

The Scoto-Milesians

The history of Ireland : ancient and modern, taken from the most authentic records, and dedicated to the Irish Brigade

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Critical Essay upon The Antiquity of The Scoto-Milesians.

NOTHING has more engaged the minds of historians than the researches they have made on the origin of ancient countries, and there is nothing in which they have so little succeeded ; so much of the marvellous has been introduced into the writings of the ancients upon these subjects, that it is with difficulty the small portion of truth found in them, can be distinguished from the fables which vanity has caused them to insert. Sacred history therefore, can serve as the only infallible guide in the knowledge of antiquity. [1] It has become so much the custom of every people to endeavor to ennoble their origin, and establish it upon an ancient and illustrious foundation, that it would appear new and obscure beginnings have something in them dishonorable : to give to them some brilliancy in the midst of the darkness which surrounds them, fable is often made use of instead of history : they prefer to lose themselves in an abyss of antiquity, rather than candidly avow themselves to be of modern mediocrity.

The Egyptians reckon a period of forty-eight thousand years, and pretend to have seen twelve hundred eclipses before the reign of Alexander the Great. Their historian Manetho, supported by the pretended inscriptions on the pillars of Hermes in the land of Seriad, describes the succession and reign of their kings for many thousand years before the time of the creation, as established by Moses. The Chaldeans ascend still higher : they pretend to have made astronomical observations, during four hundred thousand years. The Chinese count upon a revolution of forty thousand years, and pretend to have made observations long before the creation.

The learned consider these chronologies fabulous, and the pretended observations of the Egyptians and Chaldeans, to have been unknown to ancient astronomers. It has been proved that the history of the pillars of Hermes is but a fiction which falls of itself, whereas it is the opinion of every one, that Hermes was the first by whom characters were invented, and that the land of Seriad was not known to the ancient geographers. As to the chronology of the Chinese, it has been shown, that their pretensions have been contradicted by the ephemerides. The most ancient observations, acknowledged by them to be authentic, as has been made to appear, are those of two fixed stars, one in the winter solstice, and the other in the vernal equinox, in the time of the King Yao, who reigned after the universal deluge. If their historians give to their empire a duration of forty thousand years, it can be founded but upon an equivocal and uncertain tradition ; whereas, according to their own acknowledgment, their books were all consumed in the flames, about two thousand years ago, by order of their Emperor Zeo, and no monuments remain among them more ancient than that period.

Similar ravings have found credit among the Arcadians, who boast that they are more ancient than the moon, and among the Sicilians, who pride themselves on the foundation and antiquity of their cities : they pretend, for instance, that Palermo was founded in the time of the patriarch Isaac, [1] by a colony of Hebrews, Phœnicians, and Syrians ; and that Saphu,

grandson of Esau, was governor of a tower named Baych in the same city. After the example of Manetho, they cite some ancient inscriptions, not better established than those of the columns of Hermes. [2] We can form the same opinion on the pretended antiquity of Messina, which they say was enlarged by Nimrod.

The origin of the Romans is not better established, as authors do not agree upon that point. Some attribute it to the Trojans ; others give to them different founders : but without seeking after such distant prodigies of antiquity, the offspring of vanity, have we not the history of Brutus, forged by Geoffry of Monmouth, an English monk of the twelfth century ? This friar, zealous for the glory of his nation, and wishing to give to it an illustrious beginning, introduces the story of a certain Brutus, great grandson of Æneas, the Trojan, having peopled Britain, and by this happy discovery, finds for it, at the same time, an origin and a name. This system did not succeed : it was rejected even by those whose interest it was to uphold it, particularly by Nubrigensis, Polydore Virgil, Buchanan, Camden, Baker, and others.

The higher we ascend towards the source of ancient history, the more obscure we discover it to be. It is probable that the ancient Milesians had been addicted to the marvellous as well as other people who were their contemporaries. The great antiquity to which they aspire, will no doubt appear astonishing. It is difficult to conceive that a people obscure and almost unknown, can trace their origin and genealogy to times so remote, while the most considerable countries of Europe are new, and still scarcely understand their origin. It is a paradox, I allow, but it must be likewise granted, that the thing is not impossible. The genealogies of the house of Austria, of the dukes of Ascot, and of some other princes, have been, it is said, traced so far back as the deluge. We have an example of it among the Jewish people. Although God conducted with a peculiar care the pens of the holy writers, in every thing regarding the laws, the prophecies, canticles, the history of the creation of the world, and all that was above human understanding ; the same writers have treated of the genealogies of families, and have given an account of historical facts, which they had known from the study of tradition, and which were known to all who wished to be instructed in them.

After the precautions which are adopted in France, and other countries, by depositing in their courts of justice, and registries, returns of the baptisms, marriages, and burials, as also their plan of keeping the registry of their nobles, which is called heraldry, can it be hereafter a matter for surprise, if, after the lapse of two thousand years, genealogies make their appearance, and ascend from generation to generation up to us ?

The matter is therefore possible, and reduces itself to the following question, viz., to know if the ancient Milesians carefully transmitted to posterity, since a certain epoch, some features of their history. Before this matter be farther examined, it is prudent to lay it down as a principle, which should be admitted, that all ancient nations have had their obscure periods, both fabulous and historical.

Varro distinguishes, after the manner of the Greeks, three different eras—

The first, from the creation to the deluge, which is, he says, obscure and uncertain, because we are ignorant of all that passed during that time.

The second, from the deluge to the first olympiad, which he calls fabulous, from the many fables that have been related concerning that epoch.

Lastly, the third, from the first olympiad till our time, which he denominates historical.

Although the different periods characterized thus by Varro, undergo some difficulty by referring to the authority of the sacred writings ; though Josephus, in his first book against Appian, assures us that the histories of the Phœnicians, Egyptians, and Chaldeans, set forth with truth and accuracy many things concerning the reign of their kings, and that they contain the principal events which happened in their countries before the first olympiad, even before Abraham and Moses ; and although he praised so highly Dion the Phœnician, and Berosus the Chaldean, for the correctness and authority of their histories ; and according to him, that these two historians have treated of the events which happened in the second distinction of time, named fabulous by Varro, particularly Berosus, who has spoken of the deluge, of the ark, the Armenian mountains where it rested, and that he has continued his history from Noah, and the first kings who reigned after the deluge ; yet the distinction of time, made by that learned Roman, ought to be admitted into the histories of almost every people.

It is possible that some nations have preserved from tradition a general and confused idea of their origin, and of their first founders ; but if it be required of them to fix their dates, or to examine in detail the form of their governments, they will either tell us nothing of these things, or speak of them as mere chimeras.

The ancient bards have preserved to us the memory of different colonies, which came successively to establish themselves in Hibernia, before Jesus Christ. But can we not suspect the truth of the accounts which they have left us ? The bards were held in high esteem among the Milesians, who called them in their language “ Fileas,” or “ Feardanas,” that is to say, philosophers. They enjoyed great privileges, and sat by right of suffrage in the assemblies of the state ; possessions were given them from the liberality of the monarch, by the provincial kings and private lords.

Strabo [3] and Lucan called them poets, or prophets. Pomponius Festus says that a bard is a singer, who celebrates, in verse, the praises and exploits of great men. Diodorus Siculus calls a bard a composer of canticles.

The bards were, as O’Flaherty [4] and some ancient authors say, both poets and philosophers. They were masters of arts and sciences : their knowledge did not consist in the harmony of words to flatter princes. They described, like the Arabs and ancient Greeks, philosophy, the laws, and history, in verse, which style being more concise, was, at the same time, more easily retained. [5]

The bards of Wales, as David Powell remarks, were employed for preserving the heraldry and genealogies of their nobles : the profession of a bard was, among the Milesians, for the same end. [6] This office enjoined him to write the annals, genealogies, alliances, wars, voyages, and transmigrations of that people, who, in tracing them from father to son up to Milesius, are descended, according to the bards, from Japhet and Magog. This has caused Camden to say, that if every thing their historians relate concerning their antiquity be true, it is with justice that Plutarch calls that island Ogygia, which signifies very ancient. They draw, continues the same author, their history from the most remote antiquity, so that that of other nations is new when compared to theirs. [7]

It is certain that every man then, as those of our time, were descended from one or other of the three brothers, Sem, Cham, or Japhet. It is also probable, that, while men were, in the early ages of the world, near their original stock, and lived to be very old, without being distracted by that variety of sciences and arts which luxury has produced in latter ages, nor by the knowledge of so many fine but often useless discoveries which at present occupy the minds of men : fathers took care to instruct their children in that which formed the chief

object of their studies, namely, the genealogy of their families. All this seems like the truth ; we need nothing more to found our conjectures upon ; but that is not sufficient to maintain historical truths, particularly in referring to a period of antiquity, when people had not yet known the use of letters, “ with-out the aid of which,” says Newton, “ they could with difficulty transmit or continue the memory of the names or actions of men, after death, beyond eighty or a hundred years.” [8]

The bards were in general mercenary men, who gave themselves up either to the extremes of exaggerated praise, of which they were lavish, or to sharp satires, which they darted against those whose honor they had some motive for assailing. If, in spite of the regulations made and established by the assembly at Tara, for the purpose of restraining the Milesian bards, and limiting their enthusiasm, they had been often obliged to pronounce the sentence of banishment against them, to repress their insolence, (a sure proof that all they related ought not be received for historical truths,) what belief should be then attached to those of a more distant antiquity, whom nothing restrained, and who pursued with impunity whatever passion dictated ? Can their correctness in the details which they have given of the origin of the Milesians, the genealogies of their chiefs, and the succession of their kings, be relied upon ? Can we subscribe to their affected precision, in marking the day of the month, the week, or of the moon, and the precise place of their arrival in the island, at a time when chronology was so imperfect ?

Let us strive to discover a standard whereby to avoid in this history, a boyish credulity, in admitting things that are improbable, as well as a forced diffidence, by rejecting what is well founded. Let us, with Varro, distinguish the different epochs, and unravel, as much as possible, the truth from what is false.

The Ante-Milesian history, which signifies all that is related of the first colonies who were in possession of the island before the arrival of the Milesians, may be carried to times that are obscure, doubtful, and unknown.

We can likewise bring back to fabulous times, the accounts of the origin of the Scoto-Milesians, the voyages and transmigrations of their ancestors, the Gadelians, in different regions, and of various circumstances which accompanied their voyage from Spain to Ireland, until their complete establishment in it, some time after their arrival.

In the mean while, let us allow that there are no positive reasons for opposing such accounts ; all the arguments that can be adduced against them are negative, and consequently insufficient ; besides, the objects being at too remote a period to be able to distinguish them, it is perhaps as well to credit as to reject them. All judgment should be suspended upon what is not proved to be absolutely true, or decidedly false. [9] That is the maxim which Camden, an English author, has judiciously adopted ; his moderation in this instance cannot be attributed to a love for Ireland. [10] I shall observe the prudent counsel of that historian, and will give in the following chapter, under the title of fabulous history, what writers say concerning the primitive ages, both to preserve the thread of their history, and mark my respect for antiquity. [11]

As to the Scoto-Milesians, if we consider them to have been established in Ireland for some ages before the Christian era, and composing a body of people governed by laws, living tranquilly, and, being separated from the continent, beyond the reach of insult from strangers, which period we may place before the reign of Ollam Fodla, (about seven or eight centuries before Jesus Christ,) we can fix the date of the Milesian history in the third degree of time, called historical by Varro. Their annals, since then, merit belief as much as any ancient

history of other nations that we read of. Of that truth we shall be readily convinced by paying attention to the antiquity of the Irish language, which is certainly not derived from any that is spoken in Europe, and to the singularity of its characters, which have no prototype ; also to the powerful motives which had influenced the Milesians in preserving their history.

Languages have generally their origin among the people by whom they are spoken. Those who maintain that the Milesians are descendants of the Gauls, strive to discover the root of the Irish language in the Gallic ; but as the result cannot be more true than the principle from whence it is taken, it is more natural to refer, on that subject, to the traditions and ancient monuments of the Milesians. By these it is discovered that the Milesians are descended from a colony of Scythians, [12] who, after many migrations ; into different countries, came to settle and establish themselves in Ireland ; that their language also, which they call Gaelic, from Gaodhal, one of their ancient chiefs, has been at all times the peculiar language of that colony, not only since their establishment in Ireland, but even from their going out of Egypt. A people who are victorious , usually introduce into the conquered country their religion, laws, customs, and language : of this truth the Scots and Saxons will afford an example ; the former of whom, consisting of some colonies of the Scoto-Milesians, who in spite of the Picts established themselves in a canton of Albania, have preserved their language, viz., the Scotie, which is still in use among them. [13]

The Britons, having called the Saxons to their aid against the Scots and Picts, [14] experienced the perfidy of their allies, who forced them to seek an asylum in Wales. The Saxon language prevailed therefore, and the Bretonnic ceased in England, except within the narrow confines of that province occupied by the Britons. It is not probable, therefore, that the Gadelians, during their sojourn in Spain, or the Milesians, their descendants, established in Ireland by right of conquest, and who had never borne a foreign yoke, had ever changed their language in changing their country, unless they could abandon their native tongue by substituting a strange one instead of it. The error of authors, which I have to combat here, arises from their affected ignorance of the true history of the Milesians. Contrary to the spirit of this history, these authors appear to confound the Milesians with a number of other colonies who came at different periods into Ireland, with the consent of the first inhabitants, and who learned and adopted the language of the country, viz., the Bretonnic, which did not undergo any material change by the mixture of different nations.

The arguments which Camden and others draw from a pretended connection or analogy of many Irish words with the Bretonnic, or Gallic, by proving that the Irish is derived from either of them, would equally prove the contrary to their assertions. It is well known that neighboring nations which trade together, (languages being subject to corruption and change,) borrow some words from each other, without either being an original source for the other to derive its language from. For example, the French and English languages are alike in many words common to both, without the one being derived from the other. Commerce was frequent between the Scoto-Milesians and the Britons : if either nation was rendered, from subjection, like the other, it was the lot of Britain at that time. The Scoto-Milesians held over them a superiority of genius, of riches, and of arms, as a celebrated poet gives at present to the English, from his own authority. They frequently brought war into their country, and carried away prisoners ; the dreadful devastations which were committed by them, according to Gildas and Bede, furnish proofs of it. The Scoto-Milesians were at that time a free people, governed by their own laws, while the Britons, Gauls, and Spaniards were slaves, subject to a foreign power, and forced sometimes to seek an asylum in Ireland, to rescue themselves from the tyranny of the Romans. [15] It is known, besides, that the Firbolgs and the Fir-domnians, whose language was perhaps a dialect of the Celtic, had a continual trade with the Scoto-Milesians, who, after they had conquered the island, assigned them some lands in it.

Nothing more was necessary to cause some mixture of the two languages, and contribute to the supposed connection of the Scotie with the Bretonnic or Gallic, although they are fundamentally different one from the other.

We might say, that from the same cause the Scotie is derived from the Latin, because there are some words common to both languages, and which have the same signification. We discover an example in the numeral nouns, *anon, do, tri, ceathar*, and which appear the same as *unus, duo, tres, quatuor*, which the Latins make use of to express numbers. These words are in reality the same, and differ only in idiom. On that subject I have two replies, which are alike unanswerable.

First—Words are arbitrary signs, invented to express the thoughts and communicate the ideas. These signs consist in a combination of letters, or of syllables, and which may be found the same in different idioms.

Second—The Scotie language being more ancient than the Latin, why should we suppose that it has taken from the Latin some of its words, rather than think the contrary? The trade which the Scoto-Milesians had with the Romans from the beginning of Christianity, the veneration in which they held their apostle and every thing that came from him, even the language in which he had instructed them, could not these make us think that they might have adopted some Latin words, and have, imperceptibly, forgotten their old ones, without the two languages having, on that account, any affinity between them?

The learned, who have undertaken the task of fathoming and examining the nature and difference of languages, have always put in the number of the mother tongues of Europe, the Scotie, and the Bretonnic, between which there has been no analogy. [16]

Joseph Scaliger counts eleven mother tongues in Europe; the Latin, Greek, Teutonic, Slavonic, Epirotic, Tartarian, Hungarian, Finlandish, Irish, Welsh, and the Biscayan or Cantabrian. The number of the mother languages in Europe, of the least extent, says Nicholas Sanson, [17] is better known to us than of the other parts of the world, and may be reduced to six, viz., the Irish, Finlandish, the Bretonnic or Welsh, the Biscayan, Hungarian, and Albanian. The Irish language (continues he) is, besides in Ireland, still spoken in the north of Scotland. The Finlandish is used in Scandinavia, which comprises Finland and Lapland. The Bretonnic, which is the language of Lower Brittany, in France, is likewise called Welsh, being the native language of Wales, a province of England. The Biscayan comprises Lower Navarre, with Labour, in France, and Biscay, in Spain. The Hungarian is the language of Hungary and Transylvania, which countries belong to Turkey in Europe, and the Albanian is thus named from Albania, a country also of Turkey in Europe.

To refuse to a nation the use of letters, displays a wish for sapping the foundation of its history, and depriving it of the means of transmitting its tradition to posterity. It is possible that some facts of history have been preserved by oral tradition, as it is said the works of Homer had been, during many ages, preserved by the memory alone; but such tradition, without the aid of letters, must be very imperfect.

Bollandus was the first who refused to the Milesians the advantage of characters. He says, that, like the Germans, the Pagan Irish had not, before the time of St. Patrick, the use of letters, nor any method of preserving upon paper or other matter, the memory of their deeds; that among all the liberal arts, they knew but a sort of rhyming poetry, which was in great esteem with them, and served instead of memoirs and annals: and that St. Patrick, who was versed in Roman literature, was the first that introduced among them the use of letters.

It appears that Bollandus, an enlightened man in other respects, has not sufficiently examined this criticism. His error has arisen from a false deduction, drawn from what he had read in Nennius, Colgan, Ward, and others, concerning St. Patrick. These authors say, that the saint had given the “ abjectoria,” or, as Nennius has it, the “ abjectoria,” that is to say, the alphabet, to those whom he had converted. The Roman characters were, in fact, not known to the Milesians before the time of St. Patrick ; but this truly apostolical man, wishing to strengthen the new converts in the faith, by reading the Holy Scriptures, and to render that infant church conformable to the universal one, in the rites and manner of celebrating the divine mysteries, and in the use of other writings of the church, took the opportunity of giving them the Roman characters, that they might be able to learn that tongue ; and the translation of these works from the Latin into the Scotie language would have been difficult for a man that had not been perfectly instructed in the latter. But these authors, in speaking of the Roman letters, do not take from the Milesians all kinds of characters ; on the contrary, they suppose that they possessed such as were suited to their language ; whereas, in the same chapter in which Colgan says that St. Patrick had given to Fiech, one of his disciples, the alphabet, written with his own hand, he adds that this same Fiech was sent some time before into Connaught by Dubtach, whose disciple he was, to present some poems of his own composition, in the Scotie language, to the princes of that province. He also speaks of a hymn in that tongue, which Fiech had composed in honor of St. Patrick. Lastly, that Fiech had made so great a progress in the Roman language, that in less than fifteen days he knew the entire psalm book, which could never be possible without a previous knowledge of other characters. Ward [18] tells us, that Benignus, a disciple of St. Patrick, and his successor in the see of Armagh, had written a book, partly in Latin and partly Irish, on the virtues and miracles of that saint, and that Jocelyn made use of it in writing his life. If letters had been unknown to the Scoto-Milesians before that time, as Bollandus asserts, how could Fiech and Benignus have been able, says Harris, to write so elegantly and poetically in that language, and make use of characters that were not till then known to them ?

Cæsar, Pliny, and some other authors, in speaking of the druids, inform us, that they were learned ; that they knew theology, philosophy, and other sciences ; and that those of Gaul who wished to attain perfection in the knowledge of their mysteries, went into Britain to be instructed in them. Cæsar says, that they did not commit their mysteries to writing, but that in all other affairs, whether public or private, they made use of Greek characters. [19]

It is certain that their order was established in Hibernia, in the time of Cæsar, of which Ware bears testimony. [20] It is also certain that the druids of Hibernia were connected with those of Britain, and that they enjoyed the same advantages in the sciences, letters, and in every other thing.

The characters made use of by the Milesians, long before St. Patrick, are herein subjoined. It is only necessary to discover whether they were Greek or Phœnician ; that, however, shall be examined in course. But what need for resorting to authority ? A moderate idea of the elements of the Scotie language, of the figure, order, and the number of its characters, also the mysterious manner which the ancient Milesians made use of in writing will be sufficient to prove their antiquity, and the peculiarity of these characters. Those ancient characters are, in their figure, different from the other languages of Europe. The alphabet of the Greeks, and the abecedarium of the Latins, sufficiently point out the order of their letters by their initials —A. B. of the Greek tongue, and A. B. C. of the Latin. In like manner, the Bobelloth, or Beith-Luis-Nion of the Milesians, express the order of their letters by their initials, B. L., or B. L. N. The alphabet of the Milesians has this in common with the Hebrew, that, in both languages, the name of the letter is a substantive. For example, in the Hebrew, “ Aleph” signifies guide, or conductor ; “ Beth,” a house, &c. Thus in the Milesian, “ Beth” is the name

of the birch tree, “ Luis” signifies the wild ash, and “ Nion” the true ash. There is this difference, however, that the Hebrew letters derive their names from all kinds of various objects, whereas those of the Milesians represent only different names of trees ; because the druids, who were the wise men of ancient times, and who lived in the woods, thought they acted conformably with nature in giving to their characters such names as might be retained, in order to impress their disciples with the ideas they wished to inspire. We must remark here, that in the Beith-Luis-Nion, or alphabet of the Milesian language, the N., at present the fifth letter, was the third in ancient times : it is also to be observed, that the characters such as are here represented, have greatly degenerated, and are no longer what they had been in the times of paganism, and in the first ages of Christianity. [21]

BEITH-LUIS-NION

ALPHABET.

Irish, Latin, English.

- 1 B Beithe, Betulla, Birch.
- 2 L Luis, Ornus, Wild Ash.
- 3 F Fearn, Alnus, Alder.
- 4 S Suil, Salix, Willow.
- 5 N Nion, Fraxinus, Ash.
- 6 H Huath, Oxianthus, White thorn.
- 7 D Duir, Ilex, Oak.
- 8 T Timne, *Not explained.*
- 9 C Coll, Corylus, Hazel.
- 10 M Muin, Vitis, Vine.
- 11 G Gort, Hedera, Ivy.
- 12 P Peth-boc, *not explained.*
- 13 R Puis, Sambucus, Elder.
- 14 A Ailm, Abies, Fir Tree.
- 15 O Onn, Genista, Broom,
- 16 U Ur, Erix, or Erica, Heath,
- 17 E Egdhadh, Tremula, Aspen,
- 18 I Idho, Taxus, Yew.

Besides these simple characters, there are some diphthongs and unnecessary consonants, erased from the modern alphabet ; if the *h* also, which is but an aspirate, be taken away, the alphabet will consist of but seventeen letters.

This order has been changed a few centuries ago, and in the Beith-Luis-Nion, which is at present used, the letters are arranged as in the Latin alphabet. Before the invention of parchment, the Milesians made use of birchen boards, on which they engraved their characters with a style or punch : they were called in the Irish language “ Orauin,” or “ Taibhle Fileadh,” that is, philosophical tablets. Their characters were also called by the ancients, “ Feadha,” [22] that is, wood. Other people, as well as the Milesians, had the custom of engraving their letters on wood. It is that to which Horace alluded, in saying “ leges incidere ligno ;” and the prophet Isaiah, [23] “ scribe super buxum :” from this is derived the word *codex*, which signifies book, from *caudex*, the trunk of a tree.

Besides the characters which were in common use, the Milesians had a mysterious manner of writing, which was called “ Oghum-crev,” and “ Oghum-coll,” that is to say, a writing which represented the branches of trees, particularly the hazel. “ I have,” says Ware, “ a book of parchment filled with this kind of characters.” [24] Such mysterious writing was permitted to be used only by the druids, and some antiquarians, who made use of it for the purpose of transmitting to posterity certain tilings which they wished to conceal from the knowledge of the people.

A little reflection on the Beith-Luis-Nion, and the Oghum of the Scotian language, which has been explained, will suffice to confound Bollandus. A language, and consequently the elements of it, are either original, or derived from some other which has served as a model to it. Let Bollandus show us this other language from which the Scotian is derived, and upon what model its characters have been formed. We challenge him to do it : let him inform us at what time and by whom, the Beith-Luis-Nion, composed of a number of letters different in their figure and order from those of other alphabets that are known, and the Oghum, which is a mysterious manner of writing, and unknown in the other languages of Europe, were introduced into Ireland ? According to his system, it was not before the conversion of Ireland, whereas the Scoto-Milesians (as he avers) had not the use of characters : if introduced since that period, let him tell us by whom that manner of writing was introduced, and for what purpose ? And as they had already received from St. Patrick the Roman letters, much more easy, why did they adopt others ? Why did they take away from the Roman alphabet five or six letters ? That is what he cannot explain, because, as Harris says, no alphabet can be found after the most rigorous research, not even the Runic, whose elements resemble, in figure and order, those of the Beith-Luis-Nion, or the Oghum. The great number of authors whose works were written in the Scotian language before Christianity, is an unanswerable proof against the assertions of Bollandus. Keating on the reign of Laogaire II., and Gratianus Lucius, in the 20th chapter of his “ Cambrensis Eversus,” quote many of them. The first is Amergin, brother of Heber and Heremon, who was poet and supreme judge of the colony, [25] in the beginning of its establishment in Hibemia. O’Flaherty quotes the following hemistich as a remnant of his poetry : [26]

“ Eagna la heagluis adir ; agus fealtha laflaithibh.”

Which he thus renders into Latin : “ Aris præpositus fit doctior, aptior armis.”

Ethrial MacIrial Faidh, that is, [27] Ethrial son of Irial the prophet, monarch of Ireland, had written, according to Keating, the history of the voyages and migrations of the Milesians up

to his time ; besides a great number of tracts on various subjects, viz., history, the genealogies of families, medicine, philosophy, the laws, &c. O'Flaherty mentions three celebrated poets under Conchobar, who began to reign in Ulster some years before the birth of our Saviour. These poets, whose names are, Forchern MacDeagh, Neidhe MacAidhna, and Aithirne MacAmhnas, composed many works upon poetry and the laws ; they were likewise the authors of precepts, or celestial judgments, which O'Flaherty calls "juditia cœlestia." All these were revised, enlarged, and published by Kenfolae MacOlill, antiquarian, in the seventh century, under the reign of Donald the Second. [28]

Jocelyn, in his panegyrics on Dubthach O'Lugair, [29] a celebrated poet, who was converted by St. Patrick, [30] says, that "the talents he had used before his conversion, to celebrate the praises of the false gods, were afterwards applied by him to praise the true God and his saints." [31] The characters which he made use of were the Scotie, because he had then known no other. A treatise on the "Education of a Prince," written by Cormac Ulfada, monarch of Ireland in the third century, addressed to his son Cairbre Liffeachair, may be added to the above. This tract was found in a collection of ancient monuments by O'Duvegan. O'Flaherty, in fine, assures us, upon the authority of Dualdus Firbissius, an ancient antiquarian, that in the time of St. Patrick, one hundred and eighty volumes concerning the doctrine and discipline of the druids were condemned and burned. [32]

The epoch of the use of letters among the Scoto-Milosians may be placed about the time of their passing from Spain into Ireland. All circumstances are favorable to this opinion : the only difficulty is to know from whom they had received them, whether from the Phœnicians, or from the Greeks.

We know that the Phœnicians were masters of almost all the nations of Europe, but particularly of Asia Minor, Greece, and the nations bordering on the Mediterranean. They sailed, said Newton, in the times of David and Solomon, [33] upon the Mediterranean Sea as far as Spain, and beyond it ; they introduced everywhere the sciences, particularly navigation, astronomy, and letters ; and the coasts of Ireland, says Ware, after Bochart, were known to them. [34] The Spanish origin which ancient authors give to the Scoto-Milesians, and the epoch of their passing from Spain into Ireland, being compared with these circumstances, are a strong indication that letters were in very early use among this people, and support firmly the opinion of those who think that they had received them rather from the Phœnicians than from the Greeks. The use, therefore, of letters, added to a taste for history, and the necessity of preserving the genealogies in all their purity, to regulate the succession to the throne, afford a strong presumption that history prevailed among them.

The Scoto-Milesians had, like the Jews, powerful motives to influence them to preserve their history, and the genealogies of their chief families. The means which they made use of in handing down their traditions, bespeak a nation equally lettered and polished. By a fundamental law of state, it was necessary to be of the house of Milesius to possess the throne, the sovereignty of the provinces, or to fill high military posts, or the magistracy. The interests of the princes and of the people, respectively, required them to take measures to prevent deception ; very wise laws were enacted in regard to those rights. Ollam Fodla, who reigned about three centuries after the establishment of the colony in Ireland, founded the triennial assembly at Tara : he created the offices of antiquaries in the different provinces, to watch over and preserve the exploits of their heroes, and the genealogies of families. He ordained that the genealogical and historical records of those antiquarians should be examined in the triennial assembly, by commissioners appointed for that purpose ; he decreed heavy penalties against those who might be discovered to prevaricate in the discharge of their duty. Lastly, he enacted that copies of such private registries as were thus examined and made pure, should be

inserted in the great book or registry, since called the “Psalter of Tara,” which was written in verse, after the manner of the ancient Arabs. This regulation was frequently renewed and confirmed by other princes ; and that assembly was continued up to the time of Christianity.

Besides those registries, we have, since the time of paganism, the “Black Book,” and that of “Conquests,” the whole of which is given in the “Psalter of Cashel,” and in other modern works. Cairbre Liffeachair, monarch in the third century, composed the “History of the Kings,” his predecessors, a copy of which had been preserved until the last century, in the abbey of Icolm-kill ; and Sir George M’Kenzie, in his “Defence of the Royal Line of Scotland,” speaks of having seen it.

Since the time of Christianity, we have the book called “Na-Geeart,” written half in Irish, and half Latin, by Saint Benignus, disciple of Saint Patrick. The psalter called “Na-Rann,” those of Cashel, Armagh, Cluan-Mac-Noisk, Cluan-Aigneach, and of Gravala ; the books of Fiontan of Leix, Glandaloch, Roscrea, and Kilkenny. The “Martyrology” of Marianus Gorman, written in the eleventh century, besides many ancient Irish manuscripts, of Cluan-Mac-Noisk, translated into English in 1627, by Conall Mac-Geoghegan. [35]

The annals of Ulster, named “Ultonienses,” by Usher, written partly in Irish, and partly in Latin, and finished in the sixteenth century, by Roderick Cassidy, archdeacon of Clogher, [36] who had written the last part of it.

The annals of Tigernach, of Cluan-Mac-Noisk, written in the Irish language and characters, in the eleventh century.

The annals of Innisfail, written in the thirteenth century, and the Synchronisms of Flannus a Monasterio. The greatest part of these writings are still entire. We discover other extracts scattered in the writings of Lecan, and those of Molaga, Mholing, O’Duvegan, Mac-Egan, Moel Conry, O’Brodeen, O’Doran, O’Duneen, &c.

All these authors have written one after the other ; they have transmitted age after age, and as if from hand to hand, the thread of the history of the Milesians, from the beginning. Scarcely an age passes without some who write the history of every country. The last historians, if general, always renew and relate, besides the present, whatever might be contained in the ancient monuments of a country ; so that, should the original ones be lost, or consumed by time, their substance is still preserved in modern works.

The reality of the monuments of the Milesians cannot be doubted ; they are quoted by authors that are well known and incapable of imposing them by substituting chimeras for the true ones. Keating, Colgan, Gratianus Lucius, Walsh, O’Flaherty, Kennedy, and others, quote them in every page. Usher speaks of the annals of Tigernach, and of those which he calls “Ultonienses.” [37] Ware quotes the psalter named “Narran,” written in the eighth century, half Irish and half Latin, by Aongus Kelide, or Colideus. [38] He praises the “Psalter of Cashel, and its author, Cormac-Mac-Cullinan, bishop of Cashel, and king of the province of Munster, in the beginning of the tenth century ; he says, that this book is highly esteemed, and that its author was both learned and well versed in the antiquities of his country.” [39]

Sir George MacKenzie, a Scotchman, in the advertisement prefixed to his “Defence of the Royal Line of Scotland,” printed at Edinburgh in 1685, speaks of some Irish manuscripts in the abbey of Icolm-kill, which he speaks of having seen. The following are his words :

“ Since I have commenced this work, a very ancient manuscript of the abbey of Icolm-kill has fallen into my hands ; it was written by Cairbre Liffeachair, who lived six generations before St. Patrick, and about the time of our Saviour ; an exact account is given in it of Irish kings, from whence I infer, that as the Irish had manuscripts at that period, we must certainly have possessed them likewise.” There are, in the same book, many things added by the druids of that time. “ I have seen,” continues MacKenzie, “ an ancient genealogy of the kings of the Scots in Albania, which agrees with what has been said in our history on the crowning of Alexander II., and which is preserved at Icolm-kill as a sacred deposite. I have,” he says, “ likewise seen another ancient manuscript, which sets forth that the Dalreudini of Albania have been established here (in Scotland) six generations before Eire, whom Usher calls the father of our kings. From the same manuscript it is discovered, that Angus Tuirtheampher had reigned in Ireland five hundred years before our Feargus I., and that after his time, the Albanian Scots had separated from those in Ireland, which accords with our histories, that say the Scots inhabited this country for a long period before Feargus established himself in it. These same Irish manuscripts agree also with the history of Cairbre, whereof mention is made above : these are, in fact, the additions made to his book by our ancient senachies.” Such is the formal and positive testimony of MacKenzie in support of ancient Irish manuscripts.

[1] Fazell. Hist. Sicul. decad. 1, part, prior, lib. 8.

[2] Reinr, Notizie Istoriche di Messina.

[3] Geog. lib. 4.

[4] Lib. 5. Ogyg. par. 3, cap. 27.

[5] Newt. Chronol. chap. 1, p. 44.

[6] “ They were philosophers in reality, and poets in name, but it need not be doubted, whether as philosophers or poets, they have written best on divine subjects. The character of the poets among the ancients, was that of wisdom, and, as in our days, their knowledge did not consist in the measure and scanning of words, nor in their flatteries of the great.”
—*Ogyg.* part .3, c. 30.

[7] “ From the deepest sources of antiquity, the history of the Irish is taken ; so that in comparison to them, that of other nations is but novelty and a beginning.”—*Camd.* p. 728.

[8] *Introduct.* to *Chron.* page 7.

[9] “ I do not think that what is founded on conjecture, which borders upon truth, or what is supported by tradition, concerning the origin of a people, should be rejected.”
—*Buchanan, Scotch Records*, b. 1, p. 54.

[10] “ That which it is neither my intention to refute nor maintain, should receive indulgence for the character of its antiquity.”—*Brit*, page 728.

[11] “ Its authority should be conceded to antiquity, and not repelled by vain conjectures, unless better and more authentic documents can be adduced.”—*Ogyg.* part 1, p. 2.

[12] *Ogyg.* part 2, page 63.

[13] “ They brought their language from Ireland into Britain.”—*Joan. Major, de Gest. Scot.* b. 1, c. 9.

[14] “ They were forced to send for the Saxons into their country, which turned to their own destruction. The English or Angli were very strong, but ' not at all faithful.”—*Polydorus Virgil, Eng. Hist.* b.3, p. 131.

[15] “ After the Romans had extended their empire over almost all countries, many flocked to Ireland out of Spain, Gaul, and Britain, to escape from the Roman yoke.”
—*Camd. Brit.* p. 728.

[16] *Grat. Luc.* cap. 3.

[17] *Introd. à la Geograph.* 2 part, livre 3, chap. 5, des Langues.

[18] *Wardeus, Vit. Rumoldi*, p. 317.

[19] “ They were said to learn, there, a great number of verses. Neither do they consider it

lawful to commit their mysteries to writing, though in almost all public and private affairs they make use of the Greek letters.”—*Cæsar in his Gallic Wars*.

[20] *Antiq. Hib.* cap. 5.

[21] *Ogyg.* part 3. cap. 30.

[22] *Kenned.* Preface, p. 28.

[23] *Chap.* 30. V. 8.

[24] “ Besides the common characters which the ancient Irish made use of, there were secret or artificial forms for committing their mysteries to writing, which they called Oghum : I have a little book of parchment filled with them.”—*Ware’s Antiquities*.

[25] *Ogyg.* part 3, cap. 30.

[26] *Anno Mundi* 2292.

[27] *Anno Mundi* 3025.

[28] *War. de Script*, cap. 1.

[29] *Ogyg.* part 3, cap. 30.

[30] *Harris*, vol. 2, cap. 3.

[31] “ The verses which he had formerly composed in praise of his false gods, now changing to a better purpose his thoughts and language, he composed more renowned poems and sermons in praise of the omnipotent God and of his saints.”—*Jocelin in his Life of St. Patrick*.

[32] *Ogyg.* part 3, cap. 30, p. 219.

[33] *Chron.* p. 12.

[34] *Antiq. Hib.* cap. 1.

[35] *Ogyg- Epist.* p. 10.

[36] *War. de Script. Hib.*

[37] *Primord.* 15 et 16, passim.

[38] *Ogyg.* part 3, cap. 17 et 21.

[39] “ He was a man most learned and skilled in the antiquities of Ireland, and wrote in his native language, a history commonly called the Psalter of Cashel, which is still extant and held in high esteem.”—*Antiquities*, c. 2.

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