly, and retained many traces of the old chivalrous spirit. They showed their mettle by duelling more than any other class of gentry in the world, and carried their bravery in that sphere to a fantastic degree. A Galway shopkeeper once called on a west country gentleman at his hotel, complained of having been insulted, and demanded satisfaction. The gentleman did not relish the thought of a public duel with a shopkeeper, and proposed to fight it out in the room where they were. In the duel the shopkeeper's pistol did not go off. The gentleman crossed the floor, his powder-horn in his hand. "Sir," said he, "there was no priming in your pan, permit me." He filled the pan of the pistol with powder, and went back to his own end of the room to stand the shot. They were men, yet in many respects resembled rather great boys. They had no sense of responsibility to their country or their people, and there was no one to put them in mind of it, so very humble and submissive were the people, really like soft wax in their hands, which they might mould to almost any shape they liked. Indeed the Irish peasantry, as distinguished from the military caste and the lords, had always been a very meek and long-suffering race. No one imagined that they had any rights, nor did they imagine that they had any themselves. Their priests, too, associated with the Protestant gentry

and shared their ideas. The people honestly admired their drinking, horse-racing, duelling gentry, and the gentry, in their way, became rather attached to the people and to the country. Slowly the genius of the soil and clime began to penetrate their minds.

Side by side with that warlike, riotous class of rude but spirited Anglo-Irish gentlemen, the serf population of the country,—a legacy of the old fighting times, a population composed of Celtic, Danish, Norman, and Old English elements,—led their own life. They spoke the Gaelic tongue. They read no books, but they had a vast quantity of oral traditions, stories and poems innumerable, concerning old heroes, deities, saints, wizards, and witches. Long Gaelic poems and stories were repeated by professional reciters around turf fires. The gentry had no literature, but the people had this, and it was all unreal and unearthly, about the past and about dreams. They believed in the fairies. They raised the loud and piercing caoine or ullagone as they followed their dead. They joined together in factions and fought, but between them and the new lords it was peace.

Amongst other laws made by the new lords was one to prevent any Catholic from having a horse worth more than five pounds. The horse at which this law aimed was evidently "the great horse" or charger. If the Catholic landlords had been numerous, the law would have been sensible enough, but as Catholic landlords were now few

and far between, the law which was passed in a panic or under the influence of childish fears, presently became a dead letter. All young Catholic gentlemen of spirit went to the Continent for a military career, and those who remained at home dropped Jacobitism utterly, submitted to the new arrangements in Church and State, and while retaining their religion, sympathized generally with the Squires and Protestant gentlemen their neighbours. They hunted with them, attended race meetings in their society, caroused with them, fought duels with them, and except in the matter of religion, were quite the same as their Protestant neighbours. If they ever thought of the Stuarts it was with disgust. They never forgot the manner in which King James ran away out of the Battle of the Boyne, while the Catholic gentlemen of Ireland were still charging King William's victorious infantry, and his brave son still in danger. They did not pass their wine over the water-decanters when they drank the health of the King, like the Jacobite squires of England. They never dreamed of a Catholic rebellion, for they were few in number ; they had formed friendships with the Protestant gentry their neighbours, and it never occurred to them that the peasantry whom they despised had any fighting qualities or might be led into a revolt. All who could afford it kept good horses, hunters and racers, notwithstanding that penal law, and no one who was not a black-leg or a scoundrel of some species ever thought

of invoking that penal law against them. Nevertheless it sometimes was invoked.

There was in the County of Meath a Catholic gentleman of ancient lineage and considerable estate, who, like many of his class, was accustomed to drive into the county town with six blood-horses. At the hotel where he used to put up, a scoundrel of the type referred to, who also owed him some grudge, entered the room in which he sat enjoying himself with some other squires of the county, and producing thirty pounds, tendered the money as the price of the team. That was the law as it stood on the Statute Book. Any Protestant tendering five pounds to a Catholic, might for that sum take and keep any horse in the possession of the latter. So by tendering thirty pounds, this fellow could become the owner of six horses whose value was perhaps more than one hundred and fifty pounds. It must be remembered that at this time money was scarce, and its purchasing power very great.

The Catholic gentleman stood up with a very pale and stern face, and took leave of the company. Presently they heard somewhere in the rear of the inn six shots. Without being informed, they knew the meaning of those shots. The Catholic gentleman had pistolled his six blood-horses, and in that way had prepared them for the receipt of the scoundrel-claimant. History does not relate the subsequent career of the aggressor on this occasion, but we may be sure that the honest

Protestant squires of the County of Meath let him speedily know that his room was preferable to his company.

Ever afterwards this Catholic gentleman drove into the county town in a carriage drawn by six oxen. This he did not out of necessity, but as a sort of dumb yet eloquent protest against the iniquity of the penal laws. The story of this Catholic gentleman, of his blood-horses and his substituted oxen, travelled over Ireland, and had the effect of converting into an absolutely dead letter a good many of those stupid and tyrannical penal laws.

If that nation be happiest which has no politics, then the Irish nation from the Battle of the Boyne till about the year 1750 must have been very happy. There was very little to be done in the way of government, for the country was in a rather primitive condition, and that little was done by officials in Dublin, who gave an account of their conduct, not to the gentry of Ireland, but to English Ministers in London. Laws were made injurious to the trade of the country, but the new aristocracy did not care, and the traders were too weak and humble to protest. They mourned but like doves, and like the jolly, foxhunting, drinking and duelling squires, neither understood nor cared anything about the matter. It was very kind, they thought, of those Dublin officials to look after things so industriously, to get laws passed, and tot up stupid accounts and impose and collect dues. As for the squire of this

epoch, he had more important things to look after. He had the fox and the wild deer to hunt, for the great aboriginal red deer were still in the country; he had his race-meetings to attend, he had to bring together his brother-squires and others to great claret-parties and awake the midnight echoes with “Lillibulairo-bullen-a-la,” a famous Whig song of this date. To him the first commandment was “Thou shalt hate the Pope and the Pretender,” and his religion often stopped there. The Pope and the Pretender religion lasted a long time. Near the end of the century a witty barrister, once a Papist, was detected eating meat on Friday at the Bar mess. “I fear, Jerry,” said his vis-a-vis, “that you have still a great deal of the Pope in your belly.” “Faith, my young friend,” replied Jerry, “I am sure that you have a great deal of the Pretender in your head.” In the course of my own undergraduate career in Trinity College, Dublin, I had myself to take a very solemn Latin oath that I would never help to bring in the Pope or the Pretender.

It might be imagined then, that such a Protestant squire would make haste to plant his estate with sound Protestants, hating Pope and Pretender like himself. That indeed was his duty, and he knew it and made efforts in that direction. But though the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak. He did not like to turn out the old tenants, who would perish if he sent them adrift. If he got in Protestant tenants, they showed themselves sturdy

fellows, who stood on their rights, and regarded him as no more than a man like themselves, only a little more fortunate. The old Milesian, Scandinavian, Norman-Irish, and Old-English peasantry of the island, who had worshipped their old banished lords, were prepared to worship him. They hailed his arrival with shouts of joy, and cried out "Long may your Honour live to reign over us," and what sapped his anti-Pope and anti-Pretender resolution most was the fact that such cries were sincere. The poor people who never had dared to call the nose upon their face their own as against the lords of the land, were quite ready to make him their king, and did make him their king. On his own estates, when he did not bring in Protestant tenants, the new squire was absolute. The people were his servants, his subjects, his children, and he could not and would not turn them out. The situation had its charms to men fresh from England. The new Williamite landlords learned a good many Irish characteristics from the old Cromwellians, as the old Cromwellians had learned them from the Catholic and Royalist lords beside whom they lived. The peasantry with their limitless admiration and adulation completed the change in their characters. Presently the new lords began to show features not at all English.

Sometimes the new squire saw a ghost. Sometimes, in a tenant's cabin, he encountered, unawares, a singular figure sitting at his ease there, dining, and dining well, in solitary state, and the whole

household in attendance on him. A birding-piece stood against the wall. A brace of greyhounds or pointers reposed on the flags by the turf fire. His face was long, his features high and pronounced, his aspect proud, sombre, and melancholy. It was the representative of the Jacobite family whose estates the new squire held, whose chief house he himself now occupied. The Jacobite landlord often lingered on upon the estate, taking coign and lyvery of his people, and the tenant often paid two rents instead of one, one to the lord *de facto*, another to the lord *de jure*. Such ghosts frequently haunted the meditations of the new squire. Not unfrequently, instead of a mild and melancholy ghost, the squire had to encounter an active and malignant one. Some of the confiscated Jacobite lords and their sons became downright robbers and highwaymen upon a rather large scale, going about with bands of faithful followers and waging war upon the Sheriffs and their officers, and the new landlords. The Irish name of these aristocratic highwaymen and freebooters, *viz.*, Tories, has since become the designation of a great party in the State. These wandering outlawed Irish gentlemen and their followers, known to fame as Tories, supplied the Williamites of England with a nickname for their political enemies, who favoured the House of Stuart. They called them Tories in reproach, a name which the other party took up, gloried in, and finally adopted. Of these Irish Tories, once a very considerable cause of disturb-

ance, and necessitating for their suppression the employment of small armies in many parts of the country, the most famous was Redmond O'Hanlon of Ulster, whose chivalrous behaviour, deeds of derring-do, and hair-breadth escapes, are still related round many a turf and bogwood fire in the north of Ireland. If Redmond O'Hanlon had followed the rest of his confiscated brethren to the continent, he might have become as great and famous as De Lacy or Brown, and become the founder of a noble family there. By all accounts Redmond O'Hanlon was a hero, but a hero exerting his prowess in a very small and unpromising sphere.

There was a good deal of prone submission and honest admiration on one side, and of good-natured and kindly contempt on the other. Above all there was peace. For, though the gentry were putting each other to the sword in a high-spirited manner, or spitting each other elegantly with rapiers, that frequent click of steel did not hurt industry, or affect the slow but steady progress of the country.

Poverty in those days did not entail such suffering as in ours. Oppression and calamity were piously accepted as "the will of God." When the poor peasant was quite broken he cheerfully took to the road as a beggar, for it was not disgraceful to beg. The poor were still "God's poor." Everyone who could afford it, willingly gave alms, and

the giver and receiver both felt blessed by the deed. Often a poor man having sown his little patch with potatoes and corn, locked his cabin door, and with his family took the road till harvest time, when he returned to reap the fruit of his spring labour, bringing home with him the results of the summer's tramp. This begging tour in the pleasant summer months was quite regarded as part of the year's work.

Always as night fell the peasant householder found beside his glowing hearth one or more mild-eyed mendicants. He spoke of them as poor "travelling people," but thought about them as "the poor of God." Their presence was an ornament of his fireside. The squires fell in with the custom of the country, and the mild mendicants enjoyed a Protestant supper beside the squire's kitchen fire, and a shake-down somewhere on the premises. Mediæval Christianity made the beggar a sort of sacred person, and the mediæval spirit lasted a long time in Ireland.

Dublin now put forth a weekly newspaper, but it was filled only with English politics, and news from the continent. Merely Irish matters were deemed of little importance, and editors even considered it imprudent to touch upon them, save in a small way. In fact it was generally understood that the Irish gentry should gather in and enjoy their rents, and govern the country people in patriarchal fashion, and leave everything else to the

English Parliament and its representatives in Dublin.

The people took no interest in Irish public affairs, and the gentry took no interest in them, so that everything Irish was managed from London.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WAKING UP THE GENTRY.

Now it is plain that this rather absurd state of things could not last for ever. A high-spirited Protestant aristocracy owning all Ireland were certain sooner or later to insist upon the right of governing the island which they owned. Moreover the serf population was equally certain some time to demand the rights of freemen, for they were not slaves by nature at all, but only by position. Some were Milesians, descendants of the old kings and chieftains, some descendants of the many Norse vikings. All the Burkes, Butlers, Jordans, Fitzgeralds, Flemings, Savages, &c., sprang from the loins of the illustrious Norman Baronage of Ireland. The rest were Old English, who had followed in the wake of the Normans. These men, though their minds were servile owing to circumstances and education, had the instincts of freemen in their blood. Consequently a little after the battle of the Boyne an observing person might have predicted two great Irish movements, a movement on the part of the gentry towards power, and a movement on the part of the people towards freedom.

Naturally the former movement came first. As the century went on two powerful influences, proceeding from two great minds and hearts, began to mould the minds of the Irish gentry. These influences came from two famous men, Swift and Berkley.

Dean Swift though a great man was also a great wag, as any one can perceive by reading his celebrated story, "Gulliver's Travels." A vast number of funny stories are still told about him in Ireland.

Once at a country inn, hairy butter was set before the Dean. Swift called up the landlady and thus addressed her, "My dear Mrs Cusack, there is nothing I like so much myself as hairy butter, and yours is indeed hairy, hairy in the extreme. Yet, at the same time, my dear lady, I have a fancy for being myself the mixer. Please then in future, send up the hair upon one plate and the butter upon another and I shall mix them myself. That is all. Now you may go down."

Another day an over-roasted sirloin was set before him. He rang the cook up. There was a large company sitting at table. "Jane," he said, with the most serious air, "This sirloin is overdone. Take it down and do it less."

A great number of such stories are told about Dean Swift; but in spite of all his funny ways and innumerable jokes and pranks, his was a great, sober, and even austere genius. At one time in his career he directed the policy of the Empire,

being the chief adviser of the ministers of Queen Anne. When he came to live in Ireland, he was filled with great pity, seeing the gentry so wild and irresponsible, and the peasantry and common people so very poor, low, and spiritless.

He devoted himself mainly to the task of rousing the ambition and exciting the self-respect of the gentry. He began to talk to them, and to write to them—and he could both talk and write—in the plainest of plain language. Dean Swift now addressed the Irish gentry about their public duties and responsibilities. He told them that as they owned the island and were the natural leaders of the nation, they should concern themselves with public affairs, and take into their own hands the management and control of the country. His preachings and exhortations did not immediately bear fruit, but they did in time.

The other great influence was that of Berkley, the Irish philosopher. He was one of the best, kindest, and wisest of men. He told the gentry that they ought to pull down their wretched cabins and build handsome and substantial houses, that they ought to have beautiful demesnes, gardens, and ornamental timber, walks in their woods, pleasant grottoes for tea drinking, and artificial ponds and canals for pleasure boats. He reproved them for spending so much money on claret and waste of all kinds, and their wives and daughters for buying costly foreign articles of dress and luxury. He pointed out the many useful and delightful ways in which they

might spend the rents of their estates to their own benefit and that of the poor people around them. Berkley anticipated Thomas Carlyle in our century, by advising the gentry to abolish the profession of mendicancy, by laying strong hands upon the idle poor, feeding them, clothing them, housing them, and compelling them to work hard. In short, he specified a hundred things that they might do for the benefit of themselves and of the people.

Swift sought to cultivate in the minds of the gentry an angry spirit towards England. He felt that it was necessary to touch their pride and fill them with a sense of wrong, in order to rouse them from their lethargy and induce them to apply their minds to public affairs. Berkley, on the other hand, who came later, endeavoured to assuage this angry feeling and cultivate in them a friendly feeling towards England.

Both succeeded. About the middle of the century a great change passed over the minds of the Irish gentry. At home they were building and planting and improving, founding schools, looking after their estates and their people, and when they came to Dublin to their Parliament, it was with the determination to make their will felt and their wishes observed in the management of all the public affairs of the island. They began to feel a glow of patriotism, and to like the new sensation.

They erected the magnificent classical buildings which stand to-day in Dublin, a proof of their public spirit and their taste. They collected noble

libraries, they employed foreign artists to decorate the beautiful mansions which they had begun to build in town and country. The Irish gentleman of this period was a high-minded, large-minded, cultivated, and polished person, and this great improvement was due to Swift and Berkley.

Then England fell into difficulties. There was a danger that Ireland would be invaded by foreign enemies. The Irish gentry sprang to arms. A hundred thousand men well-armed, well-equipped, well-disciplined, full of patriotic and martial enthusiasm, and officered by the Protestant gentry of the country, prepared to defend the island from attack. These were the celebrated Irish Volunteers. No enemy, indeed, attacked the island, but the gentry feeling their strength, and feeling also the generous glow of patriotism, resolved to convert their Parliament into a reality. Henry Grattan's wonderful eloquence fanned the flame, and the result was the declaration of Irish National Independence in 1782. In all this movement the Catholic population, now too on their side fast awaking out of dreams and intellectual torpor, warmly participated. Thenceforward to the end of the century the gentlemen of Ireland made the laws, but they were executed by the agents of the Imperial Government. The Executive, too, would certainly have been seized by the Irish gentry, but at this time another development took place which might have been foreseen.

The Protestant gentry, grateful for the loyal co-operation of the people, repealed the penal laws, and generously and without any compulsion granted the Catholics many civil rights. But the people now awake and alive began to think that they ought, too, to have political power. The gentry, few in numbers, perceived that if the people got political power their numbers would in the end prevail, and that they themselves would be overthrown, and their privileges and estates taken from them. At first the Protestant democracy of the north sympathised with the aspirations of the Catholics, for they were themselves oppressed somewhat by the nobles and the gentry. But in the end they too perceived that their own destruction would or might follow from a Catholic political ascendancy.

So, generally speaking, the Protestant population of Ireland led by the gentry now allied themselves with the Imperial Government to resist the movement of the Catholics. This latter movement grew fiercer and fiercer. It was stimulated by the French Revolution which now broke out. Eventually this movement culminated in the great rebellion of '98. In this rebellion the men of Wexford behaved with extraordinary courage, and with a little more success might have revolutionised the island.

The Wexford men, badly led by a few priests and a few gentlemen whose minds the French Revolution had affected, did wonders in the way of war. Armed with pikes they faced, fought, and

conquered disciplined soldiers, charged and broke cavalry, charged and took cannon. Considering that they were peasants in a state of revolution, they behaved with moderation in their hour of triumph.

Elsewhere the United Irishmen were defeated and scattered wherever they attempted to gather together. For the gentry of Ireland behaved on their side too with wonderful spirit. Undaunted by the vast numbers of their foes and the furious determination by which they were animated, they stood to their work like men ; they organised themselves county by county, forming yeomanry corps in all the disaffected districts, and everywhere save in Wexford, and in Wexford ultimately, at the Battle of Vinegar Hill, completely overthrew the revolutionists. They did not fly the country like the French noblesse, but held their ground and fought and conquered in a memorable manner.

It will be asked how they did this being so few. The gentry were indeed few, but at that time they had plenty of friends and loyal supporters amongst the people themselves. Besides the recently organised yeomanry corps, they had their county militias, and their small standing army. One is rather surprised to learn that even the militias stood by the gentry in this crisis, but they did. The gentlemen of Ireland did not run like the French noblesse, and they had their reward. Enough of the Irish people stood by them to give them the victory.

The gentlemen of Ireland put down the revolution, without the aid of a regiment, or a pound advanced by the Imperial Government. There were two or three English regiments in Ireland at the time, but only and strictly in replacement of Irish regiments, which had been lent to England, for foreign service.

That being so, we must condemn the extraordinary poltroonery, with which these same men, smitten by panic or beguiled by politicians, later surrendered all their power into the hands of England. Such an abject treason on the part of a class of men, who had just triumphed in a great social war, and against odds, who had just by their own might, courage and discipline put down a revolution, has seldom or never been read in the pages of history. The gentry of Ireland ought to have been more stout-hearted and self-reliant. Had they been brave enough, they could have retained their position, and by wisdom reduced its dangers and difficulties. But they fell into a panic, and in their panic asked England to take care of them.

I believe myself, that they were stupified by too much oratory. For the last quarter of a century, they had yielded themselves up to the intoxicating delight of fine speaking. This was the age of Grattan, Flood, Curran, Hussy Burgh and other famous rhetoricians, who charmed their ears and darkened their understandings with tropes and figures and language of ridiculous sublimity, so

unlike the plain and honest speaking of Swift and Berkley. Oratory, like pride, comes before a fall, an assertion which universal history fully bears out. As they held the country in '98, so they could have continued to hold it. They could have hired, disciplined, and maintained at a small cost a standing army and a police force, amply sufficient for their needs. They could have drawn to themselves the Executive, as well as the Legislature. By discretion and manifest goodwill, they could have soothed the jealousies of the people of England, and by good government conciliated the affections of the Irish people. The times called upon them to show their mettle, and when the call came, they had no mettle to show. They gave themselves to England to keep.

When the Norse story-tellers were done with a certain character, they said, "He is out of the Saga." We may now say the same of the Irish Protestant gentleman. He too, like the Milesian kings, like the Milesian and Norman-Irish who preferred to perish with the Stuarts than to live and flourish with Cromwell and William,—he too drops out of our historical saga, and more discreditably.

How exactly might this aristocracy have maintained its power? The law of the situation was plain enough. They should have continued steadily to absorb into their aristocratic system all the best elements of the Protestant and Catholic democracies, supplying to all able and talented men

born in the island, their natural and proper career and fit places in the system of government. But that is just what all aristocracies are most unwilling to do, and generally had rather perish than do that. They can't or won't recognise the fact, that their rank is but the guinea's stamp, that the man is the gold, and that God's nobles are born everywhere. A little later, the nobility and gentry of England preferred Reform Bills and democracy, to any generous enlargement of their own aristocratic system of government which the people of England had outgrown.

Here is an anecdote which curiously illustrates the ministerial character of Castlereagh, and the plain and honest character which distinguished the best Irish gentlemen of the period.

Shortly after the Union, the Whigs in the Imperial Parliament charged the Irish country gentlemen and magistrates with having flogged United Irishmen, in order to extort confessions. Castlereagh raised his beautiful head and gracefully lied, assuring the House that nothing of the kind had ever been done. Then up at once started Lord Marcus Beresford, a scion of the famous Anglo-Irish House of Waterford, repudiated the false statement of the minister, informed the House that such floggings had been frequent and notorious, that under certain circumstances Irish magistrates had flogged to extort confession, as a matter of course, and that he had done it himself.

I know nothing else of Lord Marcus Beresford yet I confess that I am delighted to find, in an age when political deceit and misrepresentation were so rife, this short, brilliant flash of the old truthful, daring spirit that animated Ossian and his heroes, and which, I hope, is alive and strong still in Ireland biding its time.

The future of Ireland is with the people. That people has but lately emerged from the serfdom of centuries. It has still much slavishness in its composition. But it is steadily, if slowly, working out all that. One day the old true, heroic qualities of the race will shine out once more, and take the command of all the baser and more servile elements.

CHAPTER XXIX.

O'CONNELL AND HIS TIMES.

THE history of the nineteenth century is the history of the ascent of the people, of the steps by which they arrived at power. Now, for the first time, more than two thousand years after the Milesian invasion of Ireland, the people began to be aware, not only that they had rights, but that they were the fountain of all right, and the true heirs of all those monarchies, aristocracies, priesthoods, powers and dominions whose history we have been considering. The sudden and irresistible ascent of the people, after such centuries of stern suppression, is a surprising and remarkable phenomenon.

In the days of the bards, they are hardly referred to at all, save in language of swift passing contempt. "The servile tribes of ignoble countenance," sings one bard, glancing casually at those who by their labour sustained all the brilliant fighting and aristocratic classes. But the servile tribes remained and the brilliant fighting aristocracies passed fighting from the stage, and the clash of their sword-play sounded more and more remote till all was still. The monastic writers were equally con-

temptuous. Their predilections, with much less excuse, were quite as aristocratic. To them a plebeian man was as nought. If they had to refer to such a one, they called him homunculus, or something less than a man. The Four Masters writing in the reign of James the First, men whose sympathies are almost as wide and generous as Homer's, treat the plebs with the coldest scorn.

During the Tudor period, the Irish aristocracy when they would express their uttermost contempt for an obnoxious person called him a bodach. Now a bodach as such was not an essentially vile man at all, he was simply the man who tilled the ground, herded the cattle, and did all the necessary and useful work of the island. In this Tudor period, the owners of the land believed that they owned too the men upon the land ; when a tenant fled they dispatched catch-polls after him, to drag him back. When the great lords were finally overthrown by the combined action of the Crown and the Nation, every one else became more free, and the poor bodach gained a small share in the general distribution of liberty. He could now choose his lord, and go freely from estate to estate. Twice in every year he could flit if he liked. But generally speaking, he had no civil rights. If a gentleman slew a churle in the seventeenth century or the eighteenth, it was hard, indeed impossible, to get him hanged.

The Cromwellian and Williamite conquests, though they gave no immediate prominence to

the people as a power, cleared the way for their progress. The destruction of the Monarchy, and the extermination of an aristocracy, almost as old as the hills, and slavishly wondered at and adored by the people, permitted thoughts to germinate in plebeian souls, which had never germinated there before. Sarsfield and the remnant of the Catholic aristocracy sailed away to France, but the people remained. The new Protestant English lords had a people to work for them, a quiet, servile, meek, and submissive people, broken in to thoughts of humility and patient labour, by the oppression of centuries. But the king was gone, and the old nobles were gone, and the people, however submissive in outward seeming, began to entertain thoughts not quite in harmony with their very low estate. So throughout the eighteenth century we find the people becoming more and more powerful, acquiring civil rights, even rudimentary political rights, and at the end of the century organizing a great popular revolt, the rebellion of the United Irishmen in '98. That revolt was suppressed, but the mere fact that the men of Wexford had won pitched battles against the aristocracy and their armed retainers, and were only beaten because the revolters in the other counties had not been equally brave, was a cause of great rejoicing and pride to the plebeian heart generally. In the pamphlets written about this time, I can perceive that the people were more lifted up than cast down by the events of '98. When in 1800 the gentry decided

to give up the great and glorious responsibility of governing Ireland, without knowing it, they cleared the way for the advance of the people, and the ultimate seizure by them of political power.

The century had hardly opened when the Catholic masses began to agitate for political rights under the leadership of John Keogh, a Dublin merchant. To John Keogh, as the popular leader, succeeded Daniel O'Connell. O'Connell roused and agitated the people so successfully, and led them in such a masterful manner, that in the year 1829 he compelled the Imperial Government to grant to Irish Catholics all the civil and political rights of freemen.

O'Connell was by birth a landed proprietor of an old Catholic family in the County of Kerry and by no means a Jacobin or *sans culotte*. Indeed in his youth he had borne arms against the revolutionists of '98, and always referred to the men of '98 as "miscreants." Now after the people had acquired political rights, their next step in the ordinary course would have been to secure rights in the soil; in other words, a land movement was the natural follower of a successful political movement. O'Connell was not willing to lead the people in that direction. Instead, he started an agitation for Repeal of the Union. Such were his personal force and popularity that he raised a prodigious agitation, convulsed the public mind in an alarming manner, and held the biggest popular meetings ever known. His

behaviour as a Repeal agitator was certainly far from edifying. He promised the people that if the Government tried to suppress the agitation, he would meet force with force, in other words, would lead them into rebellion. When the Government resolved to suppress the agitation, he belied his threats and meekly submitted. This of course was an example of colossal lying and public fraud which brought disgrace on the Irish name, and stimulated certain vices inherent in all peoples who have but recently escaped from a state of slavery. Again, after a period of fierce agitation in which he sternly demanded for Ireland all the rights of a nation, and so gathered into his movement multitudes of earnest and sincere nationalists, he would suddenly abate the agitation, and striking a league with one of the Imperial parties, accept as a bribe the official patronage of Ireland and then distribute all the good places and appointments amongst his friends, kinsmen and followers. Indeed with all his great gifts and powers this famous "Dan" the Liberator looks very like a great peasant of the period exhibiting on a large scale the vices as well as the virtues of the just emancipated people whom he led. He was warm-hearted and courageous, but felt no instinctive abhorrence of a lie. The fraudulent and theatrical character of his Repeal agitation eventually disgusted the most intelligent and upright of his followers, a little band of singularly talented and ardent young men who

through the "Nation" newspaper had been now for some time preaching with great vigour and brilliancy the doctrine of "Ireland a Nation." The leader of these young men was Thomas Davis. For followers he had Charles Gavan Duffy, John Mitchell, Darcy M'Gee, Meagher, M'Devitt, Reilly and many others, the least of whom might almost be described as a man of genius. They were of all religions, or of none. Indeed their religion was Ireland and liberty, and not being humbugs they pretended no other. They aimed at uniting the whole country into a single party for the purpose of securing Repeal of the Union. They were known as "Young Ireland." These men being perfectly upright and sincere were disgusted with Dan's tortuous and dishonest policy. Once when he was hauling down the flag and just about to divide a fresh Whig bribe amongst his large, happy and expectant army of retainers, Young Ireland boldly stood in the way. Dan cunningly alleging a quite different ground of quarrel broke with Young Ireland and drove them out of his Association. But the people had of late been making fresh progress in political morality. They supported Young Ireland against the Liberator and in one day the great demagogue fell ruinously. It was like the collapse not of a tower but of a mountain. No one who has not studied original documents will realize how large a place O'Connell occupied in the mind and imagination not only of the Empire but of contempor-

raneous Europe. For nearly half a century he was the leader of the Irish masses, first and without any second. Even when he fell it was not from collision with any rival. He collided with a principle and went down in the collision. The principle was that public men should be governed by principle not by weak emotions of the heart and personal affection for personal friends. O'Connell loved his army of retainers not wisely but too well.

O'Connell, I suppose, can hardly be classed amongst the great men of history, and yet it would not be easy to invent a definition of "the great man" which would exclude the Liberator. There was surely a great heart in that colossal frame. Dan will never be hated. There was too much human nature in him for that. Washington, another liberator, was a very perfect character. Dan was by no means perfect, yet his very faults are rather pleasanter to contemplate than the virtues of the brave, blameless, but rather wooden American. Dan telling a crowd of peasants mounted on their little shaggy garrans that they were as fine a body of horse as the world could then show, that he only wished they had the British cavalry before them, that they would sweep them over the horizon like chaff before the gale, Dan blarneying the poor Irish peasants in that scandalous fashion was not an edifying spectacle. Probably he adopted this trick at the beginning of his career of a set purpose, in order to excite the

self-respect and stiffen the backs of a nation of serfs. But he persisted in it to the end. The Young Irelanders found Dan's blarney most embarrassing. They wished to teach the just-emancipated some of the virtues of freemen, but the just-emancipated having been informed by their idol that they were the finest peasantry in Europe, were in no mood to be lectured on their shortcomings.

In his prime I think O'Connell must have been greatest, that is to say put out his very best powers, in the law courts. Such seems to have been the opinion of his contemporaries, for on the platform he stooped too low and in Parliament his audience were too hostile. Moreover he entered Parliament late in life. In one speech delivered as if from the highest pinnacle of his fame, on the hill of Tara, when some half a million of men stood around him, he used an expression which seems to indicate a consciousness of short-comings. Raising his hand to Heaven he cried, "Yes, the manacles have been struck from these hands, but the mark of the iron is on my wrists." He was born a slave and lived as a mutineer and felt no doubt that he would have been a better man had he been born free and lived loyally.

Dan was the prince of good fellows, happy himself and the cause of happiness in others. An old Quaker once told me that the pleasantest sight to be seen in Dublin in his young days was Dan walking to the Four Courts in the morning, with

his jolly face, merry blue eyes, beaming smile and stepping as if he were kicking the Ascendancy party before him.

Dan's chaff must have been hard to stand. When he quarrelled with the Young Irelanders he ridiculed them unmercifully.

"There are a lot of fine young men now who talk a great deal about dying for their country. Let them die if they have a fancy that way, but you and I, boys, we'll live for our country."

"One live patriot is better than a churchyard full of dead ones," &c., &c.

His ridicule of Disraeli as surely the lineal descendant of the impenitent thief, was only raillery but what are we to think of his less known description of Peel's smile as "the brass plate on the lid of a coffin." There was truth in it too, for Peel smiled, and dallied, and talked economics, while famine and pestilence were depopulating Ireland.

The more earnest spirits of his time and country stood aghast and appalled at his colossal deception and enormous duplicity. Mitchel silhouettes him thus in white and black.

"Mighty, magnificent, mean old man ! Silver tongue, smile of witchery, heart of melting ruth ! lying tongue, smile of treachery, heart of unfathomable fraud."

Yet he could not hate him. He bids the turf lie lightly on his breast, and even seems to suspect that divers John Mitchells could be carved out of the colossus.

Young Ireland now put itself under the leading of Smith O'Brien, a Protestant country gentleman of considerable property and most noble descent, a man without genius, or even practical sagacity, but a gentleman and a man of honour. In modern politics most public men, however honourable in private life, assume and exercise the privilege of lying. They do not know what an awful crime it is, a sort of high treason against the very life of the people. They cannot see this themselves, but there are plenty of bystanders and observers who do. Now Smith O'Brien in the course of his public career never used an expression which did not represent the thought in his mind. It was a great education for the Irish people to have had such a man before them in a high and honoured place. The Young Irelanders joyfully accepted him for leader. They, like him, were upright and truth-speaking men. Hateful to them even in the gates of death was the man who said one thing and concealed a different thing in his mind. Nor was their political programme at this time an unwise one. They aimed chiefly at the diffusion of knowledge amongst the people. They desired to inaugurate a period of general cultivation, moral and intellectual, a task for which they were well fitted, being themselves not only upright and sincere, but also gifted in a very remarkable manner with powers both of writing and of speech. But the great Irish famine with which the Imperial Government could not or would not cope maddened them, and

when in 1848 continental nations one after another were effecting revolutions, they lost their heads, and thought the times ripe for an Irish revolution. The people who, like their idol Dan, could not understand that a promise meant a performance, had promised Smith O'Brien and the Young Irelanders to rise at their bidding, and when the Young Irelanders put themselves on the country no one came to take their part. The Young Irelanders were scattered over the world, but wherever they went gave proof of their moral and intellectual qualities.

CHAPTER XXX.

JAMES FINTAN LALOR, THE “PROPHET.”

OF the Young Irelanders the best was probably Davis, for all agreed to give him the foremost place ; the best known is John Mitchel ; but the greatest, in the sense at least, of the deepest, most original and most prophetic, was James Fintan Lalor. He was the son of a Tipperary farmer of the kind called “strong,” and his bodily presence, strange for a Tipperary man, was weak, for he was small and gibbous, but his speech was far from contemptible. That man’s words were not seed sown in vain upon the earth. His was indeed a mouth speaking great things.

James Fintan Lalor was a man who united a most logical understanding with a force and depth of imaginative revolutionary passion without parallel in his time, a man who, first in modern Europe preached the startling doctrine that land titles not originating in the people’s will are invalid, that the nations own the land, a doctrine of which Europe will hear much during the coming century, for, whether it be true or false, the world must assuredly face it, as the old wayfarer had to face the Sphinx.

From the brooding brain of the Tipperary recluse, from some fiery seed dropped there by the genius of the age, sprang forth suddenly an idea full-formed, clear, mature, clad as if in shining armour, and equipped for war. Something very new and strange, something terrible, as well as beautiful, there emerged.

Lalor's friends and comrades started aghast at sight of this portent. So there was astonishment at the birth of Pallas Athene, and of Sin from Satan's painful head. The man knew well himself the nature of the portent to which he had given birth, that it was something that concerned, not Ireland, but the world, and which the world would not willingly let die. One can imagine the amazement of that high-flying band of young Repealers and Nationalists, respectable patriots of the most orthodox and correct type, at such ultra-sans-culottic utterances as these hurled suddenly into the midst of their euphuistic conclaves.

"I never joined O'Connell and the Repeal movement, because I perceived, not from reflection but from natural instinct—the same instinct that makes one shrink from eating carrion—that the leaders and their measures, means, and proceedings, were intrinsically and essentially vile and base. The boat which you mistook for a war-frigate, I knew at once for a leaky collier-smack, manned by a craven crew, with a sworn dastard and foresworn traitor at the helm, a fact which you and Young Ireland would

seem not to have discovered till he ordered the boat to be stranded, and yourselves set ashore."

"A mightier question is the Land, one beside which *Repeal* dwarfs down into a petty parish question; one on which Ireland may try, not her own right, but the right of the world, on which you would be, not the asserter of old principles, often asserted, and better asserted before, but an original inventor, and propounder, and propagandist, in the van of the Earth, and leading the nations, in which Ireland's success, or her failure, would never be forgotten by Man, but would make her for ever the lode-star of history, on which Ulster would be not on her flank but at her side, and on which she need not plead in humble petitions her beggarly wrongs, and how beggarly she bore them, nor plead any right save the right of her might."

"That the absolute allodial ownership of the lands of Ireland is vested of right in the people of Ireland, that they, and none but they, are the first land owners and lords paramount, as well as the law makers of this island, that all titles to one foot of Irish soil are invalid, not conferred or confirmed by them, etc., etc., these are my principles."

"The Land the People's, for that strip and bid Ireland strip."

"Unmuzzle the wolf-hound. There is one at this moment in every cabin throughout the land nearly fit already to be untied, and he will be savager by and by."

What opinions are these concerning cabins and

their inmates! Yet it was perhaps some such man as Lalor who, in the days of great lords and chieftains, made that line already quoted "the servile tribes of ignoble countenance," and monks not so unlike this brooding Tipperary recluse who spoke of plebeians as homunculi.

Have we not drifted into new and strange latitudes and under very foreign-looking stars?

Language like this was heard only once before in Europe. It was when Sempronius Gracchus addressed the Romans, "Men of Rome, you are called the masters of the world, but they mock you, in saying so, since even of your native land you do not own as much as the breadth of one foot." But the words of Gracchus had no world-significance. Lalor's had, both in intention and in fact. Lalor's idea took root in the minds of Mitchel and others. With them it passed into America, propagating itself there in the Irish-American press, and from America it has come back upon Europe, advertising itself as "Progress and Poverty." Lalor's idea now well clad, that is to say, well-printed, well bound, less Irish, and more nice, possibly, but beyond question robust and vehement, walks abroad everywhere to-day, button-holing and interrogating all earnest young people, and not unfrequently making them mad.

By way of suggesting, not exactly an antidote, but something that may mitigate the attack, I would advise young people to study Carlyle's works generally, and especially Chapter VIII. of "Past and Present."

The student will find that Lalor's idea passed also through the mind of Thomas Carlyle, and at about the same time, and that Carlyle, confronted by the Sphynx, gave a different answer to her riddle. Carlyle's answer, in short, is that the land belongs, not to the people, but to the best of the people, dead, living, and to come. That reply, indeed, seems to answer a riddle by another riddle, but the wise have been always rather fond of propounding conundrums. I gather too, that in Carlyle's opinion the land question will be fought out on the Lalor theory first, before the true theory is discovered and applied.

Out of the Young Ireland movement sprang the Fenian movement, which, after threatening great things, collapsed in much the same way. The leaders were in earnest, but the led were not. These leaders, like the Young Irelanders, were also very single-hearted, upright, honourable, and disinterested men. Some of them are living quietly in Ireland to-day, and enjoy the respect of all parties.

On the collapse of Fenianism, the national movement, restricted to Federal proportions, was taken up by Isaac Butt, who brought a large body of Home Rulers into the Imperial House of Commons. Butt also endeavoured to do something for the tenants. He did little in either direction. Though he had talent, amounting almost to genius, his morale was inferior. His successor, Charles Stuart Parnell, one of the ablest popular

leaders who ever appeared in any country, combined the national with the agrarian movement.

Under pressure proceedings from him the Imperial Liberal Party passed in 1881 a great land Bill, and the Imperial Conservative Party in 1887 passed another, still greater and more sweeping.

CHAPTER XXXI.

PARNELL, SOME PERSONAL REMINISCENCES.

PARNELL died so recently, that no attempt to estimate his powers can possibly be successful. When first I saw him, he was in the chair at one of Butt's meetings in the Rotundo. He was then a fashionable and elegant, but very shy and diffident young man. All that I noticed was, that Butt, who relied mainly on the democracy, had apparently secured a young aristocrat or "exquisite," of some sort, as a recruit. I saw him next in the same room. He and Joe Biggar had just returned from their first obstructive session, and were of course the patriot lions of the hour. I had read somewhere in a newspaper, how Parnell, having been expelled from the House, had walked down the floor, leaving the members to draw what conclusion they pleased from the aplomb of his manner, and the rigidity of his back. Speaker after speaker got up. At last a young man arose, the rigidity of whose back, and the sternness of whose front, left me no longer in doubt. It was Parnell, the man who had defied the opinion of the House of Commons, and the public opinion of England, the man who had regarded all the great news-

papers "as mud under his feet, worse than the mud, for the mud could not help being there."

I next saw him in the height of the Land League agitation. He was walking down one of the Dublin Streets on his way to some public meeting. He was very smart and spruce in his attire, he smoked a cigar, had a light dust-coat on his left arm, and looked gay and triumphant, and as if he were kicking landlords into the pit. Which, indeed, to some extent he was.

Save a casual glimpse of Parnell in a Law Court, and afterwards when speaking in the House of Commons, I did not see him again till after the divorce case, and the revolt of his followers. He was ill-dressed, his hair was long and untrimmed, he was nearly bald, the rigid back and upright carriage were gone, he was bowed in the shoulders, his face was emaciated, he looked like a man who would not live long. The place was still the Round Room in the Rotundo, where I had first seen him. The building was packed to its fullest capacity, and the breath and steam of the vast multitude fell from the ceiling like rain. He had just returned from the struggles in Committee Room No. 15. Someone standing near me said, "he may break, but he won't bend." That was prophetic, he did break but he did not bend.

I saw him twice during the last year of his life. Once while driving in the County of Wicklow, on the coldest day which I had ever experienced, the day of a tremendous blizzard in England, on a

lonely hill-side I came full tilt on him. He too was driving. He sat on one side of an outside car, drawn by a white horse. The agent of his Wicklow estates was on the other. The driver was on the box. Parnell was muffled in the most copious manner, quite a hill of rugs, cloaks, and shawls. The agent, Kerr, now dead, stopped to speak with me. I knew him slightly. Then he suddenly introduced me to his companion ; I had not previously recognized him. There, on the hill-side, I had some ten minutes' conversation with Parnell, who, however, did nearly all the talking. He talked almost altogether about his mines and quarries, on that subject he was almost cracked. He had men in his employment for many years probing and boring over all those mountains. A good deal of his fortune must have been spent on that hobby. On the day I met him, he was on his way to inspect some such borings.

He believed that at last he had struck iron, and was going to do great things in the bowels of the earth. His boyish enthusiasm about these holes had something in it half diverting, half pathetic. At the time he was in the full career of his campaign against his revolted followers.

Though he was most communicative I felt instinctively the singular "withdrawnness" of the man, something suggestive of a mind remote and solitary. Fastidiously polite and courteous himself, I fancy he was one with whom it was impossible to take a liberty and even that a manner

which would not be a liberty with men of the most perfect breeding would be a liberty with him. Talking with him I felt as if I were handling the most delicate china requiring supersensitiveness of touch lest something might crack, or as if I were dealing with a very delicate and fragile lady out for her first drive after sickness. Indeed, though his talk was animated and hardly ceased for an instant, there was the pallor of death in his worn and hollow face. I was no friend to his politics, but I confess that I liked the man extremely, and a few weeks afterwards felt inexpressibly shocked, when I heard the Dublin news-boys crying about the streets, "death of Mr Parnell." It seemed impossible that he could die at a time when his gladiatorial qualities appeared to be at their brightest and fiercest, when his ubiquity, volubility and velocity recalled the fiery agitator of the Land League winter, when he was fighting his hot corner as well as a hot corner was ever fought before, when he used to shoot like a weaver's shuttle from Brighton to Connaught and back again. Great numbers of persons who did not at all sympathise with his politics, found a curious fascination in his personality during those months.

CHAPTER XXXII.

PARNELL'S PERSONALITY.

THERE are some highly characteristic anecdotes told of Parnell in his youth. Some one presented the child and his sister Fanny Parnell, the poetess, with boxes of tin soldiers and artillery. A battle ensued. The artillery on Charley's side did great execution, while his own men, though often struck, stood stiffly on their feet, Charley the astute and unscrupulous had glued his men to the table. He won greater victories by gluing his men to a certain position on the floor of St Stephen's and was overthrown in the end because his glue was not strong enough.

Fanny Parnell, who died young and I believe greatly regretted by all who knew her, was a beauty and a wit, her complexion and colouring of an exquisite delicacy. Some of her merry speeches are still repeated. For example "Man proposes and God disposes ! Alas ! I don't find it so. I think that man does not propose at all."

She came to his assistance in the Land League winter with snatches of revolutionary song, and satirized the landlords as coroneted ghouls.

“They come, the coroneted ghouls,
With drum-beat and with trump.”

I saw Parnell smile when those verses were read out in court during a State Trial. It was a very pleasant smile, merry and natural, as if he were highly and affectionately amused at the dithyrambics of his little sister and playfellow. He did not regard landlords as coroneted ghouls, I think he no more hated them than the foxhunter hates the fox. Parnell was nothing of a fanatic. Classes, interests, parties, men of all kinds were only the materials of this workman—ways and means for the making of the Irish nation. That idea was his star and he followed it.

In the last year of his life he said, “I love athletics and I love athletes.” As a boy and young man he was an ardent cricketer, and was elected captain of his own county eleven. Once he brought his men, collected from afar in that mountainous county, to Dublin for a match. He and the captain of the opposing team had a dispute about some trifle. Parnell would not give in, though his men urged him to do so. He marched them grumbling off the field and conducted them back to Wicklow. The boy was father of the man then. I am responsible for this story, which has had a press circulation. I had it from one of the team.

In those days he would do anything to win a match. If a batsman of the hostile team was a second late in coming to the wicket, he compelled the umpire to declare him out, pointing to the

rule and insisting on its application. In rural cricket this was considered unkind or worse. Where there was war in the wind he would do such things and hit, if not below, at least very near the belt.

The first public allusion to Parnell that I remember was a published letter written by the priest of his parish recommending him to a constituency. The priest wrote, "though he is the youngest of our bench of magistrates, the others defer to his opinion and when a knotty question arises postpone it till he can be present."

There was nothing disproportionate in his genius. In the world of action he would have been at home anywhere, a man who could, on demand concentrate all the powers of his mind on things little as well as great. In him there was no faculty which became strong at the expense of the others. His faculty of speech was considerable, but one never forgot the man behind the word. His words had something of the hardness and solidity of facts. His speech was action.

In 1880, owing to a succession of bad seasons, the indebtedness of the farmers brought on a popular movement for the reduction of rent. Parnell, who had hitherto been only a Nationalist, perceived, as Lalor did, that the land question was something which was strong enough to carry not only itself but the national question too. He at once put himself at the head of the nascent agitation and stimulated it to the point of revolu-

tionary frenzy. Lalor was right. There was a possible wolf-hound in every cabin. Parnell unmuzzled him that winter. There was blood on his jaws when the same hand that let him loose whipped him home again. But the work which the master required of him he had done. As in one day, the Irish land system fell with a crash. In 1880, Ireland was owned by the landlords; in 1881, Ireland was owned by the tenants. The Cabinet yielded before the cabin. The figure of Parnell during the agitation winter was exceedingly dramatic. His movements were so swift that there seemed to be not one but half-a-dozen Parnells in the field. His speeches were short, clear, incisive, passionate, admirably calculated to foment and maintain the Agrarian rebellion. He never used the vulgar exordium "gentlemen," but "Men of Meath," "Men of Roscommon," etc. In fact, he spoke not like a modern politician, but like a man who had work to do and meant to do it. The whole situation was grandly dramatic. Many of us fully expected that the landlords on their side, in that crisis of their fortunes, would have exhibited a spirit resembling that in which they were assailed, and on their side would have brought out a man to match Parnell. But somehow all their spirit had evaporated since '98. They ran, as it were, to England for shelter, and of course England, I mean the statesmen of England, betrayed them as Lalor in '48 predicted that they would. "You lie helpless on the high-

way before the great English parties and they will trample you to death," wrote Lalor. The Agrarian legislature which succeeded, and in which both parties, the Conservative as well as the Liberal, had a hand, was weak, ill-judged, and in many ways unjust. It was in many respects, illogical, even absurd, halting, inadequate, a thing of shreds and patches, unjust to owners of property, yet not just to the tenants. Our Agrarian legislature will supply beautiful precedents, to be improved upon, when some hand like Parnell's unties the English mastiff and sets him upon the landowners of England. When the first black day comes round some student of Lalor's doctrine, as expounded in "*Progress and Poverty*," will unmuzzle the English mastiff too, and there will be a hunt of the gods.

Parnell was no out-and-out revolutionist. Born and bred an aristocrat he knew that his class were the possessors of certain moral and intellectual qualities without which Ireland as a nation would be the poorer. I think he had planned out ways and means for preserving the Irish gentry, not at the cost of the Irish peasant but at the cost of the Imperial Treasury, also that he intended to manœuvre so as to have Ulster on his side not on his flank. The man was many-counselled and deep-counselled, with as fine a head on his shoulders as was ever grown in Ireland. Tyrone was another Irishman of that type. In both men I perceive the ice-clear, ice-cold intellect working

as if in the midst of fire. Both had a sovereign appreciation of facts, both a kingly courtesy, both a peculiar faculty of luminous and most simple speech. Tyrone too was never beaten.

This too—it is not a little—may be said about Parnell. Those who were nearest to him liked him best. His brothers and sisters seemed to have loved him much. Even the gentry of Leinster, his neighbours, liked him and watched his strange career as their enemy with a certain amused and affectionate interest. The offence which led to his overthrow and then to his death will not militate against his reputation in history. The Muse of history loves best her imperfect heroes. That is curious, but a fact, and the imperfection found in Parnell is just that which, instead of showing as a blot, becomes, when seen through softening mists of time and memory, something that radiates a pathetic beauty. This too is curious, but a fact. Posterity will easily forgive Parnell and like him probably all the better for his weakness.

Again I state a fact; it was witnessed by thousands. While his followers were committing Charles Parnell's remains to the earth, the sky was bright with strange lights and flames. Only a coincidence, possibly; and yet persons not superstitious have maintained that there is some mysterious sympathy between the human soul and the elements, and that storms and other

elemental disturbances have too often succeeded or accompanied great battles to be regarded as only fortuitous. Truly the souls of men were widely and deeply troubled that night, electrical and high-wrought in the extreme. Those strange flames recalled to my memory what is told of similar phenomena said to have been witnessed when tidings of the death of the great Christian Saint, Columba, overran the North-West of Europe, as perhaps truer than I had imagined.

I have now deduced the history of Ireland from the misty Milesius and his misty Milesians to the clear-cut, sharply outlined figure of Charles Stuart Parnell and the highly historical Ireland of the present day. If this superficial, but I hope fair and not uninteresting summary leads some of my readers to study deeper and better books on the same subject, it will not have been written in vain.

Some perhaps will be disappointed that like Mr Lecky and Mr Froude and other great historians I do not enlarge somewhat on the Home Rule question, take a side and advocate it with fire. So indeed I might on a fitting occasion. But I don't think any man can be a historian and politician at the same time. So, glancing at the storm of battle which rages in that quarter and listening to the thunder of the captains and the shouting, I will only express a pious hope that those who are in the right may win and that the issue of the fray will be for the welfare of Ireland.

in the first place and the Anglo-Irish Empire in the second. So with friendly greetings to friendly readers and not unfriendly to those who are not, I conclude this unconventional and loosely-flowing, but, I hope, readable Story of Ireland.

W. B. Yeats

APPENDIX.

RODERICK'S CONJUGAL ENTANGLEMENTS (p. 99).

"This was the end of the sovereignty of Roderick O'Connor, King of Erin. For the Pope had offered right over Erin to himself and his seed after him for ever, and six married wives. . . . But Roderick would not accept this, wherefore God took the kingship and sovereignty from his seed for ever in punishment."—
"Annals of Loch Ce," vol. i. p. 315.

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