

PAGAN IRELAND.



STUDY of a nation's past is not waste of time though it leave one with little better understanding of the present. No land has more anomalies to show than Ireland, baffles more its own law-givers and puzzles more the persons who hold themselves competent to legislate for it. In the following pages I hope by analysis of the national character in the light of mythology, literature, language, and monuments to indicate what elements have gone to the making of a brave but unfortunate people, and to explain thereby, after a fashion however rude, some of the peculiarities that have alternately charmed and daunted the friends of Erin. The study has been far from a narrow one, and the results apply to a much wider range of people than those within the four provinces. If they are correct, they teach many curious facts regarding the ancestors of nearly every people of Europe and America.

For the past seven centuries Ireland has been so disturbed within by political and religious faction and so interfered with from without that prosperity has not reached it like other lands. As a slender offset, the poverty of the community has kept the restorer's hand from many objects of value to antiquaries; misery has forced the people to turn for relief and consolation to the legends and literature of periods when the population was relatively large and the nation more on terms of equality with the rest of Europe. Persecution of heathen customs and beliefs by Christian converts a thousand years ago, gentle though it was compared with the same movement elsewhere, attached the Irish to their ancient superstitions. Much more did Protestant bigotry, confounding the remains of heathenism with Roman Catholicism, beget in the masses a love for all national records. The very rage of men who hunted priests and ruined the family owning a book in the old tongue, treated hedge-poet and hedge-schoolmaster as felons, and dragooned a peasantry restive under an oligarchy upheld by the British Parliament, was of service to us in causing the folk to esteem, as under happier circumstances they never would have esteemed, the records of their past.

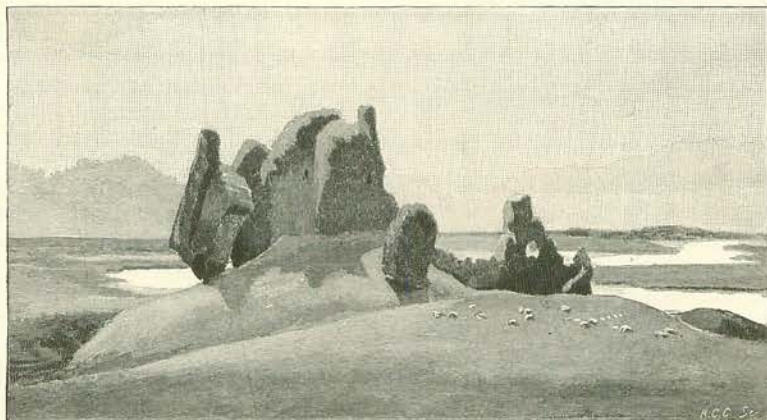
Geographical circumstances are such that traits, habits, customs, laws, legends, and religious ideas which once existed in Europe at large, but more particularly in the Baltic provinces, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark,

and France, are now to be found alive only in remote places like Ireland, or embedded in such a literature as Ireland owns—one of the most wonderful in Europe. Noting the map, you find the island westward in the Atlantic, yet near enough to southern Gaul to make it certain that from very remote periods commerce and conquest would flow to and fro past Land's End as well as by way of Britain. Hence Ireland would receive the overflow of each folk-wave of Europe, but not always and of necessity across the Irish Sea. Great Britain is protected by the Silver Streak; but the fame of the Irish strait for wrecks, the sinister name of the country for witchcraft in early centuries, and the supposed ferocity of its denizens, gave Ireland double security. The force of the wave would be apt to be spent, the conquerors relatively few, the area conquered small, and the chance of the overthrown to survive relatively good compared with nations in France and Germany. Had Ireland been much smaller, there had been less energy to rise after conquest and assimilate the intruders. Had she been much larger, she would have been invaded by greater hordes. Had she been less fertile, she had lacked the means to foster literature and the arts, for there had been no margin for rewards to poets, historians, priests, artisans. Her records had not been so abundant as to survive in any quantity, but would have disappeared like those of Scotland and Wales—countries of small size, mixed of much the same ethnic elements. We find in her history the beach-marks of movements in Europe which have left elsewhere few signs. Hence from Ireland we may be able to reconstruct the past, not of the Irish alone, but of the Welsh, Scotch, Old British, and Gauls, and of other peoples less near of kin. Her literature is a storehouse for the understanding of that *officina gentium* in dread of which the Latins stood and which included many other peoples beside the Teutons.

That "Eriu," as the island was called by the natives, should retain many traces of the pagan past is remarkable when we recall that Christianity reached it very early. It is true that in the ninth century heathen hordes from the Baltic cut a wide swath, plundering as well for revenge as for booty. Charlemagne had barbarously slaughtered their heathen kindred on the Rhine "for the love of God"; so the adventurers singled out religious settlements and cemeteries as much for the plunder of al-

tars and graves as for the pleasure of slaying priests and monks. Where an old castle shattered by gunpowder in the Cromwellian wars overlooks a plain of river-stretches, fat meadows, arable lands, and bog at Clonmicnois, on the Shannon, a famous leader of exiles from the Baltic seized the monastery church and schools. He has been identified from Icelandic

cessions to the people after acceptance from the chiefs. Undoubtedly a few cases of the violent destruction of idols occurred. One large image was broken by Patrick somewhat as in Germany at a later period Charlemagne destroyed the Irminseul, a Keltic *dallan*, or monolith, taken over from the ousted Kelts by the Saxons when the latter moved into the heart of Germany.

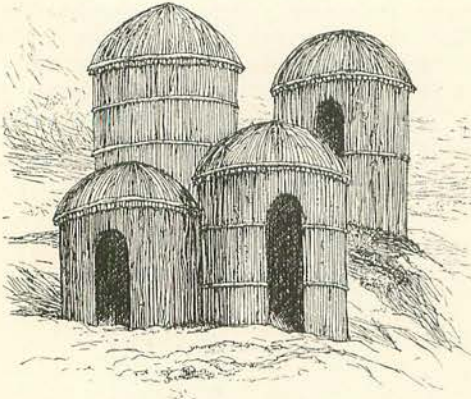


MEDIEVAL CASTLE AT CLONMICNOIS.

records as Ragnar Lodbrog, the conqueror of Northumberland. A woman who accompanied him held pagan rites there. Seated on the high altar, which ran with the blood of men and beasts, she gave prophetic answers like one of the Druidesses mentioned in the Gaelic records of centuries before. Ota, her given name, means "awe" or "horror"; but she has been identified also as Aslaug, daughter of Sigurd, who sailed away with Ragnar in the character of a Valkyr, or war goddess. Had Ragnar understood the Irish and known how thin the varnish of Christianity was, he might have called forth the paganism in the people and established his line as overlords of the island. But he took the Irish at their word, and slaughtered them as Christians until his rule disappeared in blood, as it was founded. According to the native records he was slain at last by youths in the dress of girls. So it came about that the Danish invasions, as they were called, left no heathen mark behind them on the laws and religion; they merely caused certain changes in architecture and town life, which may wait to be explained. The men of the Baltic who settled later in Ireland, founding the chief cities,* Dublin, Wexford, Waterford, Cork, and Limerick, were nominally Christian. No, the paganism of Ireland was completely blent with Christianity before these "Danes" arrived. As introduced by St. Patrick three centuries before, it was a most primitive faith, unsupported by armies or by influence and forced to win a way by con-

The Irish idol, surrounded by satellites which may have signified the months or seasons of the year, was called Crom, the Maggot, in allusion, it is said, to the flesh of human victims with which it was fed according to Druidic rite. About it was the Bloody Plain, so called because the pagans mutilated forehead, nose, and arms by beating themselves against the ground, or cutting themselves in other parts of the body with knives. So the civilized Indians of Mexico and Yucatan worshiped gods of fire and the sun; so the nations of Palestine, not excluding the Hebrews, sought merit by the infliction of wounds. Horrors and infamies like these the Church attacked; she waged war against the burning alive for theft, infidelity, and other crimes, against the immolation of children, and polygamy. But in general the Church was too weak to carry matters with a high hand. Even more than in Italy and Gaul she adopted diplomatic methods perforce; but having once established herself, the native Church was hostile to further changes from any source whatsoever. Hence by a wise toleration of the bards, legends, customs, and least obnoxious rites, and even of some idols, the Church established herself and at the same time preserved for us the greater part of what we know of Keltic paganism.

When the land-hungry band of Welsh and Norman barons entered Ireland they found a shrine of St. Brigit at Kildare with a fire kept constantly burning. Twenty nuns watched it in rotation day and night; the man who dared

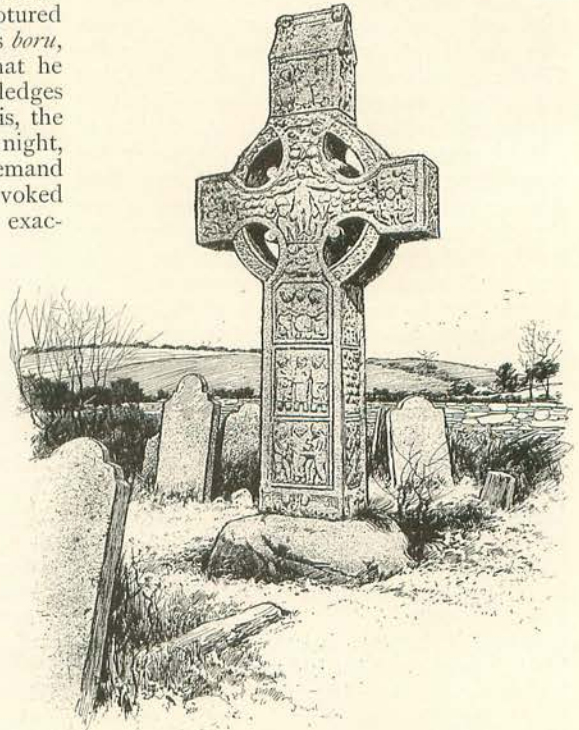


WICKER HOUSES FROM THE COLUMN OF ANTONINUS.
(BY PERMISSION OF WILLIAMS & NORGATE.)

to enter its inclosure fell dead. St. Brigit represents a patroness of learning great in renown among the pagan British and Gauls as well. The latter called her Brigindo; according to votive altars discovered in France and England, the British name was Brigantia. Her rites, as described by Giraldus de Barry, were plainly heathen, and belonged to the worship of fire and the sun. We learn of nature-worship of a primitive cast in the story of Loegairé of Ulster, a powerful king. He favored St. Patrick and caused many of the under-kings to accept the faith; but when he made an oath it was by the gods of the elements. Captured by the Leinstermen while collecting his *boru*, or tribute in cattle, he gave pledges that he would never return for tribute. "Pledges were given to the Leinstermen—that is, the sun and moon, water and air, day and night, sea and land—that he would not demand the *boru* during his life." The curses invoked in case of failure to abstain from his exactions were fatal to Loegairé. Going against Leinster once more for tribute, he "died there of the sun, and the wind, and the other pledges, for one durst not transgress them at that time." Again we hear of another king. "These were the pledges which Tuathal took, mighty at exacting—heaven, earth, sun, pure moon, sea, land, harvest."

A later phase of religion is shown by goddesses who stand for the various emotions of battle. One was called Badb, another Fea, a third Ana, a fourth Morrighu, a fifth Macha, a sixth Neman. The first is found in France on an altar under the form Catubodua, or Badb of battles. In Frisia the Romans were very fitly defeated at Baduhenna, a place that recalls this old Keltic war-goddess. Neman seems

to have struck panic among soldiers and caused them to mistake friend for foe. Macha gave the instinct to mutilate and exult over the slain; but all animate to the slaughter, all are grim and terrible fiends. Compared with the Valkyrs of the Norse they offer every sign of great antiquity. The Valkyrs might be taken from them by a race arrived at a higher stage of cultivation, but they could not derive from the Valkyrs. Undoubtedly there were many members of the Irish pantheon on a lower scale than these, spirits of mountain, valley, and river, whose names occur as famous fairies, male and female, haunting certain spots. Such in Finland were Tapio, god of the forest; Wirokannas, ruler of the wilderness; and Maähiset, the pigmies. Doubtless the pagan elements rose up in Ireland again and again, favored by the destruction of churches and abuses in the Church itself. Parts of the island may have remained untouched by the faith at the very age when Europe was filled with learned and zealous Irish monks carrying the word to heathen Swiss, Flemings, Franks, and Germans. Poets are generally contemptuous of clerics, as the ballads of Oisín and St. Patrick show. In Ireland the guild assumed many of the less obnoxious traits of the Druids; they preserved themselves by outward conformity, but in secret retained a number of magical tricks. By their aid it is that



CROSS AT MONASTERBOICE, SHOWING SUN-WHEEL.

we can pry and probe a little into the dark past of the Kelts and of Europe.

One has but to look at the Irish cross to see paganism in the chief symbol of the faith. The cross part is not Latin, but Greek, and tells a story of the early commerce with the Greek city of Marseilles and the East by the valley of the Garonne; recalls the fact that a special spot in famous Irish fairs was set apart for Greek merchants; that Cæsar re-

instead of a globe. Coins of Gaul of the time of Vercingetorix bear the even-armed cross with florid connections between the ends which represented a four-spoked wheel. The Irishman who saw a bicycle for the first time exclaimed, "Riding on a wheel, like the devil!" In the old paganism, of which he still feels the stirrings, a god whom his ancestors feared rode upon, or carried, a wheel. The priests explained this god to be the devil; certainly devil-



ROUND TOWER AT ARDMORE, SHOWING BANDS LIKE WICKER HOUSES.

ported the use of Greek letters among the Gauls; and that the legends are full of terms like "King of Greece," "Daughter of the Greek King." It suggests the myths of temporary residence, on the part of celebrated founders of Irish nations, in Thrace, Greece, or Egypt. But the Irish cross is as much a wheel as a cross. It is in truth the pagan symbol of the sun's wheel baptized but scarcely disguised, the emblem seen in the hand of bronze images from France, or carved on altars found there with pagan inscriptions. Gauls on the reliefs of the Arch of Orange wear the sun-wheel on their helmets, and a window of stained glass in Chartres Cathedral shows Christ and certain apostles in direct relation with the same symbol. The praying-wheel exists in old chapels in Brittany as a religious toy, formerly used with rites half magical under the sanction of the local clergy. In old Greece a Nemesis was depicted with a wheel; Fortuna also was placed sometimes on a wheel

ish were some of his attributes and devilish the toll he exacted; wherefore by way of legend, or by a subtler road, the modern peasant saw the analogy and with his customary shrewdness spoke.

The pagan survives in architecture. Buildings were generally square and of wood, or round and of wattles plastered with clay and painted in bright colors. After Christianity was established and the use of stone became less rare in religious and military life, the conservative bent of the people kept a form of tower no longer represented in Great Britain and the mainland. As early as the twelfth century, when the Norman-Welsh began to make stone the rule instead of the exception, Giraldus, the traveled prelate, talks of ecclesiastical towers, "which according to the custom of the country are slender and lofty and moreover round." He knew that they were peculiar but did not suspect that this form of tower represented an inheritance from a pagan religion

any more than he saw the paganism of the rites at the shrine of St. Brigit. Yet unlettered Irish tradition has kept the thread of fact without being able to give the historical sequences. In its immediate use the round tower was a sort of military necessity, and came after the ruin of monastic settlements by the pagans from the Baltic. During sudden raids it was a place of security which could not be burned down like the timber churches near by or the wattled cabins of monks and clerics within the *cashel* wall. It was a belfry whence hand-bells were rung to call the students to school and the faithful to prayer. It was a watch-tower and beacon. But it reaches through military usage back to pagan times. In a polished and highly artificial shape, due to Byzantine science in architecture, it represents the rude wattled house of Gauls. Seeing how the Irish kept heathen ideas in other things, we can perceive

last century perceived but could not define. In America the round tower, with its high entrance and adaptation to watchers and sun worship, is found among the extinct cliff-dwelling Indians. Towers in Mexico and Yucatan were in use for the same purpose. Observe in the round tower preserved at Ardmore the bands which repeat, without any useful object in stone, the horizontal bands that strengthened the tall wicker house of Gauls. Such apparently trivial points weigh heavily in favor of the indigenous character of the round tower of Ireland.

Carved figures of a grotesque barbarousness too unseemly to be reproduced have been found about the island, even in the walls of a church. They are the degraded remains of a worship of the creative processes of nature overlooked in the first zeal of iconoclasm. For an island without snakes that reptile has strange prominence in carved and illuminated work of Christian times. Cross and grave-stone bore the emblem of Christ, but on the sides of the shaft appeared the pagan decorative designs to which the sculptor was accustomed, which the people had inherited, and which they dimly understood as lucky. As the coarsest figure might leer with goggle eyes and protruding tongue from the chapel wall, finding protection under the wing of the conservative church of Ireland, so the serpent emblems invaded the margins of missals and rubrics of Holy Writ, and were not only preserved but were fashioned by Christian monks, scarcely aware that these were to teach us something of the pagan past. Gaulish reliefs have the serpent in connection with a Keltic god, perhaps representing night and death. In the Kalewala, Hisi, spirit of evil, a pagan Satan, creates the serpent from the spittle of Suoyatar, a female demon.



UPPER STONE OF QUERN, WITH SUN-WHEEL DECORATION.

how the round wicker house of the Kelt, such as we see it carved on the column of Antoninus at Rome, developed into the wood and wicker outlook tower and beacon, and in skillful hands became the Irish round tower perpetuated to our day by the hundred or more shafts of cut stone which lend charm to as many Irish landscapes. Christian in usage, they are pagan in design. The Northmen caused the demand, heathenism supplied the pattern, and Byzantine craftsmen, driven from the East by the bigotry of the image-breaking emperors, supplied the science to rear towers more durable, useful, simple, yet stately, than anything Ireland had seen before or has seen since. The history of towers in Mohammedan countries which can be derived from a worship of the heavenly bodies supplies a very remarkable parallel which the archæologists of the

Hisi heard this conversation
 Ever ready with his mischief,
 Made himself to be creator,
 Breathed a soul into the spittle
 To fell Suoyatar's fierce anger.
 Thus arose the poison-monster.¹

Pagan altar-horns found in Denmark show many serpents in those compartments which are thought to represent the realm of death and hell. How are we to account for the pertinacity with which the old Irish held fast to beliefs, traditions, and objects which belong to a past epoch and have relations with races and peoples who seem disconnected from the Keltic past?

We speak for convenience of the past of Ireland as Keltic. What gives us warrant so to do? Not the historians, who are more anxious

¹ J. M. Crawford's translation.

to call only the best of the old swarms Gaelic than to claim them all. Not the wider view of Europe and Asia which is now entertained, for that does not warrant a likelihood that one race settled Ireland. Soon the term will be inadequate to express it, when the many-colored threads that form the present Irish nation shall be unraveled and separately examined. Analysis that should start from the present day backward would bring into relief a steady influx of English, Welsh, and Scotch allured by the comparative cheapness of land at certain periods. It would consider the plantations formed in Ulster by London corporations, the confiscations under William III., which brought English, German, and Dutch blood into the land. After Cromwell's campaign there was a wholesale peopling of the best lands of the dispossessed by soldiers and colonists from England, and the same thing occurred at other times on a less extensive scale. Before Elizabeth and Henry VIII., the conquerors of parts of the island, with their men of Welsh, Flemish, and Norman blood, were merged into the Keltic mass — and yet only seven centuries have been traversed. Were these the only inroads of foreign blood one might think that according to ordinary rules of intermarriage, and notwithstanding strong prejudices of rank and race, there could hardly be in Ireland to-day such a person as a Kelt of pure stock.

But before 1172, when an English king first assumed to own the island, the same infusion of non-Irish blood went forward. Scandinavian princes ruled at Dublin, Wexford, Waterford, Cork, Limerick, and Galway, intermarrying with Irish ruling houses, and setting an example to their subjects. Scotch armies came to Ireland, and Irish troops went to Alba, as we see in Shakspeare. Slavery was the rule at a still earlier date; the raids by sea brought "foreign bond-women" into Ireland from all the shores, and the slave-trade supplied Irish markets with women and children from the Saxon provinces of Great Britain. Yet for all that Ireland remained Keltic in spirit if not pure in blood, because the people assimilated the settlers, wave after wave. At various times Gaelic drove out Norse, Norman-French, and English.

Before Christian times, at any rate, one might expect to find all pure Kelts. Yet the deeper we probe the less certain is it that the first centuries of our era saw Ireland occupied throughout by Gaels. Doubtless the language was Gaelic in the main. But the written language during the Middle Ages proves that Gaelic was not the soft, slurring tongue that we now hear, "telescoping" syllables and avoiding harsh meetings of consonants. It must have been a rough, consonantal speech full of harsh gutturals, or these would never



ROUND TOWER AT MAYAPAN, YUCATAN. INDIAN TYPE.

have found their way into the written words. The common German, who turns hard *g* into *y* and melts two syllables into one, is a purist compared with the Gael, who thinks nothing of making a word of three syllables but one in pronunciation, who turns *b* into *m*, *t* into *h*, *g/h* into *y*, and otherwise departs in his speech from the letters laid down centuries ago as the proper spelling of words. Wherefore the change? The answer is one of many that may result from the view of Ireland's past taken in this paper. It also affords by analogy an explanation of the similar but less extreme phenomenon observed in the speech of uneducated Germans to-day.

In Ireland each century saw the educated classes who spoke Gaelic as it was written abandon it for Latin, or for Norman-French, or for English. Each century it was left more and more to the uneducated commons. Now if the commons were largely descended from quite another race, on whom the Gaels had imposed their tongue and yoke; if from that other language, which they had lost, they retained what disappears last,—tricks of the tongue, inability to pronounce certain consonants, dislike to hear certain combinations of sound, a fashion of telescoping words and avoiding sounds that cannot easily be sung,—then the fashions of speech peculiar to the vanished language would live on in the tongue of the conquerors. As the servile class became free, it would affect the speech of the whole nation;

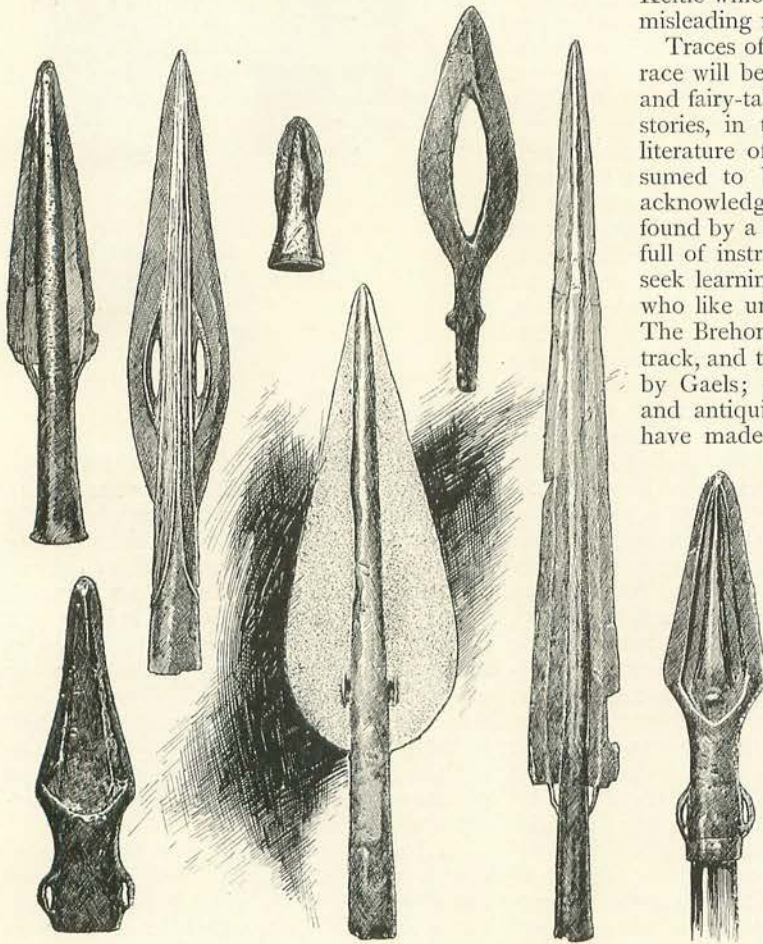
as the upper classes ceased to speak their own language, the corrupted or modified Gaelic would become the standard. This has happened to the Irish.

There were certain tribes—some enslaved, others tributary, others almost free—who were not Kelts originally, and in former epochs did not speak a Keltic tongue. There is reason to believe that the Picts were not Keltic and that they lived in Ireland and Britain before the

demi-gods, the heroes and famous ancestors of the subject tribes, would enter more into the mass of legend and song; but the revolutionists would be too divided into local bands and too mixed with Gaelic tribes reduced to their level by poverty and war to permit of any national feeling apart from the Gaels. So the Saxons were forced to accept Norman-French, and the modern Irish, for the most part, to learn that mixture of Saxon, Norman, and Keltic which we know under the misleading name of English.

Traces of an early non-Keltic race will be found in the legends and fairy-tales, ghost and specter stories, in the wonderful heroic literature of the island, once assumed to be non-existing, then acknowledged but neglected, now found by a delighted world to be full of instruction for those who seek learning, and color for those who like unhackneyed literature. The Brehon law also shows their track, and the histories composed by Gaels; the arts, architecture, and antiquities, moreover, which have made Ireland a rich field

for the archæologist. Legends and ballads resting on a substratum of fact can be used to piece out the bare hints of history. Working thus, the ethnologist may find spots where the early non-Keltic blood is, if not pure, yet relatively strong, and detect the presence of a primitive race in the features and skulls of the people. A short, broad nose, a long upper lip, a thin or late developing beard, high



JAVELIN AND SPEAR HEADS FROM THE RIVERS.

coming of the Kelts. What we know of these earliest historical people is minimized by the neglect of Gaelic historians and by their hostility. Thus they have attributed bestial traits to the leaders of these tribes when they revolted and massacred the nobles. One is called Cat-head, another Doghead; frightful calamities befell river and plain, cow, fish, and orchard, while they held sway. Such temporary risings could not reestablish their old tongue; only, the foreign elements in Gaelic emanating from their tribes would be intensified; the gods and

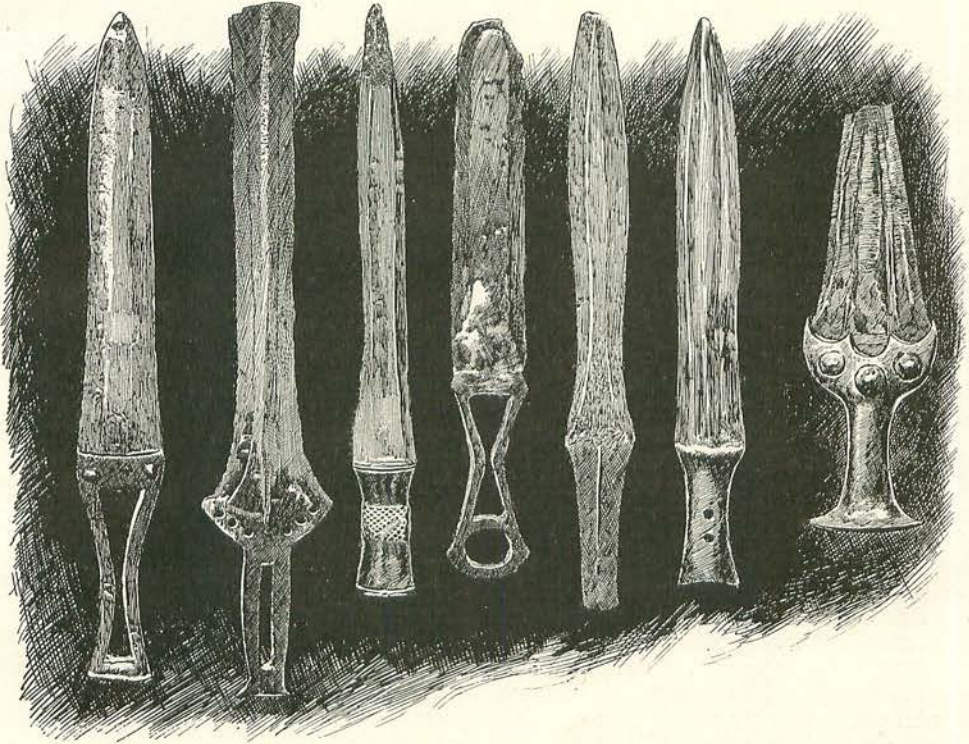
cheek-bones, short muscular figure, round head, broad face with small projecting chin, brownish or yellowish complexion, and a tendency to dark and red hair, with gray eyes, are characteristics that may serve as guides to a large infusion of this non-Keltic blood, rather than as sure signs of it. There are traces in the Hebrides and the north of Scotland, but evictions and sheep-pastures have reduced it to very small proportions.

Let us see what distinctions have been made in the population of Ireland in former times.

In 1650 Macfirbis, the last of a distinguished family of historians in the West, a man of immense industry and research, quotes from an old book this "distinction which the profound historians draw" between Milesians, Dananns, and Firbolgs:

Every one who is white of skin, brown of hair, bold, honorable, 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 Milesius in Erinn.

blood under Cromwell there existed traditions of differences in complexion and size between at least three streams of pagan settlers. Judging from internal evidence the composer of the rule thought that Milesians and Dananns were Gaels, the Firbolgs not. They were undoubtedly the least Gaelic, and in his opinion little better than the crowd of serfs and peasants who were not worthy of mention. The Danann folk were much better, though tainted with magic and Druidism. The sons of Miledh formed his



BRONZE SWORDS WITH BRONZE HANDLES, PAGAN EPOCH.

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 Dé Danann in Erinn.

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 in Erinn.

Whoever composed this ready rule to find an Irishman's ancestry from his looks and character, it is certain that he was not a Firbolg. Though fierce with antique hatreds, it is proof that before the last great infusion of foreign

standard of all that is most excellent in Kelts. Roughly this division would tally with a cross-section of medieval society, the Milesians, being nobles and gentry, on top; the Dananns, professional and tradesmen and artisans, in the middle; the Firbolgs, ignorant and brutalized peasantry, at the bottom. Yet it preserves the traditional prejudices of the Gael. Note that the Milesians, who are posed as princes and nobles after the European ideals of the Middle Ages, "bountiful in the bestowal of property, wealth, and rings,"—the substitute for coin,—are white-skinned, brown-haired men, not remarkable for size. That describes certain types found in the south and west of Ireland as well as on the opposite shores of France and down the coast of Spain. We can fancy the Milesians, who came last, greatly softened by Greek and Latin example before reaching

the island. The description of the Danann folk is very like that given of the Gauls and other Keltic tribes who invaded Italy. A race hated, as inextinguishable as that between Iran and Turan, the Aryans and Ugrians of Asia, is the only thing that will fully account for the bitterness of the description of the Firbolgs. It might have been written by a Persian wishing to blacken the Turkman who has ravaged his land, and whom he thinks "guileful, noisy, contemptible, mean, strolling, unsteady, harsh, and inhospitable."

The head of the Irish pantheon was the "good god" Dagdé, who was in some respects like Saturn, in others like Thor, but oftener a comical character—a very old man who fed on porridge. As Thor was the head of the Asa gods, as Ukko was the venerable chief of the Finnic pantheon, so Dagdé, before he was degraded to the rank of a fairy, was a god like Saturn, venerable, but outshone by his children. Later he became like Wainamoinen, the god-like bard of Finland. He was old like him, a magician, but unlucky in various ways.

More nearly a parallel to Hermes was Lug, the god from whom the cities of Lyons and Leyden derive their names; but he had specialists under him for various arts—Diancecht, patron of physicians; Creidné, patron of bronze-workers; Goibniu, the marvelous blacksmith; Luchtiné, the god of carpenters. A subterranean king of fairies, who was probably once a god, was Midir. A kind of Minerva, but the mother of a triplet of literary gods, was Brig or Brigit. The Isle of Man is named from Manannan, a Neptune afterwards reduced to a trader of magical powers. By the ninth century these gods had become humanized to such an extent that they seem heroes merely, fairies or magicians, and supplied that varied celestial and aerial fauna which delights us in the epic of Spenser, some of Shakspeare's plays, the great Italian narrative poems, and the works of troubadours and trouvères. The variations in rank from full god to ordinary human being have given archæologists much trouble; for how is one to know at what date a story was composed and whether the author regarded a figure as that of a god or a man? Very singular are the problems in historical perspective presented by these tales.

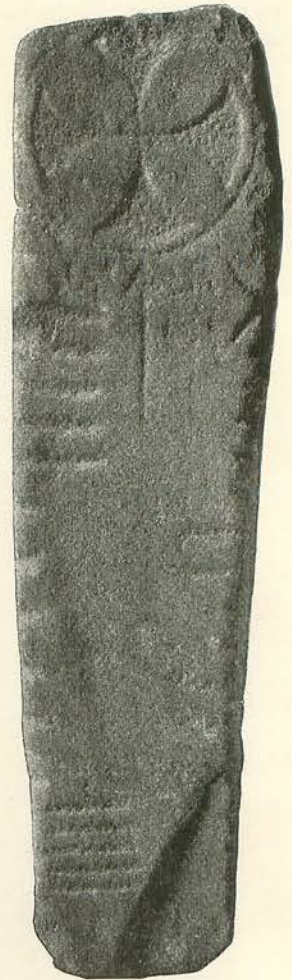
We have authority for assigning to the people called Dé Danann (of the goddess Dana) the war-goddesses named already; for in the campaigns between Dananns and Firbolgs these among them fight on the side of the former: Badb, Macha, and Morrighu. The god of eloquence, Ogma, was also a power in their camp. From his name comes *ogam*, which was an ancient writing, a secret jargon, and also a

cipher which was notched on the edges of pillar-stones above men's graves, as in the illustration. Observe that this stone has three pagan sun symbols. Below the large wheel, on each side of the arrow, is a *swastika*, or sun-mark, very much obliterated by weather. This was the Hercules Ogmios whose picture Lucian saw—that Gaulish god wearing the trappings of the classic hero, but old, bent, bald, and dragging along a crowd of men by chains fastened to the tip of his tongue. From the goddess from whom the *tuatha* or people Dé Danann got their name, descends the word Denmark, though the present Danes may have little of the blood of that old swarm which passed by northern Britain into

Ireland. The Danish swamps have yielded weapons, horns, and chariots used in religious processions, whose appearance and decorations tally marvelously with the accounts of such things in the Irish tales. Doubtless they were preserved in heathen sanctuaries in Denmark long after their general use went out elsewhere. A few of these deities we can give to the Danann tribes, but of the other gods, demigods, and deified great men it is hard to say to what swarm they belong. It is more profitable for the present to search history for grander subdivisions of the Irish people.

In his sketch of the Finnic language the Finlander Kellgren made forty years ago a patriotic but it may be not unprophetic claim:

If any language in the Ural-Altai family can be assumed as a prototype of the others, and as a complete expression of their common character, this place of honor ought to be allowed the Finnic. It is the



PAGAN GRAVESTONE, WITH SUN SYMBOLS AND OGAM CIPHER.

only one to which enough quiet has been permitted to unfold without interruption its natural spirit. Ever attacked by alien nations, the Hungarians have inhabited in constant disquiet and continuous warfare one of the great fighting-grounds of diverse nations, and their speech has not been able to develop itself pure from alien elements. The Turks have been overpowered by the strength of a foreign culture. In its first budding the development and power of their language was interfered with. It is the Finnic folk alone, protected by the situation of its country, which has been able to evolve organically and uninfluenced, in the deep shade of the woods and by the silent lakes of the home-land, a language protected by the ballads of the past. I do not think that I am carried away by fallacious hope when I announce the expectation that many a bright ray will fall from the Finnic tongue upon the still obscure realm of languages belonging to its widely separated stock, and that therefore Finnic deserves something more than the interest of the specialist.

The Keltic tongues belong to the Aryan group, the same family of languages as the Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, and Gothic; yet the Irish branch shows certain rudimental likenesses to the Finno-Ugrian or Ural-Altaic. Old Gaelic holds to modern Irish somewhat the position that early English does to our tongue. It is much more elaborate and requires a special study. Yet modern as well as ancient Irish shows a number of points of similarity with Finnic, and occasional likenesses to Hungarian and Turkish, chiefly in matters of pronunciation; to a less degree in the formation of the sentence. The verb, for instance, takes precedence in the sentence, being the most important part thereof, whilst in German it brings up the rear. The vowel of the first syllable of a word is apt to give the sound for the succeeding syllables. That contraction of several written sounds into one spoken syllable, which I have called telescoping; that change of certain consonants at the beginning of words when another word precedes, which is so marked in modern Irish and seems to have existed to some degree at least in old Gaelic; that sensitiveness to the harsh sounds of many consonants coming together—these are fundamental in Finnic. Such indications, coming together with the hints from history and the arts, are enough to change our view of the Keltic make-up of the Irish.

It is the Finno-Ugrian section of mankind which seems to have held Ireland before the Kelts—that section which includes the Hungarians, Turks, Bulgarians, Finns of Russia and Sweden, Lapps and Uighurs of Central Asia. It was once represented in Asia Minor by the people of Sumir and Accad, plain and mountain, who gave to Chaldea and Assyria their impulse in the arts and sciences, of whose mythology the Old Testament is full. Traces of them exist in nearly every part of Europe:

in Italy as the basis of the Etruscan nation which furnished the Latins with kings, laws, and religion; in Spain to this day among certain hill-tribes red-haired, short, gray-eyed, slow-witted; in Germany among the Pommeranians and Courlanders; and in Russia very pure and unadulterate, among the Finns and Lapps. Nor is Great Britain without them, especially in north Scotland and Wales. Imagine Europe spread thinly with comparatively peace-loving nomads, worshiping the sun and fire, fearing fetiches; idolaters addicted to certain grave vices, and very crude as regards morality, but on the whole a fine race. Into their scattered tribes penetrate the Kelts with a stronger civilization; active minded; belligerent; more chivalrous to their own women; given to agriculture, but passionately fond of roving; not skilled in the arts and magical sciences. Imagine these conquering in most countries—only to be split in turn by wedges of Teutons and Slavs. Somewhere in the Ural district, it may be, the Finns escaped slavery from these swarms, and learned to hate and fear their kindred, the Lapps, as sorcerers and guileful folk who met ruse with ruse, as we see them shadowed forth in the runes of the Kalewala. Thus they brought with them to the Baltic the traditions, habits, and customs of a Central Asian race untouched by alien influences. The renown of Finns and Lapps for magic in northern Europe is like that of Britons in Gaul at Cæsar's time. When ill, the Tsar Ivan the Terrible sent to Lapland for two witches to cure him. Other branches of the same stock had a like sinister fame, namely the Chaldæans and Etruscans. The softness of Italian compared with Latin may come from the rise of this soft-spoken stratum of Italy's population during the centuries when education ceased. Thus on all sides are evidences of the unity of an underlying race forced to accept other tongues, whose trace can still be pursued in the greatest literary monuments of the world—the Bible, Homer, the Kalewala, Shah-Nameh, and the epical and legendary compositions of the old Gaels.

Native historians have left hints of aborigines belonging to this stock, if one burrow beneath the grotesque derivations from Palestine, Greece, and Egypt which later fashions, chiefly Christian, have added to the records. Partholon was the first permanent settler, just three hundred years after the Deluge! yet he had to fight hunter and fisher tribes for a lodgment. Curiously enough, in the name of these aboriginal tribes there is a Ugrian touch. Their ruler was descended, we learn, from a king of the Ughmor mountains, which Eugene O'Curry calls the ancient Gaelic name for the Caucasus! The Cyclopean fort on the Arann Islands, off

Galway, was built by a son of Ughmor, famous for his poisoned spear,—a trait of various hated foes of the Gaels,—and a Fomorian, or sea-robber, of the race that fortified Tory Island, on the north coast. The name is Uighur if the *m* is softened into a *w* according to Gaelic practice. This is a fair hint that the Fomorians, in whom Professor de Jubainville sees little more than a fabulous race of night and fog demons, have at least some historical reality to stand on. Tory Island has been supposed to get its name from its “tors,” or pinnacles of rock, or from “tory,” a robber. We can now perceive, however, a likelier origin for the word, whether applied to the island or to the bands of political refugees and malcontents who fled to the bogs of Ulster in troubled times. We find in the Kalewala that Turya was a name for Lapland, or the country of wizards where the Kaleva heroes go to beat the Lapps in magic, and also, singularly enough, to get their brides. Tory Island may well have gained its name when the Finno-Ugrians still spoke their old tongue in Ireland. There, it now appears, they held out as Fomorians—perhaps *Fer-Ughmor*, Uighurmen—against the Gaels, until dislodged with fearful sacrifice of men on both sides. Then arose the ill-fame of Tory Island for witchcraft and pirates. Then it must have been that the word “tory” became fixed in the Irish language as a synonym for robber.

In Asia war has gone on for ages between the Aryans of Iran and the Turks of Turan. In Ireland a similar warfare existed; but it ended ages ago in the obliteration and absorption of the nomads. The great battles of Tura-Plain,—which many think historical, others fabulous,—what are they but campaigns in the warfare of Aryan against Turanian fought at the extreme west of Europe? The very names are the same. Archæologists have been deterred from seeing this merely because in the last century men made bold guesses, and in trying to work them out landed, through lack of evidence, in obvious absurdities. It is time to examine with composure even the writings of General Vallancey, and give that much-abused archæologist credit wherever it is deserved.

This clue in hand, we can explore many labyrinths of Ireland's past hitherto unthreadable. Startling resemblances between old Irish and Hebrew customs, which caused native writers to assert direct emigrations from Palestine, are explainable through ideas coming to the Jews from Chaldeans and those coming to the Kelts from their Ugrian ancestors. The bloody and horrible rites of Phenicians found again in Ireland do not mean a colony from Carthage, but result from like traditions among ancient men of the same stock living far apart.

It explains many things in the arts and architecture of the island.

The pagan literature of Ireland may be divided provisionally into an earlier and a later epoch. The earlier may be called the “Mab-Cuchulinn” period, to which most of the extravagant giant and fairy stories with traits like those in the Finnic Kalewala may be assigned. In the feast of Bricriu Poison-tongue, the hero Cuchulinn appears under the most savage aspect. He cuts down harmless workmen nine at a time out of pure deviltry, strolls through the country on head-hunting tours like a Dyak of Borneo, demands the daughters of his temporary hosts for his pleasure, meets a princess and carries her off, stops the enchanted spear of her father by magic, and is cursed by him to wander till he can solve certain riddles. In doing so he combats goblins and sea-witches, who are counterparts of Grendel of the Marshes and Grendel's mother in the Anglo-Saxon lay of *Béowulf*. Queen Meave, or Mab, and her husband Ailil are the royal persons round whom many extravagant stories revolve. They seem to belong to the fairy race Danann, while the champion Cuchulinn is their enemy, appearing to be a *Firbolg*. Celtic traits exist in plenty, but many features are Finnic, after the spirit of the Kalewala. Cuchulinn fights the whole army and court of Meave, just as *Wainamoinen* and his fellow-heroes proceed alone to cope with the magic and armed bands of *Louhi*, the fell hostess of *Pohjola*.

The later pagan ballads we will call the *Fion-Oisín* cycle, because *Fion*, or *Find*, the hero round whom the adventures of the Fenian troops have crystallized, is generally the chief actor or singer, while very often the words are put in the mouth of *Oisín*, his son, the *Ossian* of Macpherson's late Gaelic poems. Here belong the ballads in which *Oisín*, a revenant from the Land of Eternal Youth at the time of *St. Patrick*, recites to him the adventures of the Fenians with a rumble of hatred against bell, book, priests, and hymns which is extremely humorous and diverting. The doings and sayings of *Fion* are only a little less Finnic than those of *Cuchulinn*. There is the same invincibility through magical arts, the swords that kill of themselves, the harness dipped in poison to make it spear-proof. As one reads the Kalewala in the recent translation by *Dr. J. M. Crawford*:

Mother dear, my gray-haired mother,
Wilt thou straightway wash my linen
In the blood of poisoned serpents,
In the black blood of the adder?
I must hasten to the combat,
To the campfires of the Northland,
To the battlefields of Lapland.

There is the same bold wooing and violent abduction of brides, and restoration of wounded heroes by magical means. The methods of the physician partook of the practice of Siberian *shamans* or Indian medicine-men, though the profession stood very high when learning flourished in Ireland and languished elsewhere. In one tract we read how the learned Fionin (little Fion) is called to heal a chief who has been badly wounded, but an enemy has secretly bribed his attendant to put certain objects in the wounds, which have healed over. Fionin approaches the wicker house with four pupils, the number to which he is legally entitled, and hears three groans in succession from this Irish Philoktetes.

"What groan is that?" asks Fionin of his first pupil.

"It is from a poisoned barb."

"And what groan is that?" he demands of the second scholar.

"It is from a hidden reptile."

"And what groan is that?"

"It is from a poisoned seed," answers pupil number three.

Fionin then enters and cuts open the wounds, extracts from one a poisoned barb, from another a reptile, from a third a seed, and the chief gets well. This is evidence that the native

doctor used the same jugglery we find among the Indians when the medicine-man pretends to extract some object from his patient and by so doing often encourages him back to health. Customs that have hardly disappeared from Finland and Ireland, or are fresh in tradition, existed in both countries, such as putting children out to fosterage, blood-brotherhood,—a rite whereby champions bound themselves closer than by natural ties of birth,—keening and wailing the dead, domestic slavery, burial of objects to help the spirit on its way, tools and weapons of bronze, and utensils of wood much the same in shape. Morality of a very lax type among chiefs and of a higher sort among peasants is alike found, as well as a confusion between the human being and animals—each and all traits and resemblances which would mean little taken separately, but which aid materially the argument when all the other similarities are considered.

But a fuller statement of the manners and customs, the myths and legends, which point to a vanished Turanian race in Ireland must be deferred for the present. I hope to show that in one way or another many puzzling points in the history of Ireland and the character of her people can be solved by means of this key.

Charles de Kay.



A FIRE OPAL.

IRIS dwells in thee and throws
Rays of leaf-green and of rose,
Limpid amber courseth through
Violet glooms of fading hue.

Opal, well surnamed of fire,
If some stranger should inquire
Whence thy swift caprices came,—
Morn-mist closing evening-flame,—
Do thou kindling answer bring,
Many-passioned lambent thing!
Say with cosmic throe was born
All thy life of love and scorn,
Yet not chance but deathless law
Bred thy beauty from a flaw.
Speak thou, too, with perfect art,
For wild Genius' burning heart,
Whose perfection springs, like thine,
From some touch of scath divine.

Edith M. Thomas.