

The Fabulous Corca Laidhe

The Dublin Review

September 1851

Art. III.—*Miscellany of The Celtic Society : the Genealogy of the Corca-laidhe*

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Printed for the Celtic Society, 1849.

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HAVING, in two of our former numbers, explained the objects of the Celtic Society, and recommended it to the support of our readers, we deem it unnecessary in introducing to notice its third publication, to make any profession of the deep interest which we feel in its success. From the list of subscribers published in this volume, it appears that the four Archbishops, and more than half of the Bishops of Ireland, together with a large number of the most respectable priests, are subscribers ; but it is to be regretted, that, with a few very cheering exceptions, the English supporters of similar literary societies, seem not to think the archæological researches of the Celtic Society at least, entitled to their patronage. Yet there is nothing in the constitution or objects of the society to repel any supporter who wishes to see Irish history, such as it is, rescued from the hands of ignorant or narrow minded compilers. That is its sole end and aim—to supply the rough material to the historian, with notes and illustrations, free alike from the high flown exaggerations of national vanity and the bigotted or contemptuous misrepresentations of domestic or foreign revilers. A project so reasonable deserves the support of every historical student, who knows that Ireland, fallen though she be now, once had a great name among the Christian nations of Europe, and that even after all the unprecedented afflictions of the last few years, she still is a most important member of the British Empire.

It is useless to remind the reader of the value of an historical miscellany, a volume containing a number of detached and independent pieces, often not very important in themselves, but when collated with others, not less suggestive to the historian, than a fossil is to the geologist. Following the example of other associations, the Celtic Society resolved to collect the literary fragments scattered through the ponderous pages of such Irish encyclopedias as the Books of Leacan and Ballymote ; and in this volume we have a very favourable specimen which may please by its variety, many, who in those days of light learning, would willingly dispense with unity in an archæological theme.

The first tract in this miscellany is entitled “ the Genealogy of the Corca Laidhe,” a tribe descended according to bardic accounts, from Ith, one of the Spanish progenitors of the Irish people. Ith was paternal uncle of Milesius, whose three sons, Eremon, Eber, and Ir, were the reputed founders of the Milesian nobility in three provinces of the island, and a considerable part of the fourth. The descendants of Ith being, we are told, restricted to part of South Munster.

That the reader may form some notion of the bearing of the tract, it may be necessary to state very briefly the bardic story of Pagan Ireland, as it has been digested by O'Flaherty, the most patient and learned of all Irish seanachies.

The Irish, according to their own account, were not all of the same race, several colonies having successively invaded, and for a time held possession of the whole, or part of the island. To the primeval colonies of Partholanus and Nemethus, which went over not long after the deluge, we may apply the classic lines cited by O'Flaherty himself.

Ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbras
Perque domos Ditis vacuas et inania rega.

These colonies are not honoured by a single notice from some bards of high authority ; and by a rather suspicious coincidence, Partholanus, who landed A. M. 1970, has four sons, Er, Orba, Fergna, and Farran, the very heroes who figure more than a thousand years later, as the sons of the Milesian patriarch, Eber. The only circumstance worth attending to in the fable of these primitive colonies, is that according to the general opinion, they were of the same race as those that succeeded them, and all, it is said, spoke the same language.

The Firbolgs, under the leadership of Slainghe, invaded Ireland A. M. 2657, and divided it into five provinces, Leinster, Ulster, Connaught, North Munster, South Munster. They consisted of three tribes, called Firbolg proper. Fir Gallian, Fir Domhain. They came, we are told, from Great Britain. After a dynasty of nine kings, whose reigns lasted about eighty years, they were subdued by the Tuatha Dea Danann, but continued for many centuries to hold some territory, especially in Connaught and Leinster. So late as last century, O'Flaherty could name, he says, families then existing, descended from the Firbolgs.

The Tuatha Dea Danann, the next invaders, A. M. 2737, came, we are told, from North Britain, after many peregrinations on the continent, too numerous to be particularized. Of the Danann, it is to be observed, that they disappear almost totally from bardic story, immediately after their subjection by the Milesians, A. M. 2935. No genealogies are traced to them, but the fame of their heroes, their learning and arts, the great fortresses they built, and the number of woods they felled, and plains they fertilized, are to this day a proverb in Ireland. Some traditions say that they spoke the Teutonic language.

The bardic story of the Milesian family is briefly told. They came from Spain, and having conquered the Tuatha Dea Danann, partitioned the island between them. Ir had Ulster ; Eiber, North Munster ; Ith, South Munster ; but the bards are at a loss to decide what portion remained for Eremon, some assigning the north, others the south, others, more probably, Leinster and Connaught. What is historically certain is, that in the 3rd or 4th century of our era, clans calling themselves, then, or subsequently descendants of Ir, Eber, Ith, and Eremon, did occupy the parts of the island, assigned to them in this partition. From the four patriarchs sprung a line of kings, who ruled Ireland as monarchs, or ardrigh, for more than a thousand years before the Christian era ; but about that period, the plebeian Irish, gathering spirit after a slavery of 40 generations, rose against their Milesian masters, and not having the dread of law before their eyes, did treasonably cut off nearly the whole of the royal race, and place one of their own plebeian blood on the throne. The seasons, however, conspired against the rebels ; the pastures gave no grass, and of course, the cows no milk ; the hazel trees no nuts, or the red earth no grain ; so the repentant rebels were compelled to send a suppliant embassy to the few remaining scions of the royal stock, begging them graciously to return, and allow the kingdom once more to flourish under their shade. They did return, and precisely about this period of the restoration of the Irish monarchy, the island is again divided into the same five provinces, established more than 1500 years ago by the Firbolgs. After this restoration of the royal line, the pentarchy subsisted until the reign of Tuathal the Welcome, A. D. 130-160, who, to consolidate his throne after a second rebellion of the plebeians, founded for himself the ancient province of Meath, by cutting off a portion of each of the five provinces, which

formerly met at Uisneach hill, in Westmeath. Hitherto, members of the four Milesian lines had shared the royal succession, but from this period it gradually became restricted to the Eiremonians ; and from the reign of Nial of the Nine hostages, A. D. 400, to that of Brian Boromhe exclusive, none but the Hy Niall, i. e. Eiremonians, swayed the royal sceptre. Such are the chief outlines of the elaborate superstructure, compiled with more than the patience of a Dutch Bollandist by O'Flaherty, from all the accessible bards and annalists of his day.

The fable has its episodes. From time to time, a people, powerful by sea, descend on the Irish coasts, and endeavour to establish themselves in the estuaries, especially in the north. As "Fomoiré," the name by which they are known, literally signifies "seafaring," it supplies no grounds for conjecturing the quarter whence they came. The general tendency of the references to them, is decidedly favourable to their northern origin ; and more than once it is expressly asserted, that they came from Finland. Keating, it is true, states that they were sons of Cham, and came from Africa, which appears to favour the opinion so popular at the close of the last century, that the Irish coasts were, in ancient days, colonized by Phœnicians. If so, it does not rest on authority as certain as the trading settlements of the same people, in the south of Britain, though it can be proved on foreign testimony, that Ireland was not unknown to the Carthaginians, and better known by merchants generally, than Britain, at least in the days of Tacitus. Neither the Irish language, however, nor customs, nor any relics of ancient civilization, place the intercourse of the Tyrian sea-rovers with Ireland, beyond the reach of very reasonable doubts. Another feature which diversifies the monotonous routine of bardic story, is a record of three distinct emigrations from Ireland to Alba, i. e. modern Scotland ; first of the Picts, who went over in the days of Heremon, by whom they were driven out ; second, of the Dailraidians, in the 3rd century of the christian era, to whom the royal line, and many nobles of Scotland traced their origin ; and third, of the sons of MacErc, who passed over about the time of St. Patrick.

A simple enumeration of the various systems propounded by Innes, Pinkerton, Moore, and many others on this prehistoric part of Irish story, would be a very laborious, and by no means interesting task, both because like most similar themes, it is involved in almost hopeless obscurity, and still more from a defect of dignity and variety in the theme itself, the story of every succeeding age and tribe being nearly the same as its predecessor.

One thing, however, must forcibly strike the most heedless investigator, namely, that the historians of the 17th century, Keating and the Four Masters, had a better knowledge of Irish affairs before the christian era, than the most respectable of ancient Irish annalists. An abbot of the parent monastery of Clonmacnoise, compiled before the close of the 11th century, a volume of annals, which clearly prove, even in their mutilated shape, that he must have had the command of an extensive classical library, and that he knew well how to use his materials. Now if there was one place in Ireland where it might be expected the most copious and authentic collection of Irish history was deposited, that place was certainly Clonmacnoise. To this day it presents, even in its ruins, a more imposing monument of pure Irish civilization, than any other place in the island. It was the burial place of several kings from all the provinces ; a favourite resort of pilgrims, and though it did not always escape, its central and solitary position on the banks of the Shannon, nearly encompassed by melancholy bogs, enabled it to enjoy comparative security. Surely the abbot of this house could not be ignorant of the history of his country, and would not willingly consign it to oblivion. Yet the very first touch of his pen banishes to the realms of fable all that the bards had dreamed of Milesian story, antecedent to the year before Christ 300, and so far from attempting to give a consecutive Irish history after that period, he merely records a naked catalogue of the kings of Ulster, who reigned in the palace of Emania, near Armagh. Of the kings of Tarah, i. e. Ireland, he mentions not one before Labraid Loingseach, who reigned, he says, about 70

years before Christ, and was the founder of a dynasty of 30 Leinster kings of Ireland. Then come the names of four kings in succession, Duach Daltadegha, Eochaid Airemh, Eochaidh Feidloch, and Conaire Mor. Of the three former he gives only the names, but in the reign of Conaire, (contemporary with the birth of Christ,) the island was divided into five provinces. From Conaire to Tuathal the Welcome, A. D. 160, he records the names of five kings of Tarah, and nothing more, except that the immediate successor of Conaire, Lugard Reonderg, A. D. 79, was the first of a dynasty of kings of the northern half of the island, commonly called Leath Cuin. Thus Tigernach's history of Ireland, before the year A. D. 160, may be compressed into these lines, viz., a catalogue of Ulster kings ; the names of eleven kings of Tarah ; the partition of the island into five provinces, about the commencement of the christian era, and the establishment of two dynasties of kings, one commencing about seventy years before, the other fifty or sixty years after the birth of Christ.

So meagre a skeleton of Irish antiquities was not agreeable to those who loved the pompous and full blown fables of the bards. Tigernach's authority should be set aside by some means or other. He did not intend, it was said, to give a full history, but merely a few notices of the most prominent facts. But his history is the best interpreter of his intentions. If he had known a correct catalogue of kings of Ireland, why not give them, rather than the catalogue of provincial kings of Ulster ? Why take the building of the provincial fort of Ulster, about 300 years before the christian era, as the glimmering dawn of Irish tradition, rather than some great name in the bardic scenes of monarchs of the whole island ? Whoever takes the trouble of reading the first part of his annals, will be at no loss to discover the reason. Commencing with the reign of Ptolemy, A. C, he gives copious and correct records of Grecian, Roman, Jewish, and Christian events for the next 500 years ; his notices of Ireland during that whole period, not filling one page in a hundred, but as he advances nearer to the date of Christianity in Ireland, and after that date, his Irish facts begin gradually to occupy a larger space, proving to demonstration thereby, one should think, that if he said little of his country in earlier times, it was not because he disdained to entwine her humble story with those of great nations, but truly because he had nothing certain to say.

All the researches of Irish literary societies tend to confirm the authority of Tigernach, and among them this last publication of the Celtic Society. Nay, the bards themselves rightly interpreted by a collation of their discordant rhapsodies, will be found to agree with him, that except perhaps a series of Ulster kings for a few centuries, there is nothing approaching to certainty in Irish story before the Christian æra. Taking in the first place the genealogists, we shall find that the stems of all the known tribes of the Milesian family flourished in comparatively recent periods. The Eiremonians were divided into three principal branches : the Leinster, the Northern (Leath Cuin), and the Deogadh or Ernaan branch. The Leinster were descended from Labraid Loinseach, A. D. 70 (cir) ; the Deogadh, from Deag, about the same period ; and the Northern from Lugaidh Reonderg, A. D. 74 ; Labraid and Lugaidh, being according to Tigernach, founders of two dynasties of kings. All the known descendants of Ir, traced their descent from Ruadhri, king of Ulster, about the middle of the first century before Christ. The genealogical stem of the Ithians and Eiberians, branches at a much more recent period, all the former being descended from Lughaid Maccon, A. D. 240, and all the latter from Olill Olum, A. D. 237. Thus of all the Milesian tribes who possessed any territory in historic times, the origin is not traced farther back than to about half a century before the christian æra. It is true a long chain of bardic genealogies connects Labraid Loinseach, and Lugaidh Reonderg and Ruadhri, and Deag, and Lughaid Maccon, and Olill Olum, with the Milesian patriarchs, Eiremon, Eber, Ith, and Ir—but all these genealogies bear, according to Charles O'Conor, evident marks of bardic forgery. It appears, therefore, that whatever truth may be contained in the genealogical tables, they would not carry back the probable dawn of

Irish history to a period more remote than that in which Tigernach records the division of the island into five provinces, about the commencement of the Christian æra.

Evidences to the same effect may be collected from another species of bardic literature, which flourished with unusual exuberance in ancient times. The history of all famous localities was regularly chronicled ; every mound, and rath, and cavern was associated with the name of some hero or clan. The cemeteries of the Pagan kings are described in some of the oldest Irish manuscripts extant, and it may easily be supposed that more credit can be given to such documents, which had as it were their lasting interpreters and vouchers in the monuments themselves, than to a branchless line of genealogical names. Now in these sepulchral records, the most ancient name occurring in the Eiremonian line, is the same Labraid Loinseach, who was buried at Cruachan in Connaught : the first Eiremonian of Leath Cuin, buried on the banks of the Boyne, was a son of Lugaidh Reonderg ; and the burial place of the Deogadh or Ernaan Eriemonians, took its name from Deag or Erna. Had there been Eiremonian kings before these, is it probable that the topographical gossip in which the Irish literati loved so dearly, would not have named the cemetery where they were interred ? The hero who gave his name (Dergthene) to the Eiberians is only a few generations anterior to their common parent, Olill Olum. The king of Ulster alone appears to acquire an antiquity from the history of the cemeteries, greater than that of their common genealogical stock Ruadhri, for it is said that the famous Ollamh Fodhla, his progenitor, had with his successors been buried at Tailton (Telltown), in the county Meath. And this is not the only reason for believing that the descendants of Ir were the most ancient and firmly established race in the island.

To confirm still more Tigernach's date of the origin of the Irish patriarchal government, the reader may calculate the probable consequences of Cæsar's Gallic wars, and his invasion of Britain on the fate of Ireland. The Irish bards unanimously state that Labraid Luinsheach landed in Ireland at the head of a Gallic host, and succeeded in making himself master of the plains of Leinster and Connaught. The date assigned by Tigernach to this Labraid, would agree perfectly with the emigration of the Belgæ from Gaul to Britain, some years before Cæsar's invasion (*nostrâ memoria*). The rebellion of the plebeians of bardic story, occurring too at the same period, when stripped of its bardic dress, intimates clearly that there must have been times of disorder and revolution, such as would be caused by the irruption of foreign invaders. The division of the island was not, therefore, the voluntary act of a king, as the bards represent it, but rather the consequence of the murder of a king, Conaire Mor, as Tigernach intimates, and the dissolution by invaders of whatever form of nominal government may have existed previously in the island. From all that has been said, it may be fairly inferred that if there be any truth in the primitive history of Pagan Ireland, it is contained in Tigernach : all that is known tends to substantiate his first statements : and judging from the past, all that now can be brought to light by Irish archæologists, will not add one fact to the few chronicled by him, before the day of Tuathal the Welcome, A. D. 160.

In any enquiry into the fabulous history of Ireland, the bards would have deemed it a fundamental heresy to question the near relationship of the Milesian patriarchs, Eremon, Eber, Ir, and Ith. The three former were sons of Milesius, Ith's brother. The same system of making the parents of nations, blood-relations was also extended by the bards to foreigners, as appears clearly by the following passage in the Irish edition of Nennius, lately published by the Irish Archæological society. " Now after the deluge the world was divided into three parts, between the three sons of Noah, viz. Europe, Africa, and Asia. Sem was in Asia ; Cam, in Africa ; Japeth, in Europe. The first man of the race of Japeth that came into Europe in the beginning, was Alanus, with his three sons, viz. Isacon, Gothus or Armion, and Negua. Isacon had four sons, Francus, Homanus, Britus, Albanus. Now Armion had five sons, Gotas,

Uilegotas, Ceбетus, Burgundus, Longobardus. Negua had three sons, Vandalus, Saxo, Boarus. It is from Saxo that the Saxons are descended, but it is from Britus that the Britons come.” p. 33. Interpreting the story of the Milesian brothers by the principle on which this family classification is made, we infer that the only bond of brotherhood between them was probably their existence in the same country, and perhaps a similarity in an identity of language and institutions. The story of their family connection is not only improbable, but they were not even contemporaries if we may judge from the territories assigned to each race in the earliest ages. There are many probable traditional evidences all tending to prove that the race of Ir had long preceded the Eiremonians, and possessed the greater part, if not the whole of the island. It is admitted that the Irians reigned sole masters of Ulster until about the time of Lughaidh Reonderg. In the other provinces they also possessed large tracts of bog and mountain territory, coextensive in very many instances, with the territories into which the Irish were driven by the Anglo-Norman invaders in the twelfth century. There was an old tradition that the island had once been equally divided between two Irian princes, and to this day the remains of two forts, one on the extreme northern, the other on the southern shore, are called by their names. The renowned Ollam Fodhla himself was an Irian, and progenitor of that race of Ulster kings to whom Tigernach gives so high an antiquity. Even the greatest traditional glories of old Tarah itself are associated with the names of Ollamh and of his Irian successors, and their cemetery Telltown was not more than half a dozen miles from that royal palace. But the circumstance which more than any other would mark out the Irians as a distinct race, is the fact, that many of the tribes are expressly called Cruithnians or Picts, by some of the most ancient authorities. From all these converging probabilities, it is not, perhaps, rash to infer, that Tigernach records the succession of Irian or Ulster kings, because theirs was the only race long established in the island, and enjoying, even when driven to Ulster by invasion, a considerable remnant of their former power, which never ceased to be respectable until the destruction of the palace of Eamania, near Armagh, A. D. 332, by the encroaching and then dominant race of the Eiremonians. It is a singular tradition, too, that the Irians ceased to be buried in their ancient cemetery at Telltown, about the very period which marks, according to Tigernach, the rise of the Leinster and Leath Cuin branches of the Eiremonians.

While so many circumstances establish the antiquity of the Irian race, the comparatively recent origin of the Eiremonians is proved by evidence that may be considered strictly historical, inasmuch as their permanent conquests in Ulster, Connaught, and parts of Leinster and Munster date no further back than the third and fourth centuries of our æra. It will be seen that there are strong reasons for doubting whether the Deagadhs or Ersnaans were really Eiremonians. Certain it is that authorities so old as the ninth century, denied that they were of that race. The whole territory of the Eiremonians would in that case have been restricted during the first and second century, to parts of Leinster, of Meath, and of the adjoining level and fertile plains of Connaught—that is, the territories which tradition assigns to Labraid Loingseach and Lughardh Reonderg, the founders of the two chief Eiremonian lines. From the time that Tuathal the Welcome, A. D. 130 (who was fourth in descent from Lughaidh Reonderg), appropriated the provinces of Meath to himself, the gradual progress of his descendants to other conquests can be distinctly traced. His grandchildren acquired, we are told, large territories in Waterford, about the middle of the third century, and at the same time Wexford and Carlow fell under the dominion of the same race. Seventy years later, the entire province of Connaught was subjugated by Murdoch, one of Tuathal’s descendants, and before the commencement of the fifth century, Ulster, with the exception of parts of Down and Antrim (still held by the Irians), had passed under Eiremonian sway. Thus in the course of two centuries preceding the advent of St. Patrick, three-fourths of the island had been conquered by Eiremonians, who were to all intents and purposes, the Elizabethans, Cromwellians, and Williamites of the day. To convince himself of this gradual and com-

paratively modern establishment of the Eiremonian power, the reader need not have recourse to recondite manuscripts. Its history may be collected easily from the publications of the Celtic and Archæological societies, and from the works of O'Flaherty, and the Four Masters themselves. This fact would explain the distinction which St. Patrick evidently makes in his writings between a dominant race which he calls Scotti, and the mass of the inhabitants, whom he calls Iberiones, or Iberionaces. The Eiremonians were, according to all appearances, the Scotti, though that name was manifestly adopted from foreigners, and never generally adopted by any class of the Irish themselves. Its etymology remains still a mystery. It was given by the Romans to those sea-rovers from Ireland, whose depredations were felt in the western provinces in the decline of the empire. It would not be difficult to prove from Irish documents, that those conquering Eiremonians were no other than the Belgæ or Firbilgs of Irish tradition, who settled in Ireland during the course of the first century before Christ, but the details of that proof must be deferred until we have some publication illustrating the traditional history of the Eiberian race, which, like the Eiremonians, was also very probably of Belgic origin.

The treatise at the head of this article, though professing to give the history of the Ithian branch of the Milesian family, throws but little light on the traditional history of ancient Ireland. O'Flaherty complains that there was a hiatus of twenty-three generations in the genealogy of the Ithians from Lughaid Maccon, A. D. 250, to Ith ; and Mr. O'Donovan makes the hiatus nearly double that number. The traditional story of the Ithian possessions is, that in the first partition after the Milesian conquest, the Ithians received as their share, that part of Munster which lies west of the line from Cork to Limerick, the district east of that line being the property of the Eiberians. The sovereignty of the whole province was enjoyed alternately by the two clans, until about the middle of the first century before Christ (the date of Labraid Loingseach), when the Ernaan or Deagadh clan of the Eiremonians (so called) invaded Munster, and held both Ithians and Eiberians in subjection for more than two centuries. The Ithians it is said never recovered their former power, but the Eiberians under their patriarch Olill Olim, A. D. 240, not only regained their former territories, but became masters of nearly the whole province of Munster. This story, so far as it assigns the south-west of Ireland as the home of the Ithians, may be received with some credit, because the earliest dawn of authentic history shows them established in the south-west of the County of Cork, and their descendants were numerous and wealthy in the present diocese of Ross, down to the Cromwellian confiscation. But that in ancient times they were confined to the south-west of Munster, may be very fairly questioned, for it may be asked, how are we to account, in that supposition, for the location of several Ithian tribes in the other provinces ? How came the Ithian Calraidhe to be settled in the far Tyrawley, and the Ithian Laighis on the opposite shores of the Irish sea ; the Ithian Dalmescorb on the western slopes of the Wicklow mountain, and the Ithian O'Flym in the bogs of Crossmolina ; why are the Coscraidhe Ithians found in the glens of western Waterford, and other Ithian tribes in Leitrim, Longford, Westmeath, Sligo, Roscommon, and Eili O'Carrol in the King's County and Tipperary ? The diffusion of these tribes is chronicled, but not accounted for in the Celtic Miscellany, nor is it easy to guess what could have driven them from their own sunny regions in the south, to the least inviting parts of other provinces, unless we suppose that they had *not* been originally confined to south Munster, but that at some remote period they had possessed the rich central plains of the island, and were driven thence by new invaders to the bogs and mountains, until after the lapse of ages the largest remnants of them were shut up within the narrow limits of the diocese of Ross, just as the once wide-ruling Irians were confined by the same causes to a small tract in the opposite corner of Ireland. It is absurd to imagine that these distant settlements could have been made by Ithian conquerors issuing from the south, because conquerors usually do not select as their portion the worst parts of the conquered territory : and it is not consistent with genealogical tables to suppose that the diffusion of the Ithians was

caused by forced emigration, after the conquest of Munster in the third century, by the Eiberians, because the reputed parents of those scattered tribes lived some generations before the Eiberian conquerors. The principle on which these speculations are founded is attested by the history of many countries, namely, that the conquered retreated before the invaders to the remote and less accessible parts of the country. The whole history of Ireland, from the English invasion to the close of the reign of James I., is a decisive illustration of that principle, and it is well known that it is borne out to this day by the different strata of races in other Countries, for instance, those that line the northern sides of mount Atlas, Berbers, Romans, Vandals, Greeks, Arabs, &c.

The reader will please remember that the traditionary declension of the Ithian power dates from the Deagadh invasion of Munster, A. C. 50 (circiter). About the same time, north-eastern Ulster also received a colony of those Deagadh, that is in other words, the Deagadh or Ernaans, are driven north and south, at the very period in which Labraid Loingseach was hewing out for himself a settlement in Leinster and Meath. Conaire Mor was of this Deagadh race : and it was after his royal Dun, Bruigean ua Derga at the foot of Dublin mountains, on the banks of the Dodder, had been sacked, and himself slain, that the island was partitioned into five parts, according to Tigernach. The probable inference is that the Deagadh or Ernaans preceded the Belgæ, and were not Eiremonians. There are other very strong reasons for believing that they were Ithians. Maolmuiri, a high authority and very ancient (A. D. 850), traces the Ernai or Deagadh to Ith, and gives them the most prominent place among the clan, though in another place he appears to assign some of the most distinguished Ernai to the Eiremonians. Again, the ancient cemetery of the Ernai was in the heart of the original territory of the Ithians, and if the Ithians were not buried there, they were the only considerable ancient race whose cemetery is not pointed out. The royal fort of the Ernaan Conaire Mor was called Bruigean ua Derga, i. e. “ the palace of the descendants of Derga,” who are classed by Maolmuiri in the Ithian family. These, it must be confessed, are by no means conclusive proofs of the identity of the Ithians and Deagadhs, nor is it likely from the defects in the chain of Ithian genealogies and the manifest contradictions in the parts extant, that the question can ever be placed beyond conjecture. Certain it is however, that if Maolmuiri be correct, the Ithians did include the Deagadh, and that they possessed before the descent of Labraid Loingseach, the greater part of the South, and strong settlements in the centre of Ireland. The genealogical series of the Ithians, such as it is, consisting of twenty one generations from Lughaid Macon to Ith, would place that patriarch so far back as about half a century before Tigernach’s date of the first Ulster king, A. C. 300, an antiquity remote enough for any reasonable antiquarian, and which, moreover, would agree very well with the hypothesis, that the Ithians were a later colony than the Irians, and drove them from the south and from the regal Tarah itself, to the less inviting regions of Ulster.

To many of our readers, it will appear, no doubt, that even Tigernach himself is to be received with caution, especially as the use of letters among the Pagan Irish is not placed beyond dispute. It should be remembered, however, that the chief facts which he records are of so public a character, that they could easily be preserved during one or two centuries by oral tradition, and as there are strong reasons for believing that Christianity had penetrated to Ireland so early as the commencement of the fourth century, and of course introduced letters, the few facts given by Tigernach could be thus transmitted.

In the meantime, it is surprising, while Irish “ origins” are discussed with so much zeal, that neither of our Irish societies has yet published the provincial kings of the country in Pagan and Christian times. There are, we are told, long historical poems on that subject, still extant, and surely they should be the foundation as it were of the entire superstructure. The happy idea of an exhaustive publication, like that on the Irish Picts, in the edition of Nennius,

published by the Irish Archæological society, ought also to be followed up, giving together all that bards and historians have said of the different races and dynasties.

The later history of the principal branch of the Ithians, who were confined to the south-west of the County Cork, is given in considerable detail in the various documents now for the first time published by the editor. They illustrate some of the well-known workings of Irish life during the Middle Ages, and the miseries caused by war, confiscation, and famine, during the last three hundred years, down to the ever memorable year, 1847, inclusive. At page 384, commences a careful record of all the notices of the O'Driscolls, the chief Ithian family, extracted from the Four Masters, and other Irish authorities. It appears that immediately after the English invasion, the Barrys encroached on the eastern borders of the O'Driscolls; the O'Sullivan's, who at the same time had been expelled from the rich vales around Clonmel, moved westward, and deprived them of a portion of the barriers of Bear and Bantry; the O'Donovan's, the O'Collins's, and other families, driven from Limerick by the same causes, seized the northern part of the O'Driscoll territory, and finally the MacCarthy compelled them to pay tribute for the comparatively small portion of territory left them by preceding invaders. Still they continued to make a considerable figure, especially by sea, their principal fort, Baltimore, supplying inviting facilities for that purpose. The castle had been erected by the English so early as the year 1215, but like many other of the early conquests of the Strongbonians, it soon fell into the hands of the Irish "enemies" and became a formidable Algiers on a small scale, for interrupting and destroying the commerce of the king's liege subjects, in the southern cities of Ireland. A statute of Henry VI. to provide against these evils, forbids, under pain of forfeiture of all their property, any merchants of Cork, Kinsale, Waterford, Youghall, or Wexford, from fishing in the bays of O'Driscoll of Baltimore, or bringing either arms or victuals into his territory. If the annals of all these towns had been preserved, there would be abundant materials for compiling a naval history of the O'Driscolls, if we may judge from the records which tell of their hostile relations with the city of Waterford. In the year 1368, the degenerate English clan the Powers of Waterford, aided by the gallies of the O'Driscolls, sailed towards the city with the intention of plundering it. The citizens, the English and merchant strangers, under the command of the mayor of the city, the sheriff of the county, and the master of the Knights of St. John, sailed against the enemy, but suffered a terrible defeat, having lost thirty-six of the most distinguished burghers, sixty of the English and foreign merchants, and their commanders, the mayor of the city and sheriff of the county. In 1413, the good citizens of Waterford returned the compliment, but in a manner that confirmed but too strongly the national proverb of Saxon perfidy.

"Symon Wicken, Maior of the cite of Waterford, Roger Walsh, and Thomas Saulter, Bayliffs, in the first year of his maiorality, with a band of men in armour, in a shipp of the forsaid citie, went on Christmas eve towards Balintimore, and in night on Christmas day at supper tyme, landed his men, and in good order came to the gate of O'Driscoll's great house or castell within the said haven, and called to the porter, willing him to tell his lord, that the maire of Waterford was come unto the haven with a shipp of wine, and that he would gladly come in to see his lord. Upon notice thereof given by the porter to O'Driscoll, the gate was set open, and the porter presently taken by the maior and put aside, and so the maior walked into the great hall, where O'Driscoll and his kinsmen and friends, sitting at boardes, made ready to supp, commanded O'Driscoll and his friends not to move or feare, for he would not, nor meant not to draw no men's blood of the same house, more than to daunce and drink and so to departe. With that the said maior toke up to daunce, O'Driscoll and his sonne, the prior of the friary, O'Driscoll's three brethren, his uncle, his wife, and leaving them in their daunce, the maior commanded every of his men to hold fast the said powers, and so after singing a carroll came away, bringing with them aboord the same shipp, the said O'Driscoll and his company, saying unto them they should go with him to Waterford to

syng their carroll and make merry that Christmas, and they being all aboorde made sayle presently and arrived at Waterford, St. Steven's, at night, where with great joy received they were with lightes."—From the Casen MSS. p. 97.

In the year 1461, another descent of the O'Driscolls is recorded. In company with their hereditary confederates the Powers, they mustered strongly at the now celebrated bathing place, Tramore. But the mayor, at the head of his full muster, rose and marched out to meet them, and gained a complete victory at Ballymacadam, having killed 160 of the enemy, and taken prisoners O'Driscoll, with six of his sons, who had the mortification of seeing their "western gallies" towed in triumph to the city.

In the revenues of the O'Driscoll, it will be seen that wine levied on foreign merchants, was a very respectable item : but he was not always content with what fell to his lawful share. In February, 1551, four Portuguese ships, laden with Spanish wine, consigned to the Waterford merchants, were dispersed by a tempest on the south-western coasts, and one of them was driven into a bay near the haven of Baltimore. The chieftain and his sons went on board, and covenanted for three pipes of wine to conduct the ship safe into the haven. "When the gentry and peers of those parts," saith our author, "had tasted the wines, they forgot their safe conduct, and invited the merchants to dinner in the castle, seized and clapped them in irons, manned their Irish gallies and took the ship, and distributed seventy-two tuns of the wine among their neighbours." The news had no sooner arrived at Waterford, than a small ship, well manned and equipped weighed anchor, and on the following day was alongside the captured merchantman, unperceived by her captors, who had barely time to escape at one side, while the brave Waterfordians were ascending on the other. Satisfied with the recovery of the ship and of twenty-five tons of the wine, the victors fired a few indignant vollies at the great hall of the O'Driscoll, as a foretaste of what he might expect from the greater expedition then preparing in Waterford.

"On the 27th of the same month, the major fitted out a little fleet, consisting of the ship lately retaken, another large vessel and the great galley of the city, well appointed with artillery, victuals, and men, to the number of four hundred, and put them under the command of Bailiff Woodlock, as chief captain. Tierce Dobbyn, James Walsh, James Sherlock, Henry Walsh, and John Butler, under Captains. On Wednesday the first of April, at night they sailed, and arrived within the haven of Baltimore, and anchored near the castle, which was guarded with men and artillery. They fired at it all night, and at break of day, the ward fled, and the Waterford men landed in good order on the island, and besieged the strong fortress there ; the marines entered the castle by the small port, and put up St. George's standard, and the army all entered at the bridge gate, and kept it five days, which they spent in destroying all the villages of the island, and also the house of the Friars' Minors, near the castle, and the mill of the same. The fortress being double warded by two strong piles or castles, with walls and barbicans, the halls, offices, &c. &c., were totally ruined to the ground, and were tumbled into the sea. There was found in the island great store of malt, barley, and salt. There was taken here Fineen's chief galley of thirty oars, and above three or four score pinances, of which about fifty were burned, and the great galley carried to Waterford. Near to Inishircan was an Island called Inchipite, where Fineen had his most pleasant seat, in a castle adjoining to a hall with an orchard and grove, all which they destroyed and razed to the earth, and from thence they entered into another island and burnt all the villages of the same. Then landing on the main, they burnt and destroyed Baltimore, and broke down Teigue O'Driscoll's goodly castle and bawn."—p. 95.

From the account of the revenues enjoyed by one of the chief O'Driscolls, it would appear that they were richer than many chieftains who make a more prominent figure in the Irish

annals. An inquisition taken at Roscarberry, in 1609, before the protestant bishop of Cork, finds that the O'Driscolls tenantry contained sixty-five ploughlands ; the chief was entitled to receive from strangers as well as from his own tenants, fourpence anchorage for every ship or barque entering the haven of Baltimore ; he could buy (by right of pre-emption) five per cent, below the market price, any goods offered for sale in the said town or harbour, or if he refused to buy, the seller should pay him a duty of more than three per cent.; he had four gallons out of every butt of wine ; all the empty casks ; and a reduction of two-pence per gallon on all the wine purchased for the use of his own hall. No man could draw a net in the bay without his permission. All the wrecks within that harbour and country had been his time out of mind. Every boat fishing or selling fish, paid him 19s. 2d. in money, beside a barrel of flour, a barrel of salt, a hogshead of beer, and a dish of fish each day for the Irish abstinence days, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, and if they dried fish there, they paid 13s. for the use of the rock. Every hollybutt taken shall be given to him for a ball of butter, or if concealed for twenty-four hours, the captor forfeits 40s. For every beef killed they pay 8d., for every sheep or pig. 1d. These, with many other harbour and other dues, such as 11s. 6d. for every bloodshed supplied a very copious revenue for those days. The town of Kinsale used to appoint an admiral for the fishing season, who settled with the Lord the orders for the fishings and kept an admiral's court every Monday, all the fines levied for infraction of these orders being divided equally between the Lord and the admiral, but if Kinsale did not appoint the admiral, the Lord might take the same course alone. The Lord had always the appointment of the constables, bailiff, and clerks of the market, in that whole country. But the O'Driscoll, though wealthy and powerful over strangers, was not independent. To " his strong neighbour," the Earl of Desmond, were paid at the inauguration of the said O'Driscoll, eight beeves or eight nobles sterling, to the Mac Carthy Reagh, between cess, black rent, &c., a far more considerable sum, and to the Bishop of Ross, £2. 16s. yearly, at Michaelmas and Easter.

From the inquisitions collected by the editor, it appears that the different branches of the O'Driscolls had preserved a very respectable portion of their ancient territory, down to the reign of James I, but the confiscations from that period down to the revolution under William the Dutchman, aided, it would appear by spendthrift habits of some of the chieftains, left their descendants no more than a shred of the property. During the wars which convulsed Munster in Elizabeth's reign, they appear to have acted the part of loyal and temporising subjects, until the landing of the Spaniards in 1601, when Sir Fineen O'Driscoll, urged on by those two imperious motives, saith the *Pacata Hibernia*, " Money and Gold," delivered up all his castles to the king of Spain, but they were quickly retaken by the English, and this Fineen himself it appears was received into favour. But he had let about that time, Baltimore, and his own adjacent territory, to one Thomas Croke, for twenty-one years, for £2,000, and the said Thomas, in the 5th year of James I., had that lease converted into a royal grant to himself and heirs, of all the rights and property of his lessor. A son and grandson of Sir Fineen, appear among the first of those emigrant Irishmen, popularly known as " the wild geese" scions of noble houses, who sought a fortune for themselves in the armies of the Catholic princes on the continent. Conner O'Driscoll, son and heir of Sir Fineen, was " a Captain in the Archduke's country, fighting against the Turks ;" his son Cornelius was killed in an engagement of some Spanish vessels, with the same enemies near the straits of Gibraltar, in 1619. The Irish bards mourned the absence and composed elegies on the death of these two soldiers of fortune, regretting that they had not rather spilled their blood at home, in restoring the fallen fortunes of their house. It is much to be desired that whenever we get so complete a family sketch as this volume presents, the bards will not be excluded. They enliven the dull details of genealogy and inquisitions, and let us know how people lived and felt in their day. The four poems on the O'Driscolls, given in this volume, are worth preserving, though they must lose much of their beauty in the very literal translation which the editor most properly has

given them. A few brief extracts will show how the bards felt for the absent Conner and his son.

“ Twenty years and more besides
His back is turned to his native territory
The son of Fineen standing the brunt of spears
Without having partaken of the wine feasts of Erin.
On the stormy surface of the furious ocean
The vigilant son of Fineen has met
Hotter trouble in Turkey
In the fight of the wonderfully armed hosts.
Alas for the country wanting the aid
Of the victorious red hand of Conner ;
Alas for the native land that is deprived
Of the man of these warlike achievements.
The son abroad from his people,
The father in decrepid age,
A cause of deadly lamentation to that western land
Which sheltered the great blood of Macniard.”

Another bard, after recounting the ancient glories of the Ithian race, and dwelling with peculiar affection on their Spanish origin, tells Conner that hot work enough is to be found at home.

“ Many an eiric besides this
Due to thee, heir of Fineen,
Without denial from the rough hirelings of the English.
It is a pity to brook the grievance,
Much of blood have they shed on the plain ;
Many heroes who should be lamented
They have slain for a long time back
Throughout the land of the Gael of the ripe fields
Spill them blood for these bloods,
O hand of battles, O’Conner,
Accept no eiric for them
But equal slaughter.”

But the tones of indignation and defiance soon were turned into wailing, when the same messenger brought to the southern bays, news of the death of father and son.

“ The land of the Turk exults
That they have quiet on Conners’ deaths.
He lies till morning asleep
Without suspicion, without awakening.
The death of Conner and his father—
It is the anger of God which permitted it.
Hard to Erin is the loss
And perpetual the disaster.
There is not among the vigorous horsemen
(Their high spirit has been saddened)
A man who is not lamenting for them,
Nor a woman joyous in West Munster.

The brightness of the clouds of heaven has darkened,
The fiery lightning spreads,
No tree is seen bending with fruit o'er the stream,
Because my two heroes have fallen abroad.
The shores and the waves are
The moon and the stars are
In sorrow for the death of the heroes :
And the sound of the cataract grows louder.
Many even of the old English themselves
Have sunk in grief—no feigned grief ;
The fair Gael do for him
Weep ; nor of them need it be boasted.
Far away from the heroes are their trusted friends,
Far are they from the Church mould of Inishercan,
Cause of heavy sadness that they are so
Young Conner and his father.”

For the fate of the remaining O'Driscolls under Cromwell's confiscation, and some notices of a regiment raised by one of them for James II., with the consequent penalty, the reader is referred to the volume itself. We close our notice in the words of one of the contributors to the miscellany. “ The family of O'Driscoll having fallen into decay and lost every portion of their former possessions, it is not easy now to ascertain satisfactorily who is head of the clan. Most of this ancient sept may now be discovered in bitter contests with the overseers of the workhouses of Skibbereen and Skull, who are more keenly anxious as to the minimum rate of food to keep alive the animal man, than the oldest and most calculating political economist of the day.” Had these poor Irish been black slaves imported from Africa to the West Indies, with a Brougham and Wilberforce to plead their cause, their liberty would have been purchased for £20,000,000 sterling, but being only Irish, a loan of £10,000,000 was considered the full value of their lives, an extraordinary effort of generosity to save some of them from death.

The Dublin review (1836)
Volume : 31
Subject : Catholic Church ; Religion
Publisher : London : W. Spooner
Language : English
Digitizing sponsor : MSN
Book contributor : Kelly — University of Toronto
Collection : kellylibrary; toronto

Source : Internett Archive
<http://archive.org/details/dublinreview31londuft>

Edited and uploaded to www.augty.org
March 12 2013