

Three Ships From Wales

William Allingham

SEVEN HUNDEED YEARS AGO.

An Historic Sketch.

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I. — SHIPS FROM WALES.

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ONE day in May, seven hundred years ago, [1] three ships, which had sailed from South Wales a few hours earlier, came to anchor on the Wexford coast, and disembarked their freight of armed men, archers, soldiers in half-armour with their horses, and, lastly, a small body of men and steeds in panoply, with a red and white banner fluttering in their midst—red the colour of England, white of Wales. The men of the little army, numbering in all some 400, were of various races, simple and mixed—Welsh, Flemish, and Norman-English. Having encamped on the shore within hastily-formed entrenchments, and set careful watch, they awaited the effect of the messengers despatched inland, Irishmen who knew every track of the perilous district which they had to traverse.

The captain of this expedition is still a young man, of handsome face and strong body, somewhat above the middle height, whom his friends describe as good-humoured, generous, and magnanimous, but overfond of wine and women. His name is Robert Fitzstephen, son of Stephen, castellan of Abertivy (now Cardigan), and of Nesta, the daughter of Rhys-ap-Tudor, Prince of South Wales. [2] His companions, all volunteers, are thirty gentlemen-at-arms, of his own kindred and dependants, sixty others in half-armour, and about three hundred archers. With Robert comes Harvey de Montmaurice (a man of worship and uncle to Richard, Earl of Pembroke), not as fighter, but to make report to the earl, his nephew, as to what he finds in this Irish region. Tall and handsome is Harvey, with prominent gray eyes, of graceful figure, polished address, and witty speech, but a vicious man nevertheless (if we trust Gerald de Barri's report), wily and false ; ' honey and milk mingled with poison are under his tongue.'

Next day arrive two other ships from Wales, sailing from Milford Haven, with ten gentlemen-at-arms and a body of archers, under Maurice de Prendergast, an honest and bold man, from the district of Ros, in South Wales.

Who are these, and why have they landed in arms on the coast of Wexford ? They are a band of adventurers, soldiers of fortune, mustered under a sort of private half-sanction from the King of England, Henry the Second. Their direct and avowed aim is to help the King (or kinglet) of Leinster, Dermot MacMurrough, against Roderick O'Conor, King of Connaught and Monarch of Ireland, and other princes who are leagued against Dermot. They also, and still more earnestly, intend to help themselves.

People in general are perhaps rather vague as to what is sometimes called ' the invasion' and sometimes ' the conquest of Ireland,' having some floating notions (all more or less erroneous) connected with Dermot MacMurrough and the abduction of Dervorgil ; Strongbow, *alias* Strigul ; the Bull of Pope Adrian ; along with a general impression as to ' Irish kings,' that they were pretty much on a level with the modern potentates of Central Africa,

and that the island they lived in (notwithstanding some vague odour of sanctity and learning wafted from more ancient times) was little, if anything, better than Caffraria or Ashantee.

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II. — THE DARK AGES.

There is a space in the history of Europe which people have agreed to call *The Dark Ages*. Its boundaries are variously set : we, perhaps, may think of the shadow (including each penumbra) as extending from the Emperor Constantine to Pope Innocent III.—more than nine hundred years—from the Three Hundreds (fourth century) to the Twelves (thirteenth century). [3] During these nine centuries, it might be said (were the fanciful analogy allowed), the wondrous new birth, Modern Society, was forming itself in the womb of time.

During most of this long period, we see every part of Central and Southern Europe swept by successive floods of invasion and conquest. Britain, abandoned by the Romans, is occupied by the Anglo-Saxons, otherwise English ; the land is again overrun by the Danes, and finally subdued by the Normans—remaining England, however, and changing its later conquerors into Englishmen. The old Keltic Britons are hemmed in among the mountains of Wales and Cumbria and the rocks of Cornwall.

About the period when the Normans come upon the scene of history, the ‘ Dark Ages’ are perhaps at their gloomiest ; times of ignorance and of violence ; ‘ times of great misery to the people, the worst perhaps that Europe has ever known.’ [4]

Nor, after the Normans had settled on the banks of the Seine, and received Christian baptism, were matters much improved.

In 1035, little William the Bastard (then seven years old) succeeded his father as Duke of Normandy. The state of Normandy during his minority ‘ was fearful beyond expression.’ The nobles were engaged in ‘ rebellion against their sovereign, ruthless oppression of those beneath them, and endless deadly feuds with one another.’ ‘ Private murder was as familiar to them [the Norman nobles] as open war.’ ‘ Probably no period of the same length in the history of Christendom contains the record of so many foul deeds of slaughter and mutilation as the early years of the reign of William. And they were constantly practised, not only against avowed and armed enemies, but against unarmed and unsuspecting guests.’ [5]

As to the English Teutons, an English historian tells us, ‘ No people were so much addicted to robbery, to riotous frays, and to feuds arising out of family revenge, as the Anglo-Saxons.’ [6]

Such was the general condition of Normandy, of England, and of Europe in general.

Erin, or Ireland, at the middle of the Dark Ages, was a country in which appeared, in the midst of rudeness and turbulence, certain remarkable indications of spirituality, refinement and culture. It had a regular and expressive language, with much written and oral literature, historic, legal, poetic, and imaginative (of which the numerous relics are only now beginning to be brought to light) ; it excelled in certain arts of design, particularly book illumination and metal work [7]—and possessed a new and beautiful school of architecture. In music her people had ‘ an incomparable skill.’ [8] They observed an elaborate and humane code of ancient laws (still extant, and now for the first time being translated into English). [9]

The Irish accepted Christianity almost by acclamation, finding in it a better teaching ; and long before any other people in Western Europe, they applied themselves to the establishment

of schools and colleges. Beda, writing his Ecclesiastical History, *circa* A.D. 731, says, under the year 664 :

Many of the nobility and of the lower ranks of the English nation were there [in Ireland] at that time, who, in the days of the Bishops Finan and Colman, forsaking their native island, retired thither either for the sake of Divine studies or of a purer life ; and some of them devoted themselves at once to a monastic life, others applied themselves to study, going about from one master's cell to another. The Irish willingly received them all, and took care to supply them with food, as also to furnish them with books to read and teaching, free of charge.

The Irish (alias ' Scots') also maintained constant intercourse with other countries, and indeed were noted travellers. They founded many famous monasteries in France, Germany, Italy, &c, and held the highest reputation as teachers and lecturers in all the learning of the time, profane as well as theological. [10]

There must have been something in the character of this people to make them so fit and fruitful a soil for the seeds of learning and piety. It was not by accident that Erin became known as the intellectual garden and nursery ground of Christendom.

But from the time that the Scandinavian sea-rovers effected settlements on her coasts, and often plundered the interior, the condition of the island deteriorated. Not until after some two hundred years of merciless conflicts and mutual treacheries did hope appear of an amalgamation of the races. Meanwhile, society had become disorganised all over the country, and the regular succession to the High-Kingship was broken up. In such condition, and after so long a period of sickness, did the new adventurers find the land.

They came at a time when ' the rear of darkness thin' over great part of Europe was being scattered and light was stealing upon the landscape. The wandering and half-barbarous life of ' the Dark Ages ' had gradually changed. Powerful men had established themselves on their own domains, with their families and servitors. The ' feudal system' had arisen, visibly culminating in the strong castle on its hereditary land, village and church crouching at its feet. Its warlike and despotic lord, whose serfs and soldiers held goods and lives at his pleasure, seldom yielded save on force to any opposing will. It was a new stage in civilisation. But this state of society, which had prevailed in a large part of Western Europe, during some three centuries, was totally unknown, with all its good and evil, in the island of Erin. Neither Roman government, with its municipalities, nor Teutonic temper and customs (for the Norse invaders effected no apparent change in the general Irish character), nor finally the powerful and widespread Feudalism, had leavened this ancient Keltic people. Their history, character, and condition were altogether peculiar in Christendom.

A very early form of society, that of pastoral tribes, each tribe an expansion of a family and united by the bond of kinship, continued itself there ; the land of each tribe being, in the main, common property of all the men of that tribe. It was a mode of living that allowed much health and happiness to individuals, and shared things more evenly than many other modes. Women, children, and the weak were well cared for ; nobody was destitute or neglected. Moreover, letters and arts, as we have said, were cultivated and honoured.

But the various tribes were ill-bonded to each other. Notably one, all over the island, in language, laws, customs, traditions, and ideas, their general political and military organisation was miserably loose. They made no true nation ; could neither resist as a nation

nor be subdued as a nation. And a new and stronger form of civilisation had grown up in all the neighbouring countries.

The antique system of small communities holding their land mainly in common, remains to this day that of many millions of the human race—in India, in Russia, as well as among the Arabs and others ; and the ideas upon which it rests do still influence very strongly the mind of the Irish peasant.

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III. — IRISH KINGS.

The island of Erin—‘ Western Country,’ called by the English Ira-land—received Christianity willingly about the middle of the Four Hundreds (fifth century). Paganism lingered in it some two centuries and then expired, say after the great battle of Magh Rath (Moirá) A.D. 636. The people of this island at the time when we first catch any clear glimpse of them were undividedly Keltic. The Kelts of Erin and the Kelts of the neighbouring Inis-Prydain (Britain) were doubtless of the same stock ; the testimonies of language, customs, tradition, and record, all lead to this conclusion. That many, at an early time, passed from the larger island to the smaller, is highly probable. It is not less probable, and it is affirmed by all tradition, that several successive tribes reached the Western Island direct from lands bordering on the Mediterranean Sea.

The history of the Eastern island and the history of its Western neighbour (it is necessary to emphasize this fact) are extremely different.

Britain, subjugated, most part of it, by the Romans, and held 450 years by their garrisons, was, some thirty years after their departure, invaded by certain heathen Low-Dutch tribes who, arriving in successive swarms, drove away, subdued, and superseded the Britons over the larger part of the country, making that larger part Teutonic in every way ; their various small English kingdoms being at length coalesced into a kingdom of England. But, all this time, fifty miles of salt water kept Erin uninvaded ; her generations of men and women were born and died, Keltic in race, in speech, in manners, in laws. During the first 800 years, nearly, of the Christian era, while every other part of Europe felt the presence of hostile strangers, this Erin preserved an unparalleled seclusion. Then came the Scandinavian sea-rovers, who disturbed and harried the land, and at last made and held some strong settlements on the coasts.

But they did not change the character and system of the country.

Irish royalty had not passed out of the Barbaric type, *i.e.* the elective and mainly personal. The Anglo-Saxon Kings were Teuto-Barbaric ; the Irish Kings Kelto-Barbaric. The tribes of Erin settled down into fixed domains and chose ‘ Kings’ (*Riogh*) ; certain families rose above the rest, and the election customarily confined itself to these. Of opposition and conflict there was plenty, as elsewhere throughout Europe ; but, on the whole, Irish Royalty was comparatively a settled institution, and pursued a regular course during many centuries.

This island was ruled by five kings, namely, of Ulster, Connaught, Munster, Leinster, and Meath, [11] one of these being always chosen as sovran or High-King (*Ard-Righ*) of Erin. During several centuries—say, broadly, between the years 400 and 1000—the High-Kingship rested in one family, the descendants of King Nial ‘ of the Nine Hostages.’ From one of his sons, Conall Gulban, came the Northern branch of the O’Neills (*Ui-Niall*) ; from another son, Eogan or Owen, came the Southern O’Neills ; and of these two branches of the great O’Neill

family thirty High-Kings reigned. From a.d. 722 to 1022, 300 years, reigned seventeen High-Kings, average 17½ years each : one was killed by his countrymen, four fell in battle against the Scandinavian invaders, twelve died a natural death. This shows, for the time of the world, a remarkably well-settled succession.

The descendants of yet another son of the great King Niall, Corroae Cas, had settled in the parts about Limerick and Cashel, and called themselves *Dal-gCais*, ‘ Tribe of Cas,’ or Dal-cassians. The head of this tribe in A.D. 980 was a notable man, Brian son of Kennedy, eminent both in war and politics. Melaghlin [12] the Second, of the elder Southern O’Neills, was in that year chosen High-King ; but Brian, first becoming King of Munster, aspired to the supreme power. Meanwhile he opposed the Danes and Norwegians (who from 795 had infested the country) with a vigour to which they were not accustomed, beat them (A.D. 968) in the bloody battle of Sulcoid (*Salicetum*, ‘ Willow Wood,’ near Tipperary), and took their great town of Limerick. After this, joining forces with King Melaghlin, he took Dublin, the capital of the Scandinavians, and expelled Sitric. Brian also strengthened his family by marriages. He himself was married three times, his first and second wives the daughters of powerful Irish chieftains, his third the sister of the King of Leinster and widow of Olaf, Danish King of Dublin. Brian’s second son, Donough, married a daughter of the most powerful man in England, under the king, Earl Godwine (her sister being the queen of Edward the Confessor and her brother Harold) ; one of his daughters was married to the Scandinavian Prince Sitric, another to Kenneth MacAlpin, King of Alba (Scotland) ; for Irish kings, princes, and chieftains were on a level with men of similar rank elsewhere.

The powerful Brian now openly claimed the High-Kingship from Melaghlin, who, after debates and delays yielded it to him A.D. 1002.

Then was Brian ‘ of the Cattle-Tribute’ (*Brian Boroimhé*—‘ Brian Boru’) monarch of Erin, a usurper doubtless, but one who, like many usurpers, ruled strongly and well. [13] He made roads and bridges, founded schools and churches, sent over the sea ‘ to buy books,’ was hospitable beyond measure, and enforced observance of the laws. The Scandinavians he strictly kept down, and drew from them a heavy tribute ; therefore, in the year 1013, they made a great rising, aided by the Irish King of Leinster, and by ships and soldiers of their own countrymen, from Denmark under Prince Karl Knutson, from the Orkneys under Earl Sigurd, and from the Isle of Man under Brodar. On Good Friday, 1014, the Irish army of banded tribes (always hard, however, to keep together), commanded by King Brian, now seventy-three years old, and his six sons, met the Scandinavians with their Leinster allies on the plains of Clontarf, north shore of Dublin Bay—on each side some 20,000 men. The furious battle endured all day, and in the evening the Scandinavians broke and fled, and this day was the end of their independent power in Ireland. But the victors also suffered great slaughter—old King Brian and four of his sons were slain. The strength of the O’Brian family was exhausted. Then the deposed King Melaghlin resumed his Head-Kingship, and reigned nine years, keeping the Norse well down. After him (A.D. 1022) came times of personal and family rivalries and of general turmoil, no strong man rising to quell the stormy confusion. Scandinavian pressure and then Brian Boru’s power and ambition had broken in pieces the orderly succession to the High-Kingship.

During the next 150 years the succession to the monarchy of Ireland caused incessant wars between the provincial kings of Connaught, Ulster, Munster, Leinster, and Meath, as rivals, or the allies of rivals, and he who for a time succeeded in getting to the highest place was only, in the legal phrase of the country, *Ard-Righ go fresabhra*, ‘ Monarch with opposition.’ They pushed and pulled each other down, like children in the game called ‘ king

of the castle.' From the O'Brians of Munster, the Head-Kingship passed to the O'Conors of Connaught, against whom strove the O'Melaghlin of Meath.

When Robert Fitzstephen landed on the Wexford coast the following were the reigning families in Ireland : in Ulster, O'Neill ; in Munster, O'Brien ; in Meath, O'Melaghlin ; in Leinster, MacMurrough ; in Connaught, O'Conor ; this last being High-King of Erin, ' with opposition.' Of the MacMurroughs a fuller account will follow.

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IV. — GREATER THAN ALL KINGS.

At the beginning of the Four Hundreds (fifth century) Christianity was no longer merely a creed or religion, it had become a powerful organised society. A constituted clergy had begun to rule. And, not merely strong in Church affairs or through priestly influences, the bishops and priests became the principal municipal magistrates. During successive generations, the aim of the ecclesiastic power was to predominate in society, to rule in matters spiritual and temporal. It allied itself with all princes who accepted the Church's supremacy, and encouraged them in every opportunity of making war on the unorthodox, deservers of death temporal and eternal. If the Church at times took the side of human freedom, it was either to increase her own general influence, or (more often) to check some rival to herself in the claim to absolute authority.

The flood of ecclesiastical power, gradually rising and spreading for some ten centuries, had its times of temporary abatement and recession. But beginning to swell anew under Pope Alexander II. (with Hildebrand for prompter), it rose higher and spread wider than ever before. During many years, the successive Popes steadily kept in view the grand object of entirely subjecting to St. Peter's Chair all the national churches and all the princes and nations of Christendom.

England gave the Popes a deal of trouble. William the Conqueror, Eufus, Henry Beauclerc, Stephen, each in turn resisted, each more or less gave ground to the persistent encroachment of the Church. But during the energetic reign of Henry II. the contest for power between Tiara and Crown became fiercer than ever.

The story of Thomas à Becket needs no repetition here. Henry, sturdy king of stubborn England, must write imploring letter after letter, and strip his back to the scourge at Canterbury altar. And this humiliation befell the King some months after that day in May which saw the landing of Robert Fitzstephen and his men on the coast of Wexford.

They came there for their own ends ; but, unseen, the mighty force of New Rome, of Ecclesiocracy, was watchful and ready at their back—a power that for yet another century continued to grow, and stood in fullest vigour about the middle of the Twelve Hundreds (thirteenth century). The Pope was then lord paramount of every land in Christendom, and the greatest kings trembled at the raising of his finger ; the King of England was formally the Pope's vassal, and held his dominions as fiefs of the Holy See.

England, as we have said, was long time a troublesome son to the Holy Father, and little Ireland was another unruly child, whom it was necessary by some means or other to bring to obedience. The clergy of Erin noway differed in doctrine from the clergy of other Christian countries ; but in some parts of their discipline they differed—notably in the important matters of the form of tonsure and the time of keeping Easter. Their real offence, the true

disease (whereof these were but symptoms), was contumacy they did not acknowledge the supremacy of the Pope, neither did they pay Peter's Pence.

Now, in the same year (namely 1154) that young Henry Plantagenet became Henry II. of England, Nicholas Brakespeare changed into Pope Adrian IV.—first and last Englishman that has ever sat in Saint Peter's Chair. Henry sent three bishops and the famous John of Salisbury (a personal friend of the new Pope) to Rome with congratulations. [14] The 'Irish question' (which has been going on ever since) was almost certainly mooted on that occasion. England and Rome had each longwhile cast glances at the strange island in the west ; and now a private arrangement was made. Adrian sent to Henry a letter (not a bull), [15] which has been often quoted, saying in effect—Ireland and all islands belong to Blessed Peter and the Holy Roman Church : you have signified to us, dearest son in Christ, your desire to enter into the island of Ireland, for the subduing of that people to laws, and extirpating their vices, and to make them pay an annual tribute to Blessed Peter of one penny from each house, and to conserve all the rights of the Church : go on and do so, in God's name.

At a Parliament held at Winchester, 1155, Henry consulted with his nobles of the conquest of Ireland, but the expedition was not resolved upon, and the letter was laid by for some fourteen years. Adrian was then out of this world ; but his written words kept their magical vitality and strength, and were at last brought into play with much effect ; supported by those of a new pope.

Whilst not as yet made public, the views it expressed, and the tenor of the document itself, were doubtless well known to many. The pro-papal part of the Irish clergy—'Ultramontanes' as they would now be called—did their best to enfeeble and suppress all opposition to the new intruders ; agreeing that 'the rightful place of the Pontifical power is as that of the sun in our firmament.' [16]

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V.—KING DERMOT.

DERMOT MACMURROUGH, king of the small realm of Laighin or Leinster (a district which then included little more than the present counties of Wexford, Wicklow, Carlow, and Kildare, with part of Dublin), was great-great-grandson of a chief called Mael-na-mbo—'Mael of the Cattle'—for the use of surnames hereditary and permanent did not begin till the Ten Hundreds.

This Mael of the Cattle is described as 'lord of O'Kinshellagh,' [17] and was sixteenth in descent from Enna Kinshellagh, ancestor of that tribe. [18] When he was slain, by his own tribe, in 1006, [19] his son Dermot must have been a child, for of that Dermot (great-grandfather of our Dermot) we first hear in 1033, after which date his name often appears in the Annals, with foray and war. [20] In 1052 he defeated the Scandinavians of Dublin ; Eachmarcach, lord of the foreigners 'went over seas,' and Dermot 'assumed the kingship of the foreigners after him.' [21] He was a warlike, impetuous man, of ruddy complexion, 'whose white teeth laughed at ill-fortune.' [22] In 1056 he is styled 'Lord of Leinster,' and appears at length to have been acknowledged in the sovereignty of Leinster, to the exclusion of the family in which it had anciently rested. In February, 1072, he met the King of Meath in battle (near Navan), was defeated, 'slain, and beheaded.' [23] This Dermot the first had a son Murrough (*Murchadh*, from whom *Mac Murchadha*—'MacMurrough'), who died before his father. [24] The son of Murrough was Donogh MacMurrough, whose son was our Dermot Mac-Murrough (Diarmaid Mac Murchadha), born the beginning of the Eleven Hundreds.

Dermot MacMurrough, King of Leinster, was a man of tall and strong body, a warrior and a tyrant. His voice, we are told, in later years, became hoarse from continual shouting in battle. [25] In 1137 he besieged Waterford, and took hostages from the Scandinavians. [26] In 1141 he killed, treacherously, several chieftains of Leinster, and blinded others. [27] In 1149 he joined the Scandinavians of Dublin in a plundering expedition. In 1151, Turlogh O'Conor and Dermot MacMurrough met Turlogh O'Brian, King of Munster, in the battle of Moinmor, 'Great Marsh' (probably in Tipperary), wherein O'Brian was defeated with great slaughter. Among the allies of O'Brian was Tiernan O'Ruairc, Prince of Brefny (now Leitrim and Cavan); and next year O'Conor and MacMurrough attacked O'Ruairc, defeated him, and spoiled his territory. King Dermot at this time was about fifty years of age.

O'Ruairc's wife was Dervorgilla, daughter of the King of Meath, a woman now in her forty-fourth year. [28] She had been ill-treated by her husband, [29] and at length, with the advice of her brother, resolved to leave him. Taking her cattle and furniture, she voluntarily and deliberately went away into Leinster with King Dermot, with whom she had had some former acquaintance.

In 1153 we find Dermot releasing from fetters Niall O'Morda, lord of Lagis, after *blinding him*, contrary to guarantee. [30] And in the same year King Turlogh O'Conor led an army against Dermot, and forcibly took away Dervorgilla and her cattle—O'Ruairc now becoming ally of King Turlogh and giving him hostages.

In 1156 died Turlogh O'Conor, King of Connaught, and High-King, 'with opposition,' of all Ireland, succeeded in the former dignity by his son Rury, alias Roderic, who immediately blinded his own brother Brian. [31] A bad state of things, but nowise peculiar to Ireland.

After this we find O'Ruairc in alliance with King Roderic, prospering, and King Dermot's power on the decline. Dermot was always acknowledged as their lawful prince both by the natives of Leinster and the Scandinavian colonists there, whose chief seats were at Dublin and Wexford, and as a powerful leader in war men had been ready to follow him. But, personally, he was 'infestus suis, exosus aliis,' troublesome to his own people, detested by strangers, every man's hand against him and his against every man's. [32]

In 1166 Rury O'Conor, triumphing at last over the rival house of the O'Melaghlines of Meath, was inaugurated at Dublin as Monarch of Ireland, and at the head of his army took submission and hostages from the minor kings and chieftains. King Dermot, fearing an immediate attack, burned his own stronghold at Ferns, [33] and probably took refuge in the woods. He gave hostages to King Rury, but this could not save him. An army, including some of his own subjects, both Irish and Scandinavian, [34] and his old rival Tiernan O'Ruairc (whose wife he had carried off fifteen years before), overran the territory of Mac-Murrough, and the fierce old king (now about sixty-four years of age), hard pressed, fled across to Wales. This was in 1166. [35] They set up his son Murrough as king instead, 'he giving seventeen hostages to Rury O'Conor.' [36]

It seems clear, though little notice has been taken of the fact, that Dermot's first attempt to re-establish himself by foreign help was made in the next year, 1167. [37] He came back to Ireland with a force of *Galls*, 'foreigners,' who were probably Welsh, and fought several times against Rury O'Conor and Tiernan O'Rorke. In the second conflict, according to the Donegal Annals, was slain 'the son of the King of Britain . . . who had come across the sea in the army of Mac Murchada.' This, O'Donovan thinks, [38] was probably a son of Rhys ap Gryffith, Robert Fitzstephen's prisoner, of whom we have more to hear. Dermot, getting

the worst of it, made terms with O'Connor and was allowed again to leave Ireland. He sailed, with some sixty attendants, to Bristol, where he stayed at the house of Robert Herding, [39] or Fitzharding, and busied himself in planning a new expedition to recover his kingdom, this time turning his eyes to King Henry II. Henry was in Aquitaine, and thither hied Dermot in form of a suppliant.

Henry, now thirty-six years of age, was a man of powerful personality. He was of middle stature, broad-chested and brawny, large-headed, with square, florid, almost fiery face, and grey bloodshot eyes, which blazed terribly when he was angry ; fleshy of body, with an enormous paunch, which his violent daily exercise on foot and on horseback could not subdue. His hands were coarse and uncared for, and his shins often wounded and discoloured by kicks from horses. Always busy, he never sat, save when on horseback and at meals. For the time he was well learned, and when in good temper eloquent, courteous, and facetious, but in anger his fury was beast-like and perilous. For the rest, he was prudent, plotting, dissimulative, and often broke his word—would hold to his purpose rather than his promise. He was hard in his own household, liberal to strangers, severe to his antagonists, clement to the subdued, cautious of entering into war, most energetic in carrying it on, self-possessed in danger, firm in adversity, a steady friend and steady hater. [40]

Ireland had long been in Henry's mind. He held the Pope's letter giving over that desired island to him on conditions. Here was very possibly a good opportunity. Dermot returned to Bristol to Robert Herding's house, carrying royal letters ordering the King of England's subjects to aid, favour, and abet the Irish refugee, and these he made publicly known, along with large offers from himself.

In a castle on the river Wye, Dermot found his man.

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VI. — EARL RICHARD.

RICHARD DE CLARE was a Norman-English nobleman, head of the De Clares, proud and poor. Stripped of most part of the broad lands which his grandfather had possessed, he was living discontented in this nook within the Welsh border. A former Richard (son of a Norman Count Gislebert or Gilbert) came to England with the Conqueror, and to him were given Tunbridge, in Kent, and Clare, in Suffolk, from which latter place he and his descendants were named ' De Clare.'

Some forty years later, Gilbert (his eldest son) getting the usual King's licence ' to conquer the Welsh,' took possession of a large slice of the Pembroke district, in *Dyfed*, by help of a mixed force of Normans, English, and Flemings. Sea-floods devastating their own land had driven in 1107 many Flemings to England (Queen Maud being their country-woman), where at first they were scattered up and down, but King Henry I. collected them and sent them into South Wales, to be out of the way of quarrels with his English subjects, and at the same time to check the quarrelsome Welsh. These men furnished Gilbert de Clare with many stout soldiers. His little army slaughtered and expelled the Welsh from their south-western peninsula ; the land was divided among the adventurers and became known as ' Little England beyond Wales.' It was this Gilbert, it would appear, who was styled by his followers ' Strongbow,' and who was also known as Earl Strigul from his castle of that name, ptherwise called Chepstow. [41] Gilbert Strongbow left three sons, Richard, Gilbert, and Robert. Richard, the eldest, now head of the De Clares, journeying with his son Gilbert, probably from Chepstow to another of his castles near Aberystwith, was set upon by the

Welsh, and both father and son, with many of their followers, were slain. This befell in the first year of Stephen, 1135 ; and the place, a wood in the vale of the River Gronwy, not far from Abergavenny, is to this day called Coed Dias, ‘ the Wood of Revenge.’ Gilbert de Clare, brother of the slain Richard, was now head of the family. He appears to have been called ‘ Earl of Pembroke,’ sometimes ‘ Earl of Strigul,’ and sometimes familiarly by the inherited epithet of ‘ Strongbow.’ The family had opposed King Stephen, who therefore seized their castles in Kent and Sussex ; and Henry II. also distrusting the De Clares, deprived Richard, grandson of the first Gilbert Strongbow, of most of his Welsh lands.

Therefore sat Richard poor and moody in his Castle of Strigul (otherwise Chepstow), and turned a greedy ear to the fugitive Irish King Dermot MacMurrough and his offers.

We may add this of the De Clares, that in the reign of Edward III., their male issue failing, King Edward’s third son, Lionel, married for his second wife the heiress of the family, and then received the new title of Duke of Clarence—an expanded form of ‘ Clare.’

Of Earl Richard we have this portrait from an eye-witness, Gerald de Barri : ‘ A reddish man, freckled, with grey eyes, feminine face, thin voice, small neck [*collo contracto*], for the rest, mostly long in body. A liberal and mild man. What he could not by action, he settled by suavity of words. When in garb of peace, readier to obey than command. . . . Daring all things after counsel with his companions, presuming or venturing nothing from himself. His post in battle was a sure refuge and rallying-point for his men. In either fortune of war stable and constant ; neither despairing in adversity nor light-headed in success.’ [42]

Dermot promised Earl Richard his daughter Eva in marriage, and (what were by no means his to give) large lands in possession, with the kingdom of Leinster in reversion ; and the earl on his side bound himself to come over to Ireland next spring with a sufficient army.

Dermot then went on to St. David’s, and was well received by the king, Rhys ap Gryffith, and the Bishop of St. David’s, while ships were made ready for his voyage to Ireland. King Rhys held now in prison his own kinsman, Robert Fitzstephen, on some political quarrel, but at the intercession of several, Robert was promised his release on consenting to join the Irish expedition projected for next spring ; his half-brother Maurice Fitzgerald to go with him. They (bargaining on feudal notions) were to have the town of Wexford with two adjoining ‘ cantreds’ of land for their share.

These arrangements made, Dermot sailed to Ireland, taking with him (according to the French rhymer) some soldiers led by Richard Fitzgoderd, ‘ un chevalier de Penbrocsire.’ [43] But these were found useless, the time not being ripe, and were sent back to Wales ; whither also went Maurice Kegan, King Dermot’s ‘ latiner’ (secretary and interpreter), to observe things and to keep the preparations going.

When May came, Robert Fitzstephen, impatient probably and anxious to get away from Rhys, was ready and started, with his own kinsmen and followers, accompanied by Harvey de Montmaurice, Earl Richard’s uncle : Earl Richard himself to follow more deliberately.

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VII — OF CERTAIN WELSH AND HALF WELSH PERSONAGES

The Princes of North and of South Wales, though for centuries they had ruled under nominal submission to the Kings of England, were extremely insubordinate vassals, and the Norman-English castellans on and within the border had a busy time of it, never safe from siege or sudden attack. Even the not rare intermarriages of Welsh and English nobles had

little effect in keeping peace between them ; nor did the English kings desire such peace, which would be likely to tell against their own plans. They were jealous of all private pacts with the Welsh, and used force and guile to break them up when formed. William the Conqueror had made Walter Fitzother castellan of Windsor, one of whose sons, called Gerald de Windsor, became castellan of Pembroke, ‘ a slender fortress’ made by Arnulph de Montgomery in the reign of Henry I. This Gerald married Nesta, daughter of Rhys, Prince of South Wales, a beautiful woman, who had been concubine to King Henry I. and borne him a son, called Fitzhenry (whose sons were Meiler Fitzhenry and Robert Fitzhenry). To her husband Gerald, Nesta bore three sons—William, Maurice, and David Fitzgerald (ancestors of the famous Irish ‘ Geraldines’)—and two daughters. One of the daughters afterwards married a De Cogan, and bore Richard and Milo de Cogan ; the other daughter married William de Barri, [44] and became mother of Philip and Robert de Barri, and also Gerald de Barri, better known as Giraldus Cambrensis. Gerald de Windsor being dead, his widow Nesta (a good match) was married to Stephen, [45] castellan of Abertivy (now Cardigan), another strong place of the De Clare family, [46] and bore Robert Fitzstephen, whom we have left encamped on the Wexford headland. Thus, these adventurers—Fitzhenrys, Fitzgeralds, De Barris, De Cogans, and Fitzstephens—were close relatives, and all had a strong dash of Keltic blood ; in fact, they reckoned themselves quite distinct from both English and Norman. [47] They spoke Welsh and probably Irish. They had much intercourse, commercial and other, with Ireland. Henry II. looked upon them as very dangerous and untrustworthy subjects, and when he gave a cunning half-leave to their mixing in the quarrels of Irish kings, he thought that it might possibly prove a shoeing-horn to his own Irish plots. If they failed, he was no way publicly responsible ; if they were all killed, he could very well bear the loss of such troublesome, unruly borderers.

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VIII. — BAGANBUN.

We have left Robert Fitzstephen and Maurice Prendergast with their archers and men-at-arms entrenched on the south coast of Wexford waiting for their Irish allies. Where were they encamped ? On the shore of Bannow Bay is the answer usually given ; but popular tradition points steadily, and in my own opinion (after visiting the place) rightly, to the headland called Baganbun, on the westward curve of Bannow Bay. The name Baganbun is obviously corrupt. The name of the neighbouring bay (Bannow) Camden took to mean ‘ blessed,’ which is far from the truth, for in Irish it is *Cuan-an-Bhainbh*, ‘ Bay of the Sucking-pig ;’ and Baganbun is not unlikely to be a corruption of *Beann-an-Bhainbh*, ‘ Pigling Head ;’ but whatever may be the story of the Little Pig, it lies buried in the night of antiquity.

This part of Wexford is mostly a sheepwalk of rough greensward) sloping southward in swells and hollows, all treeless, with cottages few and scattered ; the lonely green country ending abruptly in a long line of cliff, perhaps some seventy or eighty feet high on the average, notched with rugged little creeks, and jutting into grass-topped headlands ; a zigzag path here and there, known to fisherman, seaweed-gatherer, and coast-guard, descending to the lower rocks or to some little half-moon floor of yellow sand smoothed by the restless tides. One promontory, the most conspicuous, is ‘ Baganbun,’ fifty miles due west from Milford Haven. In front, as you go out upon it, stretches the sea-line unbroken from east to west ; on your left the cliff (which is of the kind that geologists term ‘ Lower Silurian’) sinks away and shows the wide Bay of Bannow with expanse of low indefinite shores to the eastward ; and on your right juts one rough green headland behind another. Below, the surf breaks round a large dark rock in the sea and several smaller rocks between it and your promontory’s base ; and a sloping little beach of smooth sand fills the angle between this base and the general line of cliff to the westward.

The space between two of the smaller rocks is called ‘ Fitzstephen’s Stride’ ; and in this sheltered little creek, tradition says, he drew up his three ships, encamping his men on the level top of the headland above, where they were joined the next day by Maurice de Prendergast and his force out of two ships. This headland is in a manner double in shape, being of two masses joined by a broad neck, the outer and lesser bending to the eastward. Both are flat-topped and carpeted with coarse greensward, a surface of some forty English acres. Across the isthmus joining the lesser and the larger platforms runs a deep fosse between two mounds, all now coated with grass, and towards the middle of the lesser platform is an oblong hollow shown as the site of ‘ Fitzstephen’s tent.’ Where the larger platform joins to the mainland runs a double fosse, deeper than, the other, from edge to edge, a space of some 250 yards.

Such is the place which popular tradition has always pointed to as the scene of a famous historic event. The Irish annalists are silent on the subject. Giraldus merely says the landing was ‘ apud Bannam,’ and again that they were posted ‘ in insula Bannensi.’ He calls the distance from ‘ Banna’ to the town of Wexford about twelve miles (‘ millia passuum quasi duodecim’), which certainly makes against the claim of Baganbun, since that is nearer double the distance ; but this was not a point on which Giraldus was likely to be very exact.

- [1] Some authorities say 1169, others 1170. After comparison and consideration I take it that Fitzstephen came in May 1169, Earl Richard in August, 1170, and King Henry in October, 1171.
- [2] Giraldus Cambrensis (cousin to Robert) in *Expugnatio Hibernica*.
- [3] I venture (tentatively and apologetically) to name the centuries thus, as more comfortable for the memory and the imagination.
- [4] Hallam, *Middle Ages*, vol. i. p. 19 (1857).
- [5] Freeman’s *Norman Conquest of England* vol. ii. pp. 191, 192.
- [6] Hallam, *Middle Ages*, vol. ii. p. 291.
- [7] The *Book of Kells* and *Book of Burrow*, both copies of the Gospels, made, it is considered, circa A.D. 600, are in the Library of Trin. Coll. Dublin. Facsimiles in colours of some pages from these and other Irish MSS. are given in *Facsimiles, &c, of the Anglo-Saxon, and Irish MSS.*, by J. O. Westwood, M.A. (London : Quaritch, 1868.) Mr. Digby Wyatt (quoted in the preface) says that ; in delicacy of handling and minute but faultless execution the whole range of palæography offers nothing comparable to these early Irish MSS., and those produced in the same style in England.’ And the same artist, speaking elsewhere of Irish art (*Handbook to the Byzantine Court, Crystal Palace*), remarks : ‘ They [the Irish] appear in advance both in mechanical execution and originality of design of all Europe and the Anglo-Saxons in particular.’ It is noticeable that the illuminated MSS., the stone carvings, and the metal work have in common a peculiar style of ornamentation, with interlacements and spirals—that which is now known as ‘ Celtic.’ In the museum of the R. I. Academy, Dublin, are multifarious examples of ancient Irish art.
- [8] Giraldus Cambrensis, *Topographia Hibernica* (Treasury Series, vol. v., p. 153). Gerald de Barri was born at Manor beer, South Wales, circa 1147 ; went to Ireland 1183 ; again with Prince John 1185, staying each time about a year ; wrote *Topographia Hibernica* and *Expugnatio Hibernica*, 1187-8—the chief, almost the sole authority, until quite lately, of all English writers on the state of Ireland in the Eleven Hundreds. He is brisk, curious, and sometimes acute ; but vain, pompous, credulous, and unscrupulous, a babbler, a flatterer of the powerful : he saw but a small bit of Ireland, and was clearly ‘ humbugged’ very often. Many grains of value, however, are to be picked out of his two books.
- [9] *Ancient Laws of Ireland*, vols, i., ii. (Treas. Series).

- [10] E.g. (for one) the famous Johannes Erigena.
- [11] The territory of Meath seems to have been at first set apart as appanage of the High-Kingship, but not to have so continued.
- [12] Often, but incorrectly, called ‘Malachi.’ His name in full was ‘Maelseachlin’—‘Servant of St. Seachlin’—a usual way of honouring the Saints.
- [13] An ancient triennial tribute, chiefly in cows (*bó*), to the High-King, was revived by Brian. See O’Curry, *Lectures on MS. Mater, of Ir. Hist.* (1861), p. 231.
- [14] Nicholas Hastifragus, or Brakespear; born at Langley near St. Albans; being refused admission to St. Albans’ monastery, he made his way to Paris and studied as a poor scholar; thence to Spain and entered the monastery of St. Ruf, not far from Valentia, of which in time he was made abbot. Coming to Rome, he found favour with Pope Eugenius III., became bishop, cardinal, and finally, in the year 1154, Pope. He ruled three years, and then died, poisoned as some think. See *Catal. Mater. Br. Hist.*, Hardy, vol. ii. p. 283. (Treas. Series, 1865.)
- John of Salisbury, born there (*circa* A.D. 1115 ?); went to France and studied under Abelard; a teacher; a chaplain; secretary to Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury, and sent often to Rome on confidential business; then secretary to Archbishop Becket, whose side he took against the King. After the murder, returned to France; made Bishop of Chartres; died at Chartres 1180. Author of *Epistolæ* (mainly on the public questions of the time—King *versus* á Becket, &c), *Polycraticus* (on morality and philosophy), *Vita Thomæ Becket, &c.* See *Catal. Mater. Br. Hist.* Hardy, vol. ii. p. 419. (Treas. Series, 1865)
- [15] Adrian’s letter is not, as commonly described, a Bull, but a less formal ‘Privilegium.’ It is given by Rymer (*Fædera*, Lond. 1704, vol. i. p. 15), under date 1154, and in *Bullarum, Privilegiorum, ac Diplomatum Pontificum Amplissima Collectio* (ed. Cocquelines, Rome, 1739, vol. ii. p. 351), under date 1155, with some unimportant verbal differences from Rymer.
- [16] Saying of Innocent III. Muratori. quoted by Hallam.
- [17] Donegal Annals. A.D. 1006; *i.e.* the body of Annals compiled A.D. 1632-36, at the monastery of Donegal, by the O’Clerys and others, from old MSS., and since named, quite wrongly, ‘Annals of the Four Masters.’
- [18] Don. Ann. A.D. 1053. [19] Ibid. A.D. 1006.
- [20] Ibid. A.D. 1037, 1040, 1041, 1048, 1052, &c. [21] Ibid. A.D. 1052.
- [22] Ibid. A.D. 1072. [23] Ibid. A.D. 1072. [24] Ibid. A.D. 1072.
- [25] Girald. Cambr. *Expugnatio Hibernica*, lib. i. cap. vi.
- [26] *Donegal Annals* in anno.
- [27] Ibid. [28] Ibid. A.D. 1193.
- [29] Ibid. A.D. 1152. *Ann. of Clonmacn.* A.D. 1152. [30] *Don. Ann.*
- [31] Ibid.—‘Turlogh’ is properly *Toirdhealbach*, which means ‘Tower-like.’
- [32] Girald. Cambr. *Expug. Hib.*, lib. i f cap. 6. [33] *Don. Ann.* A.D. 1166.
- [34] Ibid. [35] Ibid. [36] Ibid.
- [37] The *Donegal Annals* in this same year of 1167 says: ‘The Church of the Nuns at Clonmacnois was finished by Dervorgil, daughter of Murchad O’Melaghlin’—doubtless an act of contrition. She was now sixty years old. A quarter of a century later, in 1193, we find that ‘Dervorgilla (*Derforghaill*) (*i.e.* the wife of Tiernan O’Rourke), daughter of Murrough O’Melaghlin, died in the monastery of Drogheda [Mellifont] in the eighty-fifth year of her age.’
- So much for Dervorgilla, whose share in the invasion of Ireland has been erroneously made so much of by Giraldus, by Camden, by Ware, and by almost every historian down to the present day.
- [38] Vol. ii. p. 1167.
- [39] *Ang. Norm. Poem. On the Conquest of Ireland*, p. 16 (date Thirteen Hundreds?).

London : Pickering, 1837.

- [40] Gir. Camb. *Expug. Hib.* lib. i. cap. xlvi. Also Peter, Archdeacon of London, letter to Walter, Archbishop of Palermo ; quoted in *Quarterly Review*, vol. lviii., from Upcott's *Private Collection of Original Letters, &c.*
- [41] Strigul (or Striguil, Estrigol, &c.) was another name for Chepstow Castle—built, it would seem [Dugdale : Camden], by William Fitz-Osborne, Lord of Breteuil, made Earl of Hereford, a leading man in the Norman Conquest ; and taken from his son Roger for rebellion and given to the De Clares. It is called in Doom-Book ‘ Castellum de Estrighoiel.’ The De Clares, lords of Strigul, built a smaller castle on the border of Wentwood, eight or nine miles to the west, which from them was named also Strigul, and by degrees took this name to itself, the older castle getting called by its Anglo-Saxon alias of Chepestowe. This later Strigul is commonly, but erroneously, accepted as the source of the title. *Domesday Book* (Record Commission, 1783), vol. i. fo. 162 ; Camden ; Leland ; Tanner, *Notitia Monastiea* ; Coxe's *Historical Tour in Monmouthshire* (London: 1801).
- [42] *Expug. Hib.* cap. xxvii.
- [43] *Ang. Norm. Poem.* p. 21.
- [44] Close to the Glamorgan shore (space wadeable at low water) is Barry Island, of some 300 acres, so called from the Irish Saint Barroc (Bairré og, ‘ Little Barry’), who formerly dwelt upon it, ‘ and whose remains rest there in a chapel overgrown with ivy.’ ‘ From this island certain nobles of West Cambria, who ruled the isle and adjacent coasts, took their name.’ Giraldus, vol. v. *Itin. Kambriæ*, cap. vi. (Record Series.) Sir R. Colt Hoare, (in ed. of said *Itin.* published 1806) says : ‘ A few stones mark the site of an old chapel ; and there is a holy well, to which, on Holy Thursday, a number of women resort, and having washed their eyes at the spring, each drops a pin into it.’ (Vol. i. p. 132.)
- [45] Probably a De Clare.
- [46] Abertivy, strongly fortified by Gilbert, son :of Richard de Clare.—Camden, in *loco.*
- [47] Gerald de Barri (one of them), writing of Prince John's unlucky expedition to Ireland in 1185, says, ‘ Denique tripartita nobis in primis familia fuerat ; Normanni, Angli, *nostr*i, in Hibernia reperti ;’ and goes on to express the jealousy with which the last-mentioned, ‘ *cujus aggressu via nobis in insulam data fuerat,*’ saw the favouritism with which the Normans (whom he terms ‘ *novi*’) were treated, getting the best pay, lands, &c.—*Expugnatio Hibernica*, cap. xxxvii.

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