

Traditions of Morning Land

A history of the city and county of Cork

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Ireland first peopled in Munster—The reasons for accepting the Annals of pre-Christian Ages—Their importance—Their probable truth—Difference between legends and narratives true in the main—The great value of Celtic studies—Dunamark, in the barony of Bantry, the first place inhabited in Ireland—Traditions of the “Morning Land”—Early historic records—Anthropological science—The first colonization of Ireland—Parthalon—The Firbolgs—The Tuatha-de-Dananns—Death of King Neimhidh and three thousand persons at Cork—Battle at Befeaven—The seat of sovereignty established—The Beile festivals at Clontinty, near Cork—Ireland divided into provinces—Origin of the prefix, “ster”—The Irish fire-worshippers—Examples from names of places in Cork—Assolas, near Kanturk, and near Doneraile—The seat of monarchy settled at Dun-Cearmna, now Kinsale, a.m. 3668—Battles in the County Cork—Second division of Ireland—Ængus, king of Munster—Ancestor of the Mac Carthys, O’Keeffes, O’Callaghans, and O’Sullivans—Battle at Cuille, County Cork—the Plague.

The Pre-Christian Period

ACCORDING to the best and earliest traditions, Ireland was first peopled in Munster. If such traditions are to be altogether rejected because they stretch away into a dim and misty past, we must give up a great deal of pre-Christian history. Why should not the Irish Celt have as ancient and respected tradition ? as the Assyrian or the Indian ? Does ancient Irish history fail to interest because it can be studied nearer home, or because it is the history of a people for whom there is less sympathy ? Dates in the pre-Christian periods may be doubtful, but this by no means invalidates facts : Facta may be handed down with a halo of romance; but the fact none the less underlies the halo. Yet, when all is said, there is nothing very romantic or incredible in the chief details of the old annalists. We may not date back the colonization of Cork so far as pre-Noahacian times, but the record which does so must be of interest from its bold antiquity, and from the, at least, fair probability that it is a record of some very early immigration.

The Annals of the Four Masters [1] open thus :—

“ The age of the world, to this year of the Deluge, 2242. Forty days before the Deluge, Ceasair came to Ireland with fifty girls and three men—Bith, Ladhra, and Fintain, their names. Ladhra died at Ard-Ladhrann, and from him it is named. He was the first that died in Ireland. Bith died at Sliabh, and was interred in the carn of Sliabh Beatha, and from him the mountain is named. Ceasair died at Cuil-Ceasra, in Connaught, and was interred in Carn-Ceasra. From Fintain is [named] Feart-Fintain, over Loch Deirdheirc.

“ From the Deluge until Parthalon took possession of Ireland, 278 years ; and the age of the world when he arrived in it, 2520.”

The Book of Lecan, [2] Keating, and Leabhar-Gabhala, [3] say that Ceasair and his party landed at Dun-na-mbarc in Corca Duibhne, now Corcaguiny, a barony in the west of Kerry ; but we have the high authority of Dr. O’Donovan, the learned translator and editor of the

Four Masters, for placing this landing at Dunamark, in the parish of Kilcommoge, barony of Bantry, and county of Cork—thus giving to Cork the honour of receiving the first inhabitants of Ireland. From the far East they came, not without traditions of the land which they had left—“the Morning Land,” the cradle of the race; and without giving credit to the date of colonization, we may not doubt that it was indeed at an early period of the world’s history. The first immigrants of Erin left their archaic markings after them, and the ogham character may well dispute antiquity with the runes of the Scandinavian or the cunieforn inscriptions of the Assyrians. We may not enter on the wide domain of anthropological science, but we cannot pass on to facts of history without some passing glance at its romance; and yet do we not call it romance, because distance has lent to tradition that peculiar mirage of enchantment which compels our judgment to pass sentence on our imagination, and to reject what pleases our fancy, sometimes, it may be, without a due recognition of the fact that fancy or fiction is also an element, and an important one, in our mental constitution?

Wave after wave of immigrants, all from the same far off land, all boasting a common origin, and all unquestionably speaking a common language, came, and saw, and conquered. Partholan and his hosts landed on the coasts of Dublin, and in the age of the world 2550 Partholan died on *Sean-Mhagh-Ealta-Edair*. It is unquestionably a bold proceeding to give dates to such events, but there is one strong corroboration of such annals, which, while it leaves dates to the conjectures of the learned, puts a plain fact before the simplest mind. All over Ireland the long preserved names of cairn and tumuli attest the truth of what would appear its wildest legend. The plain of the flocks of Edar—*Shan-va-alta-edar*—which stretched along the coast by Dublin, from Tallaght to Edar, long preserved its ancient name, and Tallaght is the scarcely altered form of *Taimhleacht-Muintire-Partholain*—the Tavlaght, or plague-grave of Partholan’s people—for here, in ages too far gone to count, an awful plague swept away this colony by thousands. [4]

The Formorians and the Nemedians followed. The Formorians were pirates, and, according to the Annals of Clonmacnoise, were “very troublesome to the whole world.” But, possibly as some excuse for their conduct, they are said to be descended from Ham, the son of Noah,

The pastoral Firbolgs came next, also by way of Europe, from the East. The Firbolg chiefs landed in different parts of Ireland. Though, they were tillers of the ground, they appear to have had good ideas of government, for they had laws and social institutions, and established a monarchy at Tara, which became the early centre of civilization. They were surrounded by the magical, wonderful, warlike Tuatha-de-Dananns, who ruled ancient Erin for a long period, driving the Firbolgs to the coast and islands, and amalgamating with those who continued to remain unmolested in the centre of the country. The Milesians followed, coming still, like their predecessors, from the “Rising Sun,” and the united races formed what we now call the Irish people, yet not without a dash of Danish and Saxon blood.

Yet the races still show themselves by individual characteristics. The Firbolgs were small, straight-haired, and swarthy men—combative when roused, faithful to their chiefs, but, if the truth must be told, indolent and quarrelsome. [5] They are specially characterised by the brown or grey eye with dark lashes, which at once marks a well known Celtic type. They, in their comparatively prosperous sway, were rath builders, and buried their dead without cremation beneath cromleachs or tumulii; and undoubtedly they left to their descendants agricultural tastes, and that love of land, or territorial possessions, which is so opposite to the mere “land hunger” of the Anglo-Saxon: the one loves the soil from hereditary affection, the other holds it eagerly from love of possession, and sometimes from greed,

The Tuatha-de-Dananns were a noble race. Bold in battle and skilful in art, they were men to conquer and to retain their conquests. These people were builders and workers in stone and metal, and from them we possess the largest native collections of tools for the formation of metal weapons, technically known as celts, and nearly the largest national collection of swords and battle axes.

The Tuatha-de-Dananns were of large structure, but also fair complexioned, with light or reddish hair. They left their name and mark after them, and two remarkable mountains in Kerry were called *Da-chich Danainna*—the two Paps of Danann—from a royal lady of the race. [6]

The Milesians came next, and took a place of personal supremacy, so that their chiefs, with “O” and “Mac,” held rule till English invasion deprived them of territorial possessions.

Such were the amalgamation of races which looked down from the ancient fort of Shandon (*Seandun*) on the colony of St. Finbar, and on the site of the now populous city of Cork, where they united in keeping the high festival of *Beltaine* at Clontinty—the Meadow of the Fires. [7]

It is generally supposed that Ireland was divided into five provinces by Slane, or Slaigne, the first Firbolg king. The division is thus described :—

“Slane, the eldest brother, had the province of Leynester [8] for his part, which containeth from Tuver Colpe, that is to say, where the river Boyne entereth into the sea, now called in Irish Drogheda, to the meeting of the three waters by Waterford, where the three rivers, Suyre, Ffeor, and Barrow, do meet and run together into the sea. Gann, the second brother’s part, was South Munster, which is a province extending from that place to Bealagh-Conglaissey. Seangann, the third brother’s part, was from Bealagh-Conglaissey to Rosseda-haileagh, now called Limbriche, which is in the province of North Munster. Geanaun, the fourth brother, had the province of Connacht, containing from Limerick to Easroe. Royre, the fifth brother and youngest, had from Easroe aforesaid to Tuver Colpe, which is in the province of Ulster.” [9]

During the early ages, and indeed until the foundation of the city of Cork by St. Finbar, that part of Munster is seldom mentioned specially. We find in the Four Masters, under the age of the world 2859, Neimhidh died of a plague, together with three thousand persons, in the island of *Ard-Neimhidh*, in Crech Leathain, in Munster. *Ard-Neimhidh* is now known [10] as Barrymore island, or the Great Island, near Cork, and *Crich Leathain* comprises a large district including Castlelyons,

In the age of the world 3579, Conmeal, son of Emer, who had been thirty years in the sovereignty of Ireland, fell in the battle of Aenach-Macha, by Tighearnmas. A list of his battles are on record, and unquestionably he did his share of fighting from one end of Ireland to the other. One of the sites mentioned is Berra, probably Berehaven, Co. Cork. Clere maybe Cape Clear, but it has not been satisfactorily identified. In 3656 Berre is again mentioned as the site of one of the battles of Tighearnmas,

Tighearnmas was a notable monarch. He is said to have been the first by whom gold was smelted in Ireland, and who patronised the exquisite work which still remains as an undeniable evidence of the artistic skill and the cultivated taste of the ancient Celt. Three “black rivers” are said to have burst forth in this reign, one of which, Forann, has not been identified by Dr. O'Donovan, who suggests that it may be the river Fonro, near Youghal.

In the age of the world 3668, Cork was honoured by becoming the seat of monarchy. Sobhairce and Cearmna Finn, the two sons of Ebric, son of Euschre, son of Ir, son of Miledh, reigned over Ireland, and divided it between them into two parts. Sobhairce established himself at Dun-Sobhairce. [11] Cearmna settled himself at Dun-Cearmna, [12] at least as far as any Celtic prince of the period could be said to have settled. Their united reign was a long one, lasting for thirty years. Certainly the governments were sufficiently divided, and a march from the Co. Cork to Antrim would in these days have required a strong incentive.

We are not told how Cearmna governed his southern kingdom, but these two princes were the first kings of Ireland of the race of Ir.

Sobhairce was slain by Eochardh Meann, a Formorian, and Cearmna by Eochardh Faebhar-Gblas, who succeeded to the sovereignty of Ireland,

In the age of the world 4981 we find the death of Rudghraighe, and in the list of his battles one is mentioned as having taken place at Gleannamhnach [13] and another at Cuirce. [14]

The famous Conn of the Hundred Battles dates, according to the Four Masters, from the age of Christ 123.

Ireland was once more divided into two parts by Conn and Eoghan Mor. This is mentioned in the Annals of Tighernach. [15] The Annals of Clonmacnoise (Mageoghan's translation) contains the following mention of Conn and the Munster families :—

“ Conn Kedcahagh having thus slain King Cahire, succeeded himself, and was more famous than any of his ancestors for his many victories and good government. He was called Conn Kedcahagh of [*i.e.* from] a hundred battles given [*i.e.* fought] by him in his time. He is the common ancestor, for the most part of the North of Ireland, except the Clanna-Rowries, and the Sept of Lothus, son of Ithus. He had three godly sons—Conly, Criona, and Art Enear—and three daughters—Moyné [the mother of Fearghus Duibhdeadach, King of Ulster and Monarch of Ireland], Sawe [Sadhbh or Sabbiner], and Sarad [the Queen of Conaire II]. Sawe was married to Maicneadh, for whom she had Lughaidh Maccon, Monarch of Ireland, and after his death to Oilíoll Olum [the King of Munster], by whom she had many sons, as the ancestors of the Macarties, O'Briens, O'Kervells, O'Mahonies, and divers others of the west [south] part of Ireland, by which means they have gotten themselves that selected and choice name, much used by the Irish poets at the time of their commendations and praises, called Sile Sawe, which is as much [in English] as the Issue of Sawe.”

Conn was succeeded by Conaire II., the father of the Carbery muscs, the founders of many important Munster families. There were six Muscraídhés. [16] These names have all become obsolete, except that of Muscraídhé O'Flynn, which now form the two baronies of Muskerry in Cork. Muscraídhé Luachra was the ancient name of the district in which the Abhainn Mhor (the Blackwater) has its source : it was so called from its contiguity to the mountains of Slieve Luachra in Kerry.

There were troublesome times in Munster, A.D. 241, in the fifteenth year of King Cormac, and there is the record of another battle at “ Beire,” which has a good deal of notoriety in this fashion.

The year 489 is notable for the death of Ænghus, son of Nadfreach, King , of Munster, the common ancestor of the Mac Carthys, O'Keeffes, O'Callaghans, and O'Sullivans. His death is thus recorded :—

“Died, the branch, the spreading tree of Gold—
Ænghus the laudable, son of Nadfreach ;
His prosperity was cut off by Illann
In the battle of Cell-Osnadha the foul.” [17]

Ænghus was baptized by St. Patrick at Cashel, and it is said that the saint pierced his foot unintentionally with his crozier. A stream of blood poured forth, but the prince remained unmoved, believing it to be a part of the ceremony. He received a special blessing for himself and his offspring, who have undoubtedly multiplied to all the ends of the earth.

The Four Masters and the earlier annalists are reticent on southern affairs, in which they were naturally less interested ; but Keating [18] records a battle in the year 528 at Cuille, in the county Cork, wherein an immense number perished. He further adds that this disaster was the result of some insult offered to a devout woman, Suidhe Midhe, who had been in some way ill-treated by the people. This is the first, and, we believe, the last instance in which any com-plaint has been made, either in ancient or modern times, of the Cork people, whose charity is too well known to need commendation.

In the year 543 “there was an extensively universal plague throughout the world, which swept away the noblest third part of the human race.” It was known as the *Blefed* or *Crom Chonaill*. It was preceded by famine and followed by leprosy, and its first victims were St. Berchan of Glasnevia, and St. Finnen of Clonard.

Early Christian Period.

The last feast at Tara—Ollamh Fodhia, of “furious valour”—Names given to Tara—The feast held every third year—The order preserved in the assembly—The position occupied by the different Kings—The King of Munster’s place—The Sunny House of the women—Change made in the administration—The Irish language even then becoming obsolete—The nine persons who were entitled to make a law—Revision of the Seanchus Mór by St. Patrick—Similitude between Hebrew and Celtic law—the law of Eric—Fosterage—Joint occupancy of Land—The causes of feuds in ancient Erin—Result of Drainage and Cultivation—The number Nine—Great meeting of Munster men to arrange Local Laws—They select the plain between Killarney and Mangerton—The Septs that came, and where they came from—The O’Briens, the Mac Namaras, the Mac Mahons, Mac Donalds, O’Gradys, O’Kennedys, O’Heas, O’Keefes, O’Maleys, O’Mahonys, O’Learys, O’Caseys, and Sheehans—The Twomeys and Kennedys—The Cork Princes, with the Mac Carthys of Desmond and the O’Sullivans of Bear—The O’Dunbars, Moriartys, O’Callaghans, Kehoes, and Driscolls—The food used by the Irish at this time—The Brown Bear, the Wild Deer (*Fiadh Ruadh*), the Wild Goat, the Wild Boar (*Torc Fiadhan*)—The quality and quantity of Food which was to be given to the aged—The great care taken of them.

THE last feast at Tara was held A.D. 554, and as the echo of the footfalls died away in its deserted halls, the romance of early Irish History became a thing of the past. There is ample historical evidence for all that is related of the desertion of Tara, though there is some little uncertainty as to the exact date. [19] The feast of Tara was instituted by Ollamh Fodhla, and is commemorated thus in a very ancient quatrain :

“Ollamh Fodhla, of furious valour,
Who founded the Court of Ollamh,
Was the first heroic king
That instituted the Feast of Teamair.” [20]

There has been unfortunately a disposition, not only amongst strangers but even amongst the more educated classes in Ireland, to look on the history of its past, of pre-Christian or of very early Christian times, as mere legend, preserved by a superstitious people in the form of romantic tales, but without one particle of foundation. Contempt is perhaps one of the most effective weapons against truth. However strongly we may be convinced of the rectitude of our opinions, or whatever solid ground we may have had for forming them, a little breath of contempt, if it does not throw the fabric to the ground, will at least induce us to compromise or to yield weakly.

The sneers of the ignorant ought not to affect the conclusions of the learned ; but when the ignorant happen to be the many and the powerful, there is always fear that numbers may prevail over justice.

The feast of Tara was held every third year during the month of March, and was in fact a convention or parliament, at which the affairs of the nation were settled. A poem which was written about the year 1000 gives a good idea of the way in which proceedings were carried out :—

- “ The Feast of Teamair every third year,
For the preservation of law and rule,
At that time was proudly held
By the illustrious king of Erinn.
- “ Cathair [Mor] the Popular held
The far-famed Feast of Royal Teamair ;
There assembled unto him, to his delight,
The men of Erinn, to the one place.
- “ Three days before Samhain, at all times,
And three days after, by ancient custom,
Did the hosts of high aspirations
Continue to feast for the whole week.
- “ There was no theft, no wounding of the person
Among them, during all this time ;
No plying of weapons, no cutting,
No evil word, no threatening boast.
- “ Whoever was guilty of any of these
Became a mortal, venomous foe ;
No gold for such crime was from him received,
But his life on the immediate spot.” [21]

For some eighteen hundred years this native parliament or assembly met with tolerable regularity, and every detail of these meetings was carefully arranged.

Such arrangements unquestionably could not have been made by an uncivilized people. It would not be possible here to enter into full details, or to give more than the merest outline of the usual course of proceedings.

The places of the provincial kings and princes were so carefully assigned as to prevent any cause of discussion, and in fact whatever petty wars were carried on through the country,

order appears to have been preserved in this assembly. Indeed the local wars which discredit early Irish history were, we suspect, principally cattle raids, predatory incursions which the nomadic state of life involved.

Keating has given special and very full details of the arrangements at Tara, and it will be remembered that Keating writes from very ancient sources. In the time of Laeghaire (cotemporary with St. Patrick) the traditional observances were still continued.

The King or Chief Monarch of Erin, with his court, occupied the *Teach Miodhchnarta*, or great banqueting hall ; the King of Munster had the *Long Mumhan*, or Munster house ; the King of Leinster, the *Long Laighean*, or Leinster house ; the King of Connaught, the *Coisir Chounachlact*, or Connaught banqueting house ; and the King of Ulster, the *Eacheois Uladh*, or assembly house of Ulster. There were three other houses—one for the hostages, whose safe keeping was an important matter in those times ; one for the poets, called poetically *Realta-na-bh-Filiodh*, or the star of the poets, and here the judges sat and dispensed justice ; and last, the Sunny House of the women, where the provincial queens lodged with their attendants, for women and the learned met with a special respect in ancient Erin.

In the great deliberative assemblies the provincial kings had each his own place, and that of the men of Munster was on the south side. So much for the political part of the assembly. The laws were administered by judges, first by poets, and then by persons who were specially trained for the purpose.

The change occurred thus :—The poet judges were accustomed to deliver their decision, in language which was unintelligible to the people. This may have arisen partly from a desire to claim additional respect by throwing a veil of mystery over their communications. At least it shows that lawyers loved to puzzle the uninitiated as much then as now.

It may have been also that legal terms were expressed in language which even then was becoming obsolete.

King Conor MacNessa, [22] however, put an end to all obscurities by requiring that the law should be explained in the vernacular, and by allowing men and even women to compete for judgeships.

Amongst the women we find *Brigh*, the daughter of *Leancha*, who criticised and corrected her father's errors. Amongst the men, Fergus Fiannaite, from the district of Fiannait, near Tralee, Co. Kerry, [23] and Eschaidh Mac Suchta, King of North Munster.

Cormac, who reigned in A. D. 227, “ made an order that all future monarchs of Ireland should be at all times accompanied by ten persons, consisting of a chief, a judge, a druid, a doctor, a poet, an historian, a musician, and three servants. The chief was to sit at the king's shoulders ; the judge, to explain the laws and customs of the country in the king's presence ; the druid, for sacrifice, and prophecy of good or evil to the country, by his pagan knowledge ; the doctor, for attending to the health of the king, queen, and household ; the poet, for lauding or satirizing all persons according to their deserts ; the historian, to preserve the genealogical branches, and the history and actions of the nobles from time to time ; the musician, to play the harp, and sing songs and poems before the king ; the three chief servants, with a sufficient company of assistants to attend on the king and his company at table.

“ This order continued in force from Cormac’s time to the death of the great monarch, Brian Boroimhe, in the year 1014 ; but in the Christian times a bishop took the place of the druid among the king’s attendants.” [24]

The ancient laws continued in full observance until the time of Patrick, and the change which was then made is perhaps one of the most important events which has ever occurred in the history of any nation. It is at once an evidence of the high respect in which the Irish Celt held his ancient observances, and of the completeness and rapidity of the national conversion. An assembly was convened by King Laeghaire, which is thus recorded by the Four Masters :—

“ The age of Christ 438. The tenth year of Laeghaire. The Feinchus of Ireland were purified and written, the writings and old works of Ireland having been collected [and brought] to one place at the request of St. Patrick. Those were the nine supporting props by whom this was done—Laeghaire (*i.e.* King of Ireland), Corc, and Daire—the three kings ; Patrick, Benan, and Caireach—the three saints ; Ross, Dubhthach, and Fearghus—the three antiquaries.”

This committee of nine consulted on the necessary alterations, and, this done, the whole was submitted to the national assembly at Tara to receive the national sanction. The compilation then obtained the name of the *Seanchus Mor* [25] or “ Great Body of Laws,” and it was so called from the great number and the great nobility of those who thus gave it their sanction.

We must again express regret at not being able to give a detailed account of the wonderful and admirable body of laws by which our pre-Christian and Christian ancestors were governed. But we can, happily, give a brief account of the laws by which the men of Munster were governed in these distant ages.

The criminal laws were clear, explicit, and singularly just. Before the coming of St. Patrick the death penalty was exacted vigorously as under the ancient Hebrew laws. [26] But he changed it to the *Eric*, so that, if the friends of the murdered man were willing, a fine would be accepted. The greatest care is used in every legal definition, the most exact directions and distinctions are laid down, every case is fully anticipated, and every judgment clearly declared. The whole body of Irish laws would be a decided credit to the most civilized and cultivated nation.

In the introduction to this Collection of Laws, as revised by St. Patrick, we find the teaching of Catholic theology in the doctrine of expiation here, as the sure way to redemption hereafter —“ every hand is punished as it deserves”— and in plain and distinct words it is added—

“ It was these two laws were fulfilled : the culprit was put to death for his crime, and his soul was pardoned and sent to heaven. What was agreed upon by the men of Erin was, that every one should be given up for his crime, that sin might not otherwise increase in the island.” [27]

The law of *Eric* was condemned by some English writers, who were not only ignorant of its peculiar application, but who were also ignorant of its almost universal existence. There were certainly—must we say there are—many persons to whom the words Irish and barbarian seemed convertible terms. [28]

The law of contract was also very fully drawn out, and in this again there was a similarity to the Hebrew law. A man who was guilty of any fraud was obliged to go into the service of the persons whom he had defrauded, until he had liquidated his debt by his labour. There were also laws regulating the conduct of parents and children, and very special ones in respect to fosterage, the knowledge of which would explain the special regard which the Irish have always had for their foster children and the respect shown to them, while the custom itself is a strong evidence of the antiquity of the law,

A careful consideration of the laws of landlord and tenant would explain much that has puzzled political economists regarding the extreme tenacity with which the Irish Celt clings to the land, and the laws formed for co-occupiers of land show why they look upon any breach of this custom as a cruel injustice. When once a tribe had settled and obtained land either by conquest or immigration, the distribution of land would be the first object. If the land were obtained by immigration the chief would naturally secure the larger share, and the division, without any formal arrangement, would be in proportion. Cultivation would be the best object, but as some portions of land would yield to tillage more easily than others, waste lands, barren lands, and morasses would naturally remain unreclaimed, and hence as far as they could be used they would remain common property.

By degrees the drainage of adjacent tracts of land would in some degree, reclaim such places, and make them of more or less value. Then disputes would necessarily arise as to possession. Hence there would be in those times at least two kinds of dispute about the possession of land—the dispute arising from a positive desire of possession of that which belonged to another, and which could only be ended *vis et armis*, and the dispute for possession of debatable land, which with advance of civilization would be referred to legal decision.

Legal decision would eventually become law, and each country, or, if tribes were widely divided, each tribe would probably have its own special decision and judgment. Thus, in ancient Ireland, while a general system of law prevailed throughout the country, each tribe under the government of a *riagh* or king (the chief king being the Ardrigh) could make its own local laws, which would be observed in its territory.

The tribal division of Ireland was unquestionably a national misfortune. Separate interests gave rise to quarrels and feuds, which the national character, even by its very customs, kept up. Hence the internecine disputes, and the not unfrequent joining with foreigners, whether “ayue Danes” or Saxons, against those who should have been united in one common interest of nationality.

Nine [29] persons were required to make a lawful local custom—a king, a poet, a *brughaidh*, [30] a bishop, a professor, an advocate, an *aire torgaill* (a sort of sheriff), and an *airdinneach*, or lay vicar.

About the year 690 the Munster men determined to have a code of laws of their own, or rather to revise and alter the national law to meet their special customs and requirements. In order to effect this important purpose, they commissioned Amargin, a distinguished scholar, to go and study the national law and compile a code. He complied with the request, on condition that there should be a great assembly of all the Munster men in one large plain to ratify the compilation.

It was difficult to find a plain of sufficient size : for it need proximity to rivers and mountains to furnish fish, flesh, fowl, and water, for so many people.

The plain between Killarney and Mangerton mountain was chosen, and here one of the most important Irish “monster meetings” was held. How little does the modern traveller know of these ancient annals of Ireland as he traverses this district. The land belonged to a chief named Cormac, probably a Mac Carthy, and he refused to allow it to be used unless the body of laws were named after himself and his land, so it obtained the name of *Cain Chormaic*, or “Cormac’s law,” not the first time in which a patron has obtained the credit of a work not his own. It was called *Cain Inith Rime*, from the name of the plain. [31]

The Septs.

Such a gathering of MacCarthys, O’Sullivans, O’Keeffes, and O’Briens was probably never seen. The Dalcassins were from Thomond (now Clare), Limerick, and part of Tipperary, numbering in their hosts O’Briens, MacNamaras, MacMahons, MacDonalds, MacEniry, O’Gradys, O’Kennedys, O’Heas, O’Quins, O’Hurleys, O’Mahonys, O’Caseys, and Sheehans, with Tuomys and Nunans and Hickeys ; The Eugenians, came from Desmond, the families of Cork’s kings, and of these were the MacCarthys, princes of Desmond ; the O’Sullivans, from Bear and Bantry ; the Mahonys, the O’Callaghans, the O’Donohoes, the Fogarty, the Moriarty, the O’Keeffes, and the MacGillicuddys, the Mahonys, the Kehoes, the Driscolls, the O’Learys, and the Flynns.

Gleann Amhnach had then its own king or prince, to whom seven shields and seven swords were given as tribute, [32] and no doubt he headed the O’Keeffes (*O’Caoimh*), whose district was *Gleanna Amhnach*, the present Glanworth, in the barony of Fermoy, Co. Cork. The Duggans (*O’Dubhagain*) were their neighbours, and before the English invasion these two tribes possessed Fermoy, Condons and Clongibbons. The boundary between them cannot be determined precisely now, but the O’Duggans’ country was between *O’Caoimh* and the *Ui Fidhghente*. After the English invasion the country of *Feara Muighe Feine* was granted to the Flemings, from whom it passed to the Roches, and was called *Crioch Riosteach*, or “Roche’s country.” The Duggans claim descent from the celebrated Druid *Mogh Ruith*. His descendant, who ruled in Fermoy—the “Lordly king of the Farthmatha”—was entitled to tribute of seven steeds and seven drinking horns. He is entitled the “swift hero,” but whether this honourable appellation was generic or individual remains unproved. It is at least certain that *Cuanna Mac Cailchine*, who was chief of *Feara Muighe* in the seventh century, was famous for hospitality and munificence, and the same race gave two saints to Munster, Mochuille and Molaga. [33]

The O’Heas (*O’h-Aodha*) came from *Muscraidhe Luachra*, the country of the O’Heas, on the borders of the Blackwater (*Abhainn Mhor*). This district obtained its name from its contiguity to the mountains of *Sliabh Luachra* in Kerry.

The O’Donegans (*O’Donnagain*) came from *Muscraidhe Tir Maighe* (Muskerry of the Three Plains), now Barrymore. The O’Flynns came from *Muscraidhe ui Fhloi*, now the deanery of Musgrylin.

How the vast assembly fared as to food is a difficult question. Probably many tribes brought their flocks with them, pastoral fashion ; and probably they did not disdain to eat as well as to hunt the *mathghamhain*, or brown bear of North Europe, which with the wolf (*un allaidh*) remained until a late period. The red deer too (*fiadh ruadh*)—it may be a degenerate species of the famous Irish elk—would have been found in abundance on the mountains of Mangerton and Killarney, where the wild goat (*galkar*) would also abound.

The wild boar (*torc fiadhain*) would not be far to seek, as the name of Torc [34] mountain at Killarney indicates ; nor would Kanturk (*Ceanntuirc*), the land or hill of the boar, have

been out of reach of adventurous spears ; and the “ fish full” rivers and lakes of *Lein* would afford a sufficient variety of daily fare.

In one of the many domestic laws of ancient Erin there is a law deciding the provision to be supplied : to the aged, which gives us some idea of the ordinary food. Three items of maintenance were allowed by the law—maintenance in food, maintenance in attendance, and maintenance in milk. For maintenance in food, half a bairghin, or cake of wheaten meal, with salt and a vessel of sour milk ; for attendance, his body to be washed every twentieth night, and his head every Saturday ; for milk, one milch cow every month throughout the year.

The house which was to be built for the aged is also described, and gives a good idea of the habitation of the poorer class at this period, when, undoubtedly, Ireland was far more prosperous than it has been in what would be called more civilized times. The houses were generally rectangular or circular, and the houses or huts for poor aged men were to be not less than seventeen feet long, and were made of basket work with weather boards. This was the simplest description of house. Probably the interstices were filled up with mud or moss.

- [1] The Four Masters were friars of the order of St. Francis of Assisi, who well kept up the spirit of the old Irish bards and brehons, and of the learned monks and priests of the day of Patrick and Columcille. Their great work would be a credit to any nationality. Brother Michael O’Cleary was the master spirit of the Masters. To his zeal and energy we owe the collection of national records, which were then becoming more and more scarce, and a compilation which is a masterpiece of historical information. In the troubled and disturbed state of Ireland he had some difficulty in finding a patron, but all things are possible to unwearying patience and undaunted energy. A noble northern prince came forward and supplied the large funds which were necessary for this important undertaking, and the name of Fergus O’Gara will be for ever associated in honour with the names of the poor friars of St. Francis who wrote the Annals of their country.
- [2] *The Book of Lecan*. When Moore visited O’Curry, and found him surrounded with ancient Celtic MSS., such as the above work, the Book of Ballymote, etc., etc., he turned to Dr. Petrie, and exclaimed, “ I never knew anything about these books before ;” and added an emphatic opinion that he had no right to compile a History of Ireland while ignorant of their value and existence. The Book of Lecan is preserved in Trinity College, Dublin. It was compiled in 1416 by *Gilla Isa môr*, a direct ancestor of Duaid Mac Firbis.
- [3] *Leabhar Gabhala*. This book is quoted by Mac Firbis, and was written by his grandfather. It is the Book of the Invasion of Ireland.
- [4] “ The word Taimhleacht—a plague monument, a place where people who died of an epidemic were buried—is pretty common as a local appellation in various parts of Ireland under different forms ; it is of pagan origin, and so far as I know is not applied to a Christian cemetery, except by adoption, like other pagan terms. In the northern countries it is generally made Tamlaght and Tamlat ; while in other places it takes the form of Tawlaght, Towlaght, and Toulett.”—*Joyce’s Names and Places*, p. 135. *Four Masters*, vol. I, p. 3.
- [5] The characteristics of each race are thus given by Duaid Mac Firbis, in his *Book of Genealogies* :—“ Here, too, is the distinction which the profound historians draw between the three different races which are in Erin—that is, between the descendants of the Firbolgs, Fir Domhnanns and Gailiuns, and the Tuatha-de-Dananns and the Milesians :—
“ Every one who is white [of skin], brown [of hair], bold, honourable, daring, prosperous, bountiful in the bestowal of property, wealth, and rings, and who is not afraid of battle or combat — they are the descendants of the sons of Milesians in Erin.
“ Every one who is fair-haired, vengeful, large, and every plunderer, every musical

person, the professors of musical and entertaining performances, who are adepts in all Druidical and magical arts—they are the descendants of the Tuatha-de-Dananns in Erin.

“ Every one who is black-haired, who is a tattler, guileful, tale-telling, noisy, contemptible ; every wretched, mean, strolling, unsteady, harsh, and inhospitable person ; every slave, every mean thief, every churl, every one who loves not to listen to music and entertainment, the disturbers of every council and every assembly, and the promoters of discord among people—these are the descendants of the Firbolgs, of the Gailiuns, of Liogairne, and of the Fir Domhnanns, in Erin. But, however, the descendants of the Firbolgs are the most numerous of all these.” —*O’Curry’s MS. Materials of Irish History*, pp. 223-4.

- [6] The Tuatha-de-Dananns are supposed to have wandered in North Europe before invading Ireland. The reader is referred to our *Illustrated History of Ireland* (new and enlarged edition), page 62, for a description of their weapons, and an account of their meeting with Firbolg chiefs, and the curious fact of their speaking a common language.
- [7] It need scarcely be observed that the Irish Celts were fire worshippers. Fires were lit on great festivals, and especially on May-day eve. Many places still bear names commemorative of this—as Clontinty, near Glanworth, Cork. The whole subject of Celtic root words is one of the deepest interest. *Teine* is the usual word for fire, and *Solas* for light. In ancient times a light was kept burning at many fords, which are still called *Ath Solas*—the Ford of Light. Cork furnishes an example of this custom. A ford on the river Auberg, near Kanturk, has given the name to the townland of Assolas. There is a ford of the same name near Doneraile, on the Glenavair river, and the traveller to Macroom passes over the bridge of Athsollis, which crosses the river Brungea.
- [8] The termination *ster*, in Munster, Leinster, and Ulster, is the Scandinavian *Stodr*—a plain—which has been affixed to the Celtic name. Leinster is the place or province of *Laeghen*. The Irish name of Ulster is *Uladh*, pronounced Vila , Munster is from *Mumhan*.
- [9] Annals of Clonmacnoise
- [10] Four Masters, vol. 1, p. 11
- [11] Now Dunseverich, near the Giant’s Causeway.
- [12] *i. e.*, Cearranas Dun, or fort. This fort was situated on the Old- Head of Kinsale. Keating says that it was called Dun-mhic-Padrig in his time.
- [13] Gleannamhnach, now Glanworth, in the barony of Fermoy, Co. Cork.
- [14] Cuirce, a place in the county of Ciarraighe-Chuirche, now the barony of Kerricurrihy, Co. Cork.
- [15] Tighernach was of the Murray race of Connaught. He is styled successor of St. Ciaran and St. Comans in the *Chronicum Scotorum*. He died A.D. 1084. His annals are very valuable, having been compiled from early sources.
- [16] According to O’h-Uidhrin’s Topographical Poem there were six Muscraide, all in Munster, namely—1. Muscraide Mitine, the country of O’Floinn ; 2. Muscraide Luachra, the country of O’h-Aodha, along the Abhainn Mor (Blackwater) ; 3. Muscraide Tri Maighe, the country of O’Donnagain ; 4. Muscraide Treitheirne, the country of O’Cuirc ; 5. Muscraide Tarthair Feimhin, the country of O’Carthaigh ; 6. Muscraide Thire, the country of O’Doughaile and O’Fuirg.—*Book of Rights*, p. 42
- [17] Four Masters, vol. i., p. 153.
- [18] Keating ; O’Conor’s Translation, vol. 2, p. 31.
- [19] Tighernach puts the “ *cena postrema* ” of Tara A.D. 560 It is entered twice in the Annals of Ulster, first under A.D. 567, and again under A.D. 569. The hill of Tara had five names—the first was *Drum Decsain*, or the conspicuous hill ; the second *Laith Druim*, or Laith’s hill, after a Firbolg Chief of that name, who was the first to clear it of wood ; the third was *Druim Cain*, or the beautiful hill ; the fourth was *Cathair Crofinn*, from a Tuatha-de-Danann lady ; the fifth *Temair*, from being the burial place of Tea, the wife of Eremon, the son of Milesius.—*O’Curry’s Lectures*, vol. ii. page 189.

- [20] The poem from which the above is taken was written by Ferceirtne, who was attached to the court of Connor MacNessa, at Emania. Two copies of this most curious and ancient poem are still preserved, one in Trinity College, Dublin, H. 3, 18, and the other in the British Museum, Egerton 88. This poem dates from the time of the Incarnation.
- [21] O'Curry's Lectures, vol. 2, p. 13.
- [22] The history of this king's reign is full of interest. See *Illustrated History of Ireland*, new and enlarged edition, p. 127.
- [23] O'Curry's Lectures, vol. 2, p. 22.
- [24] O'Curry's Lectures, vol. 2, p. 23.
- [25] From *Sen* (Celtic) old, which has direct cognates, not merely in the Indo-European, but also in the Semetic ; Arabic, *sen*, old, ancient—*sunnah*, institution, regulation ; Persian, *senn*, law, right ; *sanna*, Phœnicibus idem fuit quod, Arabibus summa, lex, doctrina jux canonicum.—*Bochart, Geo. Soc., i. li., c. 17. See Petrie's Tara, p. 79*
- [26] All early Irish history points not only to an Eastern but to an Israelitish descent. It is well known that the *Lia Fail*, or “ Stone of Destiny,” now most probably in Westminster Abbey, is supposed, to be a pillar stone used by Jacob, and brought from the East by the Tuatha-de-Dananns. We have met recently with a curious little pamphlet, which has had a circulation of some 300,000, the object of which is to prove that the whole British nation are descendants of Eastern tribes. This is obviously incorrect as far as the Saxon race are concerned.
- [27] The Seanchus Mór—Introduction to—Ancient Laws of Ireland, vol. i., p. 13.
- [28] The law of *Eric* existed amongst the ancient Greeks, and is mentioned in the Iliad. Tacitus mentions it also. It prevailed amongst the Gemiaus, Franks, and Anglo-Saxons.
- [29] The number nine seems to have had a very special meaning in ancient Erin.—*Illustrated History of Ireland*, new edition, p. 77.
- [30] The *brughaidh* was a farmer who possessed a certain quantity of land—in fact, a tenant farmer.
- [31] O'Curry's Lectures, vol. 2, p. 32.
- [32] *Book of Rights*, p. 79.
- [33] One of the lost books mentioned by Keating is the Black Book of St. Molaga.
- [34] *Torc*, pronounced “ Turk,” hence Turk Waterfall, well known to tourists at Killarney. Wild boars abounded in Ireland, and hunting them was a favourite amusement. “ By the aspirations of the genitive form, *tuirc* becomes ‘ kirk,’ as in Drumkirk, a name of frequent occurrence in Ulster, which represents the Irish *druimthuirc*, ‘ the boar's ridge.’ And when the ‘ t’ is changed to ‘ d’ by eclipse, the termination ‘ dark’ or ‘ nadurk’ is formed, as in Edendurk in Tyrone, ‘ the hill brow of the boars.’ ”—*Joyce's Names and Places*, p. 463.

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