

Early Races According To Irish Bards.

Our nationalities

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The ancient Irish literature is of far greater interest, perhaps, than that of Great Britain, France, Spain, or Germany.

Most nations traced their origin to the gods at first. Afterwards, when the deities rose somewhat higher than the earth, and retreated to the sacred precincts of a celestial Olympus, men were content with a fatherhood of the loftiest heroic character. Homer's grand poem furnished a Trojan parentage for several races. The Irish narrations are different. Though notices of men and events of a strictly Pagan character are not unknown, the only really definite conceptions of the chroniclers, Bards and Monks, were connected with Scriptural names and saints. This fact gives us a distinct clue to the age of the stories, which must have been after the conversion to Christianity.

We are told by Irish Bards of seven distinct invasions. The Firbolgs, Tuath de Danaans, and Milesians seem the only ones securing permanent occupation. A number of tribes may be indicated, with no special account of their history. The *Lettmanni* or *Leathmannice* are said to have given name to the Avene Liff or Liffey ; some trace the tribe to Livonia of the Baltic. The *Mantinei* might have been Teutons of Zealand. The *Veneti* were, also, in Venice. The *Damnonians* or *Domnann* are called the aborigines of Connaught, and thought to be Belgæ'. The *Galians* gave name to Ulster in Irish ; others style them *Gallenians*, and say they came from Britain under Slangy, first monarch of Ireland. But they were not the earliest coiners, being considered the third colony. The *Brigantes* formed the clan Breogan, the lord of that Spanish land from which the Milesians set out.

The Irish historians were ambitious enough to have their country very early and respect-ably settled. In truth, Keating modestly writes : " To give an account of the first inhabitants of Ireland, I am obliged to begin at the creation of the world." Was that necessary ? The Welshman, proud of his remote genealogy, is reported to have shown this entry somewhere down the list : " About this time Adam was born." So little is said in the Bible of events before the Deluge that the worthy romancers of Ireland may be excused commencing with Noah's epoch.

Upon the authority of St. Fintan, a convert of St. Patrick, it may be affirmed that Ireland was colonized *before* the flood. Giraldus Cambrensis, in Ireland during the twelfth century, heard the story, and duly noted it. The ' Annals of Ireland,' by James Grace, written in the reign of Henry VIII., can enlighten the reader upon the interesting fact. It is idle at this time to ask Grace for his authorities. He says :

" Cesarea, niece of Noah, aware of the coming of the Flood, sailed for Ireland, and was the first person who landed there ; she was accompanied by three men only, and she hoped that this land alone, seeing it was uninhabited and waste, would be saved from the Divine judgment which the sons of men were bringing on the rest of the world."

It is a pity that we have no further information, except that the lady protector of the three men came to Littus Navicularum, wherever that may have been. It is conjectured by some persons that this quadruple alliance was dissolved unpleasantly by the rising of the water.

Giraldus, whose capacity for swallowing legends is consistent with his age of faith, ventures to express his astonishment as to how any account of that visit was communicated when all the parties perished in the flood. But we fail to see why that should be doubted any more than the miracles with which the travels of Giraldus are so profusely illustrated.

There is just another fact that must not be omitted. Fintan told St. Patrick that Bioth and Ladhra came also to Ireland before the Flood. In their case the rule was reversed, for they brought with them there fifty maidens. They all died before the Deluge, leaving no particulars of the circumstances of their stay there.

The second attempted colony was under Parthalon, says the *Leabhar Gamhla* or *Book of Invasions*, about 1500 B.C. Another MS. gives the date 2048 B.C. ; but it scarcely matters. One calls him Partholendus ; but that scarcely matters. Somebody says he came with thirty ships, just three hundred years after the Deluge. He was a Greek, or a Scythian, but a descendant of Gomer. He came from Greece, and the Welsh Triads, that give him a bad character, assert that he was a pirate from Spain. He was accompanied by his wife, three sons, and their wives. The wonderful *eight* brings us to the Noah story again.

Parthalon had others beside his own family, even soldiers, affording some ground for the Welsh suspicions. He arrived at Inverskene, now in Kerry County, upon a Tuesday, the 14th day of the May moon. The narrative is quite exact in some of its particulars. He was not pleased with Kerry, and moved round to the site of Dublin, attracted by the lovely *Ben Eider*, or Hill of Howth. Here he found some giants, whom he had to reduce to order. One of these giants managed to live to the time of Patrick. At least, the huge monster was said to have been raised from his grave by the Saint, duly baptized a Christian, and then allowed to lie down in his stony bed for good without further molestation.

Parthalon never forsook Dublin Bay. After a residence of three hundred years at Howth, a terrible thum or pestilence carried off the whole party. Is there not a Thaum-Lacht there? Have there not been many kists broken open there for urns of bones? The writer has seen the reputed grave of Parthalon, at a cromlech on the glorious Hill of Howth, but never ascertained how the news of the destruction was handed down, unless by the giant restored to life for a few minutes by St. Patrick.

The Nemedian Irish.

After the death of Parthalon and company, Ireland had rest for thirty years—always excepting the giants, a proverbially quiet race. Then came the Nemedians.

These arrived from Greece, of course ; that country exercised the minds of Irish writers. They were in thirty-four vessels, containing thirty men each. Their leader, Nedi, or Nemhidh, was eleventh in descent from Japheth. Other versions represent them from Scythia, from Jutland, from Germany, from Britain, &c. Nedi or Nemeth had four sons[^] — Starn, Hiarbanel the Bard, Fergus Red-side, and Audinn, with his wife Macha and several nurses. Why the nurses are mentioned is not clear. All landed in Leinster.

Suffering from cold in the damp Irish atmosphere, a Druid, one Midhe of Meath, succeeded in making the first fire for them, says the “*Book of Leinster*.” Unfortunately the pestilence reached the party, possibly from the undrained land, and three thousand died on Barry’s Island, near Cork.

Eventually, the Fomorian pirates drove them from Ireland, after a residence of 216 years ; and the Nemedians went to Alban or Scotland, and to Thrace in Greece. But they reappear on Irish sods as the story goes on.

The Fomorian Irish.

The Fomorians, Fomhraidh, or Fomhoraigh, are called African sea robbers, and are unpopular with Irish bards. Some regard them as sons of giants ; the date of their arrival is put at 1000 B.C. They have been confounded with the Phœnicians. They must have been strong and tall, since the Giants' Causeway was their stepping-stone structure. All that O'Flaherty said of them 200 years since was : " The Fomorians (whether they were the aborigines of Ireland or not, they were certainly very famous for their attacks on the different invaders) were not descended from Phut the son of Cham."

It is not likely they were aborigines, for the so-called giants were certainly before them. Procopius has them Africans. Skene, with more judgment, considers them Frisian pirates, from the German Ocean. If so, they may have been early Sassenachs. Some bring them from Finland. If so, they could have been either Scandinavians, or their predecessors, the Fins proper, a race neither Celtic nor Teuton, but allied to the Basques of Spain.

Again, they were *Lochlan naibh* from North Germany, and had a fort in Ireland, on Tory Island, called Tur Conaing. Now, *conaing* is the Saxon for *king* ; another nail for their Sassenach coffin. A Fomorian king erected. Fort Balar ; his name being Balar Beman. One Fririn made the Achech Fort of Londonderry. The Fomorians are usually credited with being builders of the Irish Cyclopean forts. But *Fo-mor*, in Celtic, means *under the sea*. The Irish writers called Holland, *Tir-fothuinn*, the *land under the waves*, from its being low. Hence they had *Tir-former*, the *land under the sea*, and *Fomorians*, a sea people. It is a deep mystery to find these connected with the *Cruthens* or Ulster Picts.

The Firbolg Irish.

Here we begin to find some solid ground, for the legends multiply and strengthen at this point. Still, as legends, they may be myths after all.

When the Nemedians had to retire before the Fomorians, a large party set sail under Simon Breac, of *Lia Fail* notoriety, for Thrace. There they were ill-treated, made slaves of, and condemned to carry bags of leather, called *Bolgs*, whence they got the name of *Fir-bolgs*, or *men of the bag*. Tired of that life, they sighed for the ancient Irish home ; so, getting into their *bolgs*, which made capital coracles, like the ox-hide boats of the Russians when they attacked the Greek Empire, the Firbolgs passed through the Straits of Gibraltar, and returned to Erin. O'Flaherty's ' Ogygia,' of 1665, knew of their flourishing " in Connaught for a series of ages, to the reign of Cormac."

They came under the care of the five sons of Dela, and divided the island into Ulster, Connaught, Leinster, Meath, and Munster, with one brother over each. O'Flaherty says the people " of the sons of Dela came from South Britain, or present England, are called in our histories Firbolg, Fir-Domnan, and Fir-Galian ;" *fir* being *men*. Though under five leaders, the five thousand Firbolgs were of two tribes—the Fir-Gallian (spearmen) or Galenians, of Leinster, and the Fir-Domhnon (deep diggers) or Fir-domnians of Connaught. Before being conquered by the Tuaths, their nine kings reigned eighty years.

Not a few authorities make the Firbolgs the true aborigines of Ireland. Ledwich says they were Belgæ, and of Teutonic origin. Betham interprets *Fear Bolg* as *shell men*, from shell necklaces they wore. " It may, perhaps, be questioned," says he, " whether the Belgæ of the Continent and the Cymbri were the same people ; but there can be no doubt they were of

Northern extraction, and the Teutons were also of the same Northern race.” But it is more romantic to make them Greeks. Others, as O’Kearney and O’Brien, Bishop of Cloyne, will have them Phœnicians. McFirbis, the Bard, associates them with the cannibal Attacotti, who were, also, the ancient race of Glasgow. O’Donovan, the much-valued authority, discovers Attacot, or Aithech-tuatha, as a “ term applied by the old Irish writers to the enslaved descendants of the Firbolgs, and to all those who are not of the royal line of the Milisians or Scoti.” An able editor of the Dublin ‘ University Magazine,’ considers the Firbolgs as Belgæ from Gaul, and the same as the Menapii and the Cauçi of Ptolemy. Captain Oliver thinks them Mongolian.

In Kerry and Connaught many of that race are said to be living. The little dark men of the western isles of Munster and Connaught have been thought children of the Firbolgs. Ulster is, also, given as a home. “ The Ultonians of Ulster,” says Mr. O’Donovan, “ of the ancient Irish race, still consider themselves as hardier and more warlike than the natives of Munster, Connaught, or Leinster.” The others, probably, have an equally good opinion of themselves.

Tradition makes them the former owners of the small-handled bronze swords occasionally turned up there. Ethnologists have called them narrow-headed, and the others round-headed. Sir William Wilde fancies they always buried at full length, and not, like others, with knees and chin together. He writes : “ We will call them Celts. They had laws and social institutions, and established a monarchical government at the far-famed Hill of Tara. The Firbolgs were a small, straight-haired, swarthy race, who have left a portion of their descendants with us to this very day. A genealogist (of Galway, 200 years ago,) described them as dark-haired, talkative, guileful, strolling, unsteady.” Is it possible, then, that the very excitable temperament of some Irish is not Milesian, but Firbolgian, which may be Iberian ?

Professor O’Curry describes two races : “ One, high-statured, golden-coloured or red-haired, fair-skinned, and blue or gray-blue-eyed ; the other, a dark-haired, dark-eyed, pale-skinned, small, or medium-statured, little-limbed race.” The latter is deemed the Firbolg by Mr. Skene. Some give them a straight nose and a very prominent larynx or Adam’s Apple. The junction of Sligo, Mayo, and Galway is said to show the race more purely.

The ‘ Book of the Cruithne’ extols the superior learning of the Firbolgs, particularly of their Druids. A specimen of the poem runs thus in a translation :

“ There remained behind of them in Ealga (Ireland)
With many artificers and warriors,
Who settled in Breagh-magh,
Six god-like Druids.
Necromancy and idolatry and Druidism (leaving)
In a fair and well-walled house,
Plundering in ships, bright poems
By them were taught,
The observance of sneezing and omens,
Choice of weather, lucky times,
The watching of the voices of the birds.
They practised without disguise ;
Hills and rocks they prepared for the plough ;
Among their sons were no thieves.”

What a thousand pities, then, that the rough Milesian Irish came to overwhelm Firbolgs and Tuaths, so clever and good !

Celt, Saxon, or Iberian, the Firbolgs were a most important part of the population of Ireland, affording no inconsiderable share of the blood of modern Irishmen.

The Tuath-De-Danaan Irish.

Of all the Irish races, the Danaans were, unquestionably, the most remarkable. They stand out preeminently as the intellectual people of that country. They were, above all others, the *Druids* ; by which name the Irish Bards designated men of superior intelligence, with such a knowledge of the natural laws as constituted them magicians and dealers in charms.

Fanciful definitions of Tuath-de-Danaans have been given. *Tuath* was said to be the Egyptian *Taut*, or the *Tau* of the worshippers of Sirius. The *de* was asserted to be the river *Dee*. The Danaans were, Danes with some, and Danites with others. The ‘ Black Book ’ of Christchurch, Dublin, has much about them. Nennius calls them the *Plebes Deorum*. The Tuatha were known as the *Divine Folk*. Ledwich has them Danes.

In the old traditions, they are so associated with magic and fairy tales, that one writes : “ I am now satisfied that the Tuath-de-Danaans never were real people, but a fanciful set of sprites or fairies.” History makes them real. When the Milesians invaded Ireland, three kings of the Tuaths, brothers, were killed in the Battle of Invercolpe, or Drogheda, says the *Leabhar Gabhala*. It is suspicious that their last recorded king, MacGrene, should bear a name meaning *Son of the Sun*.

The Tuatha were said to have fled from Athens, when the Syrians conquered Greece (?), under Nua of the silver hand, he having replaced his natural limb by an artificial one. Another tale makes Nua or Nuadd leader of Danaans from North Britain. They are said to have left four cities—Falia, Gorla, Finnea, and Mura. Betham makes them Teutons ; and Wilde,— Celts. Another calls them brown-haired Scots. MacFirbis, 200 years ago, thus described them : “ Every one who is fair-haired, revengeful, large, and every plunderer, professors of musical and entertaining performances, who are adepts of Druidical and magical arts, they are the descendants of the Tuatha-de-Danaans.” They were thought fair or sandy, and much given to freckles on the skin,

Wilde calls them “ a large, fair-complexioned, and very remarkable race ; warlike, energetic, progressive, skilled in metal work, musical, poetical, acquainted with the healing art, skilled in Druidism, and believed to be adepts in necromancy and magic.” He fancies they “ spoke the same language as their predecessors, the Firbolgs.” He notes their long, bronze, leaf-shaped Swords, like Grecian. “ I think,” says he, “ they were the builders of the great stone Cahirs, Duns, Cashels, and Cairns of Ireland ; while their predecessors constructed the earthen works, the Rathes, Circles, and Forts.”

It is usual to speak of the Danes as constructors of the stone forts of Ireland. These, observes Mr. G. W. Atkinson, “ are the Tuatha de Danaans, whom I think must be the highly intellectual race that imported into Ireland our Oghams, round towers, architecture, metal work, and, above all, the exquisite art which has come down to us in our wonderful illuminated Irish MSS.” It is no wonder if such a race was looked upon as magical.

“ Wise as the Tuatha de Danaans,” is a saying, “ as Mr. A. G. Geoghegan says, “ that still can be heard in the highlands of Donegal, in the glens of Connaught, and on the sea-board of the south-west of Ireland.” An old MS. informs us that “ the purpose of the Danaans’ journey was in quest of knowledge, and to seek a proper place where they should improve in Druidism.” Another writer contrasts the rude Celt with the polished Tuath.

They were cunning enough, when beset by the fleet of Milesius, to raise a fog by their enchantments, so that the stupid Milesians mistook Ireland for a huge hog's back that rose above the water. They did not take in the Firbolgs so easily in their own invasion of the country. They first landed in the north-west. Wrapping themselves in what is called a Druidical fog, they got as far as Moy-tuir, or Mugh-Tura, the plain of the tower, before the Firbolgs saw them. They then assured the Firbolg Irishmen that it was of no use trying to contend with them, as they knew too much, for they could make Tuaths slain in battle come to life again. "We defy your Druids," shouted the brave and smart Firbolgs; "for we will run sticks of rowan through the bodies, and nothing can raise them then." The rowan stick is well known to possess magical powers. "Then let it be a fair fight," quoth the Tuaths, "without any *Draoideachta*, or magic." The battle was fought on equal terms, and lost by the Firbolgs, who had to retreat into Connaught.

Who, then, were the Tuatha? Some trace them to Scandinavia. If so, they were a fore-stalling of Danes and Norwegians. They were also said to have been of the Nemedian race, a part of whom fled before the Fomorians to Northern Europe, when the rest went to Thrace. If so, they were Teutonized Nemedians. Others bring them from Germany, as Teutons, in opposition to the Celtic race. It is more probable that they found their way through Britain from the East. They were said to have ruled 197 years before their conquest by the Milesians.

Curious figures in kilts, with Persian crowns, are still to be seen. The writer saw such at Cashel. The dress and crown are Oriental, and the figures are imagined to represent the Tuatha. Were they Phoenician settlers? Whatever they were, they were not destroyed, though subdued, by the more rude and warlike Milesians. They remained to give some tone of intellectual taste, to keep alive some knowledge of the arts, to preserve a little primitive civilization. Credited as Druids, no one can suppose they were the race to raise huge blocks of stone for worship. They were more advanced than that.

It would be interesting indeed if we knew more reliable facts about the Danaans, and could indicate the probable extent to which they influenced the races before and after them in Old Ireland,

The Milesian Irish

Whoever they were, Celt or no Celt, the Milesians have succeeded in being placed in the very front rank of all the Irish colonists. An Irishman is proud of being thought a Milesian. And yet the stories about that ancient race are marvellously conflicting and misty. Their identification with such characters as Pharaoh, Moses, and Jeremiah, and with such places as Egypt and the Land of Shinar, is suspiciously like an invention of merry or imaginative Irish monks of early Christian days. After the very extraordinary tales they tell in the history of their times, one ceases to wonder at any other creations of fancy.

The 'Book of Ballymote' gives the adventures of Milesius. He was intimate with Moses. One time he and a party were out upon the Red Sea, when a great storm arose, which drove them far to the eastward, beyond India. Somehow, they got on to the Caspian Sea. There they remained spellbound thrice nine days, because of the music of the sirens or sea-nymphs. Roused from that danger of delights, they got into worse trouble as they entered the country of the *Burnt Breasts*. This was Amazonia, which has been equally placed in the Caucasian Mountains, Media, India, and America. There is no certainty about the exact locality Milesius reached.

Wandering-Jew fashion, the party went forward. Passing Albania westward, besides Slieve Riffi from the north, they landed in Aicia, after Alania, and here they remained a month. A Druid was with them, but his natal region is not mentioned in the 'Book of Ballymote.' This Druid ordered them to go to Erin. If they had a guide on the occasion, he was at fault in his geography, or wished to play the party a trick. First of all, they were at Gothiam, the Gothland of Sweden. The navigation of the Baltic may have been puzzling, or they preferred a land route, for we next discover them in Southern Germania. Up again they marched, fifty-four tribes of them, (!) over the river Rein, jnst Galliane to Belgicane, leaving the port of Lugdunum, passing Galliam and Erriturriam, happily bringing up at length in Southern Spain.

Caithear, the Druid, had all the traditional sense of his order. When the sirens were harping, he prudently melted some wax, and poured it into the people's ears to arrest the seduction. Perhaps he was hunting for wax during the thrice nine days of enchantment. But it was impertinent for Lamfinn, son of Agnomán, somewhat bothered with the tortuous route, to demand, "Where is Eire?" This was long, long after the Druid had cried, "Arise, and we shall not stop until we reach Eire." It must have damped the spirit of Lamfinn to have this reply: "It is further off than Scythia, and it is not ourselves that shall reach it, but our children, in three hundred years from this day."

Men were very quiet and tractable in those days. They had not then entered Erin. They remained in Spain. One day, well remembered in story, for it was *Samhain* Eve, or eve of November 1st, the *All-souls*' day of the heathen, Ith, the son of Breogan, had a wonderful sight. He was on Breogan's Tower, and beheld from that corner of Northern Spain the land of Erin.

The book, '*Lowr Gavala*,' learned something more. Gadelius, otherwise Milesius, was an acquaintance of Aaron's. The coming high-priest prophesied that his friend would be going one day to a country where no noxious reptiles could live, a decided advantage over crocodile Egypt. For some reason not apparent, our hero goes to Shinar, of Babel reputation. There, very discreetly and naturally, he became a teacher of foreign languages. Establishing a university—the first on record—he opened a school for Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Irish, all necessary tongues for those to acquire contemplating visits to the lands in which these were spoken, or hereafter to be spoken. He was good enough to make use of the Druidical sticks or tallies on which to make his *mark*, and framed upon these wooden tablets an alphabet and a Grammar of Irish.

There is yet another version. It was not Gadelius or Milesius that set up the Shinar University, but Fenius Farshee, King of Scythia. There this prince with an Irish name learned at Babel all the languages of earth. His Professor Eber taught Hebrew. His accomplished son, Niul, though not interviewed by the Press of the period, had his praises so well sounded that Pharaoh invited him to be teacher in Egypt. He taught the king's daughter, Scota, so well that she became his wife. It was their son who was the genuine Gadelius, who studied Irish, whence the word *Gædhelic* was derived. It was on the occasion of that young man's visit to Aaron in the wilderness that he got bitten by a serpent. Of course, he was cured by Aaron, who informed him that hereafter he would go to Erin where no serpents could live. Gadelius subsequently went to Spain along with the grandfather of Milesius.

Again, Milesius was said to have had two sons by Scota, in Egypt, and afterwards had Ith, the discoverer of Ireland. This led to his voyaging from Corunna, in Spanish Basque Land, and getting killed by the Tuath de Danaans, who resented the intrusion of foreigners, as bad to them as Sassanach to Celt. His son, Lughaidh, led back the remnant to Spain, and the sons of his relative, Milidh or Milesius, came to avenge Ith's death, somewhere, as O'Flaherty tells us, about 2934 A.M. or 1070 B.C.

These monkish legends have been interpreted by Mr. Arthur Clive thus : “ Either there was no such thing at all as the Milesian invasion, or the Milesians were Christian missionaries.” This is not a bad suggestion. “ The account of the alphabet, &c.,” said he, “ does not look like the history of a nation of warriors. On the contrary, it is clear that in this queer rambling story is contained the history of the men who brought the knowledge of letters and of the Bible into Ireland.” That about Ir or Ith, son of Scotia, was, he supposes, “ a metaphorical way of saying that Milesius planted the monastery of Ir off the coast of Hibernia.” It is certain, according to him, that “ Irish Christians were called the clans of Mileth or Milesius.” Elsewhere, *Ir* is the son of Milesius, giving rise to the name *Ir-landia*.

Spain is identified with Milesius and an Irish colony, Livy speaks of a Spanish nation of Milesians. The settlers may have left near Cape Finisterre or Artabrum. Ortelius affirms that the Irish came from the Spanish province of Cantabria, Father Innes, a respectable authority, judiciously fancies that war in Spain was the cause of the emigration. “ Many, without doubt,” says he, “ from Spain, Gaul, and Britain, betook themselves to Ireland as a release from the most iniquitous slavery.”

Father Innes was very probably correct. The Milesians of Ireland were Spaniards. The *Concani* were so. If so, of what race were the Milesians ?

Spain was of mixed races ; but those of the north, whence the colony set forth, were, it may be presumed, not Celts, but Iberians. They were, in that case, Basques. Elsewhere, reference has been made to this interesting people, who were very different from Celts, and had no love for them. The Iberians, however, are dark ; while a tradition gives credit to the Milesians for being fair. A certain old MS. declares that the light and decent people were derived from Miledh, but that the noisy, talkative, thievish folks were of Firbolg origin.

Mac Firbis, to whom the present learned are much indebted, has these words : “ Every one who is white of skin, brown of hair, bold, honourable, daring, prosperous, bountiful in the bestowal of property, and who is not afraid of battle and combat, these are the descendants of Milesius in Erin.” He thus gives the traditional idea of his own day. Baldwin, the American Ethnologist, suggests : “ Perhaps the Milesians were the first Kelts that appeared in Ireland.” This is not unlikely ; and, as Celtic people were in Spain, the colony may have been forced out by the aboriginal Iberian Basques.

Spain is shown by D’Alton to be associated with Ireland ; he saying : “ In conformity wherewith we find similar affinities in the maps of Celtarius and Ptolemy, the Lucenses, Concani, and Antrigones in the Spain of the former geographer being met by the Luceni, Concani, and Anteri in the Ireland of the latter, and the Nannetes in Gaul by the Nagnatae of Ireland.” No information comes to our aid in Spanish tradition. But a Mac Donnell reappears in Spain, and a Mac Mahon in Gaul. *O* and *Mac* are both Milesian for son.

Milesius is derived from Gomer, of Genesis, by some. Ware sees him come from Magog, son of Japheth. He was reputed of Scythia, and Josephus mentions that the Magogians were called Scythians by the Greeks. Ir was said to have gone to the north. The house of Ir, the Red Branch, were in Ulster, and were constantly at war with Connacht. Connaught was given by Milesius to some Belgian tribes that helped him against the Danaans, when two Spanish Druids were reported to have been slain in the war with the inhabitants of Ireland.

The Milesians are supposed to be the Scots ; and O’Flaherty speaks of their coming as a Scottish invasion. “ Eight sons of Golam, the Spanish soldier,” says he, “ with their relations and kinsmen, planted a Scots’ colony of Scythian origin in Ireland.” They came, in 120 ships,

on Thursday, in May, 2934 A.M. Heber was the eldest of the eight, and Heremon the youngest but one.

The Psalter *Narran* has these statements : “ Heremon was the first of four Scots who held the dominion of all Ireland. Of the seed of Heremon, 58 kings held the sovereignty of Ireland before Patrick.” About 50 kings came after the Saint. One story is that Heber took the south and Heremon the north, 1268 B.C. ; but that, like Remus and Romulus, they had a quarrel, and one killed the other. Milesius is elsewhere called the father of Heber and Heremon. Their brother Amergin, was the first Druid of Ireland ; that is, he was a Brehon or judge.

Altogether, the Milesian narrative abounds in such manifest errors and contradictions, with Scriptural names interpolated, that there is no disentangling its thread of history, if any there be. It may have a basis of fact, in a band of emigrants from Spain, or they may have come from Britain. Approaching by ships, they were colonists, and evidently melted into the general mass of Irish. There is no possibility of distinguishing the Milesians from the main body of Irishmen there before them.

The Fenian Irish.

Those who have assumed the name of *Fenians* in our times are not quite like the genuine Fenians of Erin, though these gave a world of trouble to the authorities in their own day. But some Fenian tactics were employed to get rid of them, and Ireland was no worse for their summary removal. Yet, though those not killed in fair fight were afterwards murdered in foul play, they had been long enough in the country to influence the blood of the present generation of Irishmen.

Their crimes, which provoked the vengeance of the Irish nation, were forgotten in their destruction, and the soft light of romance has been thrown around their memory. The extent of so-called Fenian literature is immense. Though conspicuous enough in the annals of Scotland, the people were glorified in Ireland. O’Kearney writes : “ we find incontrovertible proofs of the existence of the Fenians in Lochlan, Britain, Scotland, and other countries.”

Who, then, were they ?

Vallency thinks the Finne, Fiana, or Fillfinne, were armed soldiery ; and that every province had its Curaithe or Curaidhe militia, commanded by a Finn. An Irish MS. calls them military tyrants and enslavers. Some confound them with the Fomora or Fomorians ; others fetch them from Finn-land. Strangely enough, the ‘ Book of Leccan ’ speaks of them as “ the Fenians of the Northern Seas.” The ‘ Book of Fermoy ’ gives them the kilt of the Highlander, and declares that they had great privileges, for that the Fians of Eire had their choice of women for wives. “ None but the brave deserve the fair.”

It is most likely that they were a sort of Mamalukes, or Bashi-Bazuks, in the pay of princes, good fighters, but not too nice as to the work they did, or the persons they attacked. They were like the Zouaves, special recruits with special favours. Useful for awhile, they were cut off, like Mamalukes and Janizaries, when they became a difficulty with their employers.

O’Kearney will not allow them to be Irish, but “ a branch of those enterprising foreigners who remained in this island and elsewhere, when casualties and changes at home necessarily cut off the communications of their friends.” They were, like the Swiss Guards of Paris, the Varangian Guards of Constantinople, and other foreign mercenaries, ready to sell their valour in the best market, and were as truculent as the *Free Companies* of the Middle Ages.

They were decidedly superior to the Irish generally, which lends a sanction to O’Kearney’s idea. They could turn a tribe sick or old, when convenient. Magic was thoroughly practised. But why some of them should become females on alternate years is not clear ; we cannot pry into their domestic matters. It was, however, annoying as well as absurd for the wife of the great hero Fionn to be alive by day, but turn dead at night.

The Fenian tales and poems in Irish are, it is said, in 2594 stanzas, or 10,376 lines. The ‘ Pursuit of the Diarmuid’ is entertaining. Diarmuid O’Duibhne ought to have been caught, for the audacious Fenian had run off with Grainne, daughter of the King of Ireland. Then there was the “ Battle of Gabhra,” fought in 283, and particulars of which, in a long and wearisome poem, were furnished to St. Patrick by a survivor some hundreds of years after. The Psalters of Cashel and Tara have other Fenian traditions. The ‘ Book of Dinnsenchus,’ by the bard Amergin, about 550, makes out that Oisín, who told St. Patrick his story, was then 300 years of age. A number of the Fenian poems have been translated by Mr. O’Kearney.

From such remains, we learn that the Fenians had seven legions of 3000 each ; being armed with swords, javelins, axes, slings, and bows. They had silk banners of various colours, representing animals, &c. Fionn’s standard bore the resemblance of sunbeams. Each Fenian, before admission to the ranks, must give proof of being a good poet.

Irish air had the same effect upon the Fenians as upon other races in that lively country. They were always quarrelling among themselves. The Leinster Fenians, for instance, of the clans of Baoisgne, were fighting with the Fenians of Moirne. The Connacht Fenians helped Conn of the Hundred Battles against Eoghan Mor of Munster, and against the Fenians of Leinster. All Ireland got tired of the Fenians. Decent people were shocked at their irreligion ; for one poet says :

“ O how sorrowful was the choice
The Fenians of Fionn preferred :—
That their hounds should be sweeter to them
Than to be praying to the Saints.”

King Cairbre undertook to put down the nuisance, and gathered 28,000 of the best warriors. The Fenians sent to their brethren in Britain, Scotland, and elsewhere, but only secured 21,000 in all. The desperate Battle of Gabhra was fought on June 17, 283, and ended in the slaughter of 12,000 of the royal troops, but 18,000 of the Fenians. The balance of the latter were effectually and speedily hunted down, so that the race was exterminated. The site of the struggle was near that of Garristown, in Dublin County.

Though Fionn O’Baoisgne was slain in this Battle of the Boyne, his son, the poet Oisín, escaped. His adventures were detailed by him to St. Patrick, who tried his best to convert this, the last, Fenian, but utterly failed in his purpose.

Oisín declared that, as he was running away from the fight, he met a most lovely young lady, superbly dressed, who promised to save his life if he would promise to marry her. Nothing loth, like a good Fenian, she took him up on her white horse. Off the animal bounded over the sea to a city of delights. There he married the princess, and lived happily enough for three hundred years. After that time, he sighed for old Ireland, and asked his wife to allow him to go on a visit. She granted his request, gave him the magical horse, but told him on no account to get off the creature’s back. Well, he bounded over the sea, and came to Erin. Going to the old Fenian haunts, he inquired about his friends. None knew them. “ But they are Fenians,” quoth he. “ And who are the Fenians ?” said the people. The poor fellow was puzzled. At last a very aged man was brought, who remembered when a little boy hearing a

very aged man tell an old story about a race of men once called the Fenians. Oisín, who had no idea he had been 300 years away, was utterly confounded. In his stupor he got off his horse. The animal at once flew off home, and the Fenian poet found himself both old and blind. In that state he met with St. Patrick.

A part of his story gives a picture of the Fenian conception of Heaven :

“ It is the most delightful country to be found,
Of greatest repute under the sun.
Trees drooping with fruit and blossom,
And foliage growing on the tops of boughs,

Abundant there are honey and wine,
And everything that eye has beheld,
There will not come decline on thee with lapse of time,
Death or decay thou wilt not see.

Thou wilt get feasts, playing, and drink,
Thou wilt get melodious music on the harp-strings,
Thou wilt get silver and gold,
Thou wilt get also many jewels.

Thou wilt get a hundred virgins gay and young,
Bright, effulgent, like the sun.
Of best form, shape, and appearance,
Whose voices are sweeter than the music of birds,” &c. &c.

With such anticipations of the future, Oisín, the blind old Fenian, turned a deaf ear to the story of St. Patrick's Purgatory.

Looking at the poems for some light upon the Fenian race, we can understand Mr. J. F. Campbell's notion of burnt Sienna men, russet, orange-coloured, and fair. Thus Fionn is described as having a marble skin, rose-cheeked, blue-eyed, and with graceful locks. Oscar was a fair-skinned hero. On the other hand, Fraoch was dark, with raven hair, red cheeks, and curly hair. From the descriptions, Mr. Glennie is led to say : “ I think that the Fenian traditions would appear to connect themselves with the Picts.”

It is amusing to see how distinguished Irish authorities differ about the Fenians. The Rev. Dr. Drummond observes : “ The era of Fionn and the Fenians is as distinctly marked on Irish history as any other event which it records.” But Mr. O'Beirne Crowe, who has lately written learnedly upon Irish matters, speaks contemptuously of “ fabulous Fenian militia of ancient Erin ;” daring to fly in the face of ten thousand lines of Fenian Poems, and cry out : “ Such a body has never had a being in Erin,”

It is quite possible that some persons might regret the modern resuscitation of the Fenians, and wish they could believe no such body had ever a being either in Erin or in Clerkenwell.

The Phœnician Irish.

The connection of Carthaginian Phœnicians, if not of those from Tyre and Sidon, with Ireland is well-established. It is not the object of this work to allude to that most interesting subject, the religion of Pagan Irish, or fresh evidence could be presented of these visits of Oriental shipmen.

Sir William Betham affirms a Phœnician Irish colony, particularly from the affinity of Hiberno-Celtic and Phœnician languages. Thus we have in Punic, *Gan ebel Bal-sameni ar a san*, and in Irish *Guna bil Bal-samen ar a son*, for *O may the good Bal-samhen (Baal) favour thee !* Bochart says : “ This name Hibernia appears to be a Phœnician word, for Hibernia, by some called Iërna, &c., is the same thing as Ibernæ, or, the remotest habitation.” Avienus, of the fourth century, quotes the Carthaginian voyager Hamilco in the words, “ called Ierne by the Ancients.” Welsford, the philologist, asks : “ Is it not more than probable that the same Phœnician or Celt-Iberian race who had named Cyprus *Yarna*, (woody) colonized Ireland, and named it Ierne for the same reason, namely, its superfluity of wood ?”

Irish traditions run to Spain as the great source of Irish ancestry. Spain, of old, was for centuries a colony of the Phœnicians, having one settlement at Gades, now Cadiz. If, then, the Milesians were from this peninsula, they would have more or less Phœnician blood. Relics of a generally supposed Phœnician character have, in gold and bronze, often turned up in Ireland. Certainly the bronze swords of the Dublin Museum are just like those recovered from the field of Cannæ, where Hannibal, the Carthaginian, defeated the Romans. Ring money, like that of the Irish, has been found in the ruins of Carthage.

The Phœnicians came to Ireland for pearls, gold, tin, and copper. Sir Hans Sloane believes that the celebrated Tyrian purple dye, from shell-fish, was a recognized tradition of Ireland up to William of Orange’s day. The Irish-Jewish colonists, mentioned by Postelius, were most likely another Semitic race, the Phœnicians. They were a great and enterprising people, not unworthy to aid in the creation of the modern Irishman.

The Celtic Irish.

Space will not permit a full discussion upon the origin of the Celt himself. He has been shown to have an extensive and honourable relationship ; for his kindred have been found in Chaldæa, Troy, Greece, and Italy. Ireland has been deemed Celtic, and England Saxon. But it has been thought that the Celts in England are more numerous, in proportion, than even in Ireland.

The Bards traced the Celts to Gomer, son of Japheth, Bishop Percy of Dromore makes all Irish and Britons to be Celts. Betham sees no affinity between Welsh and Irish, and calls the Cimbri non-Celtic. Vallency will not have the Irish Celts at all. Dr. O’Brennan regards the Celts of Scotland and France as of “ the same race as the Celts of Ireland.” Others will not have Irishmen Celts, as so many of them have small and often turned-up noses, while Gauls had such powerful organs. The low noses, so prevalent in the Sister Isle, mark a Mongolian proclivity, say others, like unto the Tartar ; the thick lips are not less the evidence of a less respectable ancestry than Celtic.

Mr. Pritchard, the ethnologist, perceives a connection with ancient Italy, saying : “ It is remarkable that it is with the Irish dialect of the Celtic that the barbarous part of the Latin coincides. The Celtic people, therefore, who inhabited Italy in early times were akin to the Irish Celts, and not to the Britons or Celtic Gauls.” Aneurin, the Welsh Bard, put the race *Cynt* before *Gwiddel* and *Phrydin* ; the *Cynt* or *Cynet*, the first of the Celtic families, has been thought Irish. Herodotus says the Celts, next to the *Kynetæ*, were the most western population of Europe.

The *Gaidal* or *Gwydhil* may be put as the ancient Celt. Welsford fancies the word *Celtiæ* a contraction from the Greek *Galatæ*, or *milk people*. Others refer it to *Celtus*, son of Hercules. Keary regards the Celts as the oldest Aryans of Europe. The Cimmerians or *Kimmerii* of

Homer came from the cold north. Mr. Howorth looks on a large number of the so-called German tribes of Cæsar as Celtic, and Holtzmann is of the same mind. The Titans, who warred with the gods, have been included among the Celts.

Roget de Belloguet distinguished the Celt as blonde, tall, longheaded, of a lymphatic temperament, and quite different from the Iberian, with dark eyes and hair, having a dry and nervous temperament. Some think it quite a mistake to ascribe the Irishman's vivacity to his Celtic ancestors rather than to the Iberian. It is a fact that the Celtic French—the Bretons—are rather heavy than smart, enduring more than resenting, conservative, and not revolutionary. On the contrary, that part of France which is least Celtic, as the south, produces the fiery spirits of party tumults.

A war of races is only inferior in destructiveness to a war of creeds. It has been a great misfortune for race-questions to get mixed up with politics, often to the dividing of people under the same government. Ignorance has ever been the nurse of bigotry. In no instance has that been more verified than in Ireland.

There two parties assume to be Celt and Saxon, without foundation in fact. The English Saxon is pitted against the Irish Celt. Writers, not less than interested orators, have widened the breach by senseless and bitter sarcasms. "What the lion is to the ass," quoth Pinkerton, "the Goth, is to the Celt." That Englishman little thought he was maligning his own country people, the majority of whom are Celt, at the expense of the Irish, who, with their admixture of Dane, Norwegian, Lowland Scot, and Eastern English, leave alone early races, are in all probability *less* Celtic than the English.

Unhappily, the leaders who knew better kept up this antagonism for party purposes. The Irish, from ancient tribal usage, are very susceptible to an attack upon a neighbour. The name *Sassenach* has stuck, and is maintained, to the loss of common brotherhood and Christian sympathy. Dr. Johnson exhorted: "Sir, first clear your mind of cant." Until that be done, a fair way of looking at the question cannot be expected. But then we should learn that, as Huxley puts it: "*The arguments about the difference between the Anglo-Saxons and Celts are a mere sham and delusion.*"

Picts and Scots.

As Scotland had its Picts and Scots, so had Ireland. In constituent elements of population the two countries have many points of agreement. Both have Celt and Saxon.

The Irish Picts are generally known by the name of the *Cruthens*, *Cruithné*, or *Cruithnigh*. The Bards place them in the north and north-east, opposite to Scotland, from which country they are said to have come, repaying Ireland for sending the Scots to Scotland. The legend of the 'Acts of St. Cadroë' speaks of the Picts of Dalaradia in Ulster and in Galloway. The story of the 'Descent of the Dalaraidhe' associates these with the Picts of Albin, or Scotland, and calls them the *Cruithnigh* or *Painted men*, the same meaning as is attached to the word *Pict*.

Some Irish authors resent the imputation of deriving any folks from Scotland, though proud of giving that land their race of kings. They bring the Cruithné from Wales. Others have them from the English part of the old Strathclyde, which comprehended all from the Clyde down to Lancashire on that western side. But the Strathclyde inhabitants were Cymric Britons and Celts. The best Scottish writers incline to regard their own Picts as the true Caledonians and Cymric Celts. Columba, dwelling among Scottish Celts—that is, the Irish—was said to require an interpreter when he preached to the Picts of Albin. Yet there may have

been but two dialects of the same tongue. Picts are mentioned as people on Tara Hill. The Danes ended the Pictish or Cruithné kingdom in Ireland.

The Irish Picts have been called Fenians. Mr. Glennie finds traditions put them together. "The Feinne," says he, "belonged to the Cruithné or Picts, and that they were the Gaelic race who came to Ireland by way of Scotland from the north." Others recognize them in the *Comgalls*, and in the Norwegian Fingalls. The Fomorians are mysteriously associated with the Cruithné, who are reported to have been the race erecting the megalithic monuments of Ireland.

The 'Book of Leinster' and other MSS. have romantic tales of their being from Greece, or the never-to-be-forgotten Thrace of the Irish. Then they were said to have had nine ships. But they came somehow through Gaul, being driven out by King Eireamon. One says they looked in at Wexford in their distress, and were relieved by the hospitable inhabitants. In their generosity these sent a number of women on board to be wives for the strangers, who joyfully set sail for some place in Ulster.

Other MSS. confound them with the Nemedians, who were driven from Ireland by the Fomorians. The Cruithné were declared to be real Irishmen, forced from home by an inroad of African pirates, and so taking their way to Thrace, by modern Turkish Roumelia, the ancestral home of quite a number of the Irish tribes. It was a party of these who, returning from Greece, were so well treated at Wexford. But one writer fetches them, through Europe, all the way from Armenia.

The SCOTS are the Irish proper, as understood by the ancients. Their home, native or colonial, was in Ireland, called then *Scotia*, though that appellation got carried over the Straits, to be applied to Caledonia or Albin.

Cæsar is represented as saying, that Erin "is inhabited by the nations of the Scots." Orosius, of Spain, in the 5th century wrote: "Ireland, inhabited by the nation of the Scots." Gildas, the historian of the 6th century, calls the land *Scotia*. That name was used for Ireland in the 12th, 13th, 14th, and even in the 15th century. Prideaux affirms that "the Scots of the Roman authority were no other than the Irish." The Scots, of whose cruel devastation of Britain Gildas has so affecting a tale, were Irish. They were the *Scuits* from Scythia. The 'Acts of St. Cadroë' brings them from Greece to Cloin on the Shannon, and then to Kildare and Cork. They were fair, yellow-haired, long-faced hunters. O'Conor says, the Senachies always distinguished other Irish races from the Scots or Gaidhels, called after Gaodhal, born in Egypt. The learned Bishop of Dromore thinks Scots and Gaidhels of a common stock.

Those who regard the Milesians as the principal race of the Irish, and find the word *Scot* given to Irishmen in general, assert that the Milesians were Scots. Edward Lhuyd and others will have the Scots or Gaidhels first pass through Britain. Most writers consider the Scots to be the Celtic race. The most energetic, they at least gave their name to the whole of Ireland 2000 years ago.

Adamnamus, the successor of Columba at Iona, always speaks of the Irish as *Scots*. Probus, 7th century, has "Ireland, the country of the Scots." Eginhart, the Chancellor of Charlemagne, tells of "Ireland, the island of the Scots." The great St. Bernard uses that phrase. Henry of Huntingdon, later still, says that "Ireland is properly the country of the Scots."

The name of *Scot* has altogether gone from Irish soil to the more northern “land of the mountain and the flood.” This furnishes no bad illustration of popular ethnology. A *Scot* is now used only to apply to any person north of the Tweed. Few ordinary folks would dream of the appellation belonging originally to an Irishman only.

Dalriada was a name applied alike to the south-west of Scotland and the north-east of Ireland. The people were Gaeidhil, the Welsh Gwyddil. Those who distinguish Picts and Scots believe the latter displaced the former. Gildas places them together as plagues to the Britons : “Foul droves of Scots and Picts ;” adding : “They came up out of their curragh, just like odious regiments of reptiles, from the deep caverns of their earth-holes.” Boethius said : “They are called *Gaideli*, and also called Scoti.” They waited for the departure of the Romans to begin their forays. Egesippus once said : “Scotia, which links itself to no land, trembles at their (Romans) name.”

Sir William Betham, who thought the first Irish were from the North, says : “The Irish ever called themselves Gael, and an individual man Gaelach, which last Cæsar Romanized into *Celtæ* or *Keltæ*.” Ware asserts that “Ireland all along retained the absolute title to the name Scotia, until the extinction of the Pictish government in Britain.” One of the earliest mentionings of Scotia out of Ireland is by an Arab geographer of 1150, and he applies it to Albany of Scotland, Colonel Gawler regards the name *Scot* as synonymous with *wanderer*. As to the source, C. M. Kennedy observes : “That the Irish Gael came originally from Spain is a fact substantiated by history as well as by tradition.”

The exaggerated type of Gaelic in Connaught is thus noted by Mr. D. Mackintosh : “Head elongated backwards, large perceptive faculties, projecting ears, oblique eyebrows, low nose, in most sub-varieties turned up at the point, great distance between the nose and mouth, projecting mouth and jaws, retreating chin ; in some of the Irish sub-varieties, no chin.” A Fenian writer speaks of an Irish hero as “fairest of the heroes of the earth, larger and taller than any man ; bluer than ice his eye, redder than the fresh rowan-berries his lips, whiter than showers of pearl his teeth, fairer than the snow of one night his skin.”

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