WOMAN IN EARLY IRELAND.

AN IRISH CHILD OF THE UPPER CLASS.

IT has become the fashion to say that a civilization may be measured by the treatment it accords to woman. Hence it may profit to look a little into the position of woman in ancient Ireland so far as one may penetrate the darkness of the past and in such measure as can be given here. The Irish woman of to-day might well inspire a wish to know something of her ancestresses, if it were only to learn whence her qualities are derived; for the women of no country surpass and those of few lands equal her in charm of face and manner, modesty and decorum, brightness and strength of wits. We need not rest our belief concerning the attractiveness of Irish women upon modern statements, nor upon the Lady Blessingtons and Anne Boleyns, nor upon Irish princesses famous in medieval ballads like Kudrun of Ireland in the German poem and Iseult of Ireland in that of France. We have the great romantic literature of Ireland in part still remaining as witness, together with references to many lost poems and prose tales in which queens and noble ladies take the lead.

A long list of Tochmarca, or "courtships," existed of which the bard was expected to know some by heart, and among which a favorite was the courtship of the Lady Eimer by Cuchulinn. Then there were the Aitide, or elopements, among them a very famous one, the tragedy of Deirdré and the sons of Uisneach, first translated in 1808 and told again in English verse by the late Dr. Joyce of Boston. Then there were the Serca, or loves of gallant men and fair dames. Such tragedies and comedies must have been very popular at fairs and in towns, at moated granges of Gaelic farmers and in the triple-fossed strongholds of chiefs; for though stories of battle, voyage by sea, foray and revenges, are far more numerous, the love-tales were sufficient to warrant Giolla na Naem in characterizing the Gaels of Ireland as remarkable among nations for beauty and amorousness.

The verses attributed to him were translated by Eugene O'Curry from the version given by Macfirbis. The composer starts from Asia Minor and names the nations in succession, the Danes and Picts coming last because known to him by their colonies in Ireland and North Britain.

> For building the noble Jews are found,
> And for truly fierce envy;
> For size the guileless Armenians,
> And for firmness the Saracens;
> For acuteness and valor the Greeks;
> For excessive pride the Romans;
> For dullness the creeping Saxons;
> For haughtiness the Spaniards;
> For covetousness and revenge the French,
> And for anger the true Britons —
> Such is the knowledge of the trees.
> For gluttony the Danes, and commerce;
> For high spirits the Picts are not unknown,
> And for beauty and amorousness the Gaedhils.

The same difficulty we found in drawing the line between god and hero, between mythical allegorical figure and person of history, follows us when we turn to women. A trait that appears very early is the respect paid to women by tradition, showing itself in the large number of female leaders of swarms that invaded Ireland in primitive times. Not only their names are recorded, but where they were buried. Undoubtedly the Gaelic war-goddesses are reflected in some of the queens who fall on the field of battle; or, like Macha Redhair, seize a throne and hold it against all comers; or, like Queen Meave, marrying Ailill for her second spouse, treat their partner with small respect and show him plainly that the woman

THE LAST OF THE FORESTS.

sits the higher on the throne. How much is myth, how much poetic exaggeration, how much history, nobody can tell; but the first pages of the ancient Irish chronicles teem with instances of female prowess and the leadership of women.

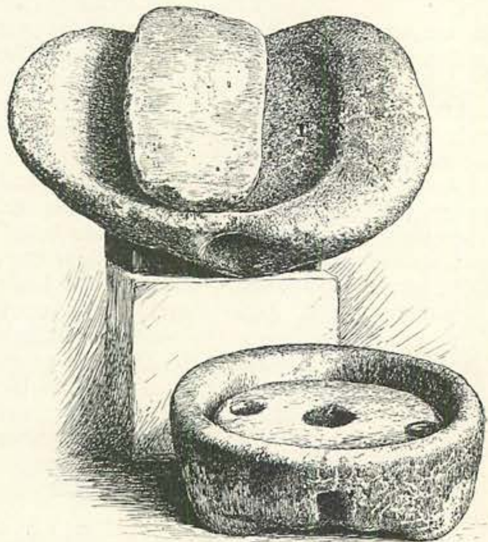
We can be certain, however, that Morrigu, or Great-Queen, was a war-sprite; for in the "Battle of Magh Rath," translated by John O'Donovan and published in 1842 by the Irish Archæological Society, we read of her apparition in the air above the head of the chief king, bent on vengeance for the misdeeds of Congall Claen.

There is over his head shrieking
A lean, nimble hag, hovering
Over the points of their weapons and shields—
She is the gray-haired Morrigu.

Perhaps Morrigu, Badb, and Macha are the "three daughters of the wicked Cain" whom the wise men of the Christian period mention, as quoted by Geoffrey Keating; they occupied Ireland first, and may be the war-goddesses of non-Keltic tribes. But Kesair, "granddaughter of Noah"— was she in any sense a historical person?

She is the first queen to whom Keating refers with confidence, though he was a learned and pious cleric who ought to have protested against a legend which improves on Genesis. For Kesair advised her father Bith to forsake Noah's God and consult an idol, and the idol counseled them to build a ship of their own and put to sea. This they did, with Ladra, Fintann, Barran, and Balba; they remained seven years and a quarter afloat, and landed near Bantry in Cork. Hitherto it has been the rule to smile at such legends, which are put to the account of vainglorious monks of Ireland. But since we have evidence from Babylonia of various versions of the deluge myth, and especially now that the connection of the ancient dwellers in Ireland with the first peoples of Babylonia and the Ugrians and Finns of Russia has been shown in former articles in THE CENTURY MAGAZINE, it is better to examine a legend like this with all seriousness, and debate whether or not the Irish version is not, beneath the biblical varnish, a sister myth preserved in Ireland by a branch of the Finno-Ugrian race instead of a direct imitation of the story we get in the Old Testament. Fintann, who accompanies Kesair, is connected with fish myths similar to those discovered in the present century in old Babylonia and which reappear in the Finnish Kalewala among exploits of Waïnamoïnen.

The earliest immigration myths preserved by Keating point to polygamy. The leadership of women does not preclude, as we know from African examples, both slavery and certain forms of polygamy. Against these the orthodox Keltic, and later on the Roman Catholic Church, waged steady conflict as soon as they came to power. In attacking matters common to man on lower stages of development Christians introduced the Oriental way of looking at woman; they strove to deprive her of much of her freedom of action in order



HAND-MILLS IN THE DUBLIN MUSEUM.

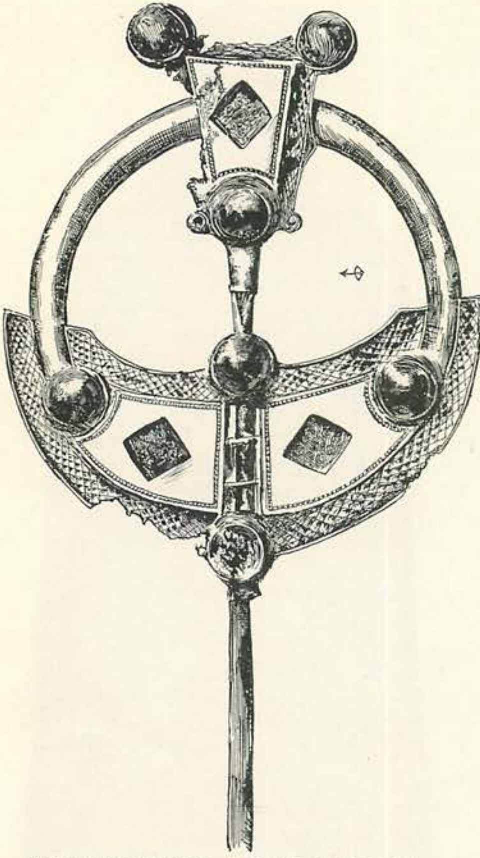
to improve morals; and, while making her chaster, limited very seriously the chances of independent life and the pursuit of a career on the part of a woman of enterprise. Beyond the veil of the Christian centuries woman in Ireland can be found pursuing many of the professions usually monopolized by man. It was as if the Christian priests wanted to get women out of public life as much as possible and cause them to devote most of their leisure to affairs of religion.

But as regards the ordinary woman there was no relief to her toil save the fairs, where trouble was always brewing between the valiant men of different tribes, septs, departments, and where bloodshed was always in order unless some powerful prince kept a strong guard and disarmed all who entered the precincts. The stone quern, or hand-mill, was the badge of the common woman's slavery in Ireland. If there were no slaves, the women of the tribe had to do this hard work; but in the pagan period, and far down into the Christian, "foreign bondwomen" were staples in Ireland. They form one of the commonest articles mentioned in the metrical lists of fines and tributes preserved in the Book of Rights. It is recorded of St. Brigit that her father, the Druid Dubthach, became so incensed with her for giving away property to the poor that he put Brigit in his chariot to dispose of her, saying, "It is not through honor or regard for thee that I am bringing thee into a chariot, but to take thee and sell thee to grind at the quern for Dunlaug, son of Enda, the king of Laigen."[1]

Eri, Fodla, and Banba, three sisters, appear to be mere impersonations of Ireland under female forms; Badb, Macha, and Morighan, or Morrigu, as we have seen, are battle goddesses, such as the Scandinavians called Valkyrs, or Choosers of the Battle. Brighid, the patroness of literature, handed down to Brig, a Druidess and daughter of a famous pagan lawyer, some of her preëminence in wisdom, for she is the Pallas Athene of the ancient Irish. St. Brigit, first Abbess of Kildare, whose father threatened to sell her for a slave, according to the pious legend, may have been a historical character, but her worship carried over many pagan practices, of which perhaps the longest to survive was the divination as to a husband. In the last century, and probably far down into the present, unmarried women of the people used to fashion an effigy of St. Brigit on the eve of the day she rules in the calendar. By various incantations and ceremonies with this puppet they sought to learn who was to be their husband. The magicians of the ancient Finns did the same; modern Samoyeds and Lapps fabricate and conjure with similar puppets, which with us are now relegated to the nursery in the form of the

FINNISH WOMAN IN OLD COSTUME, SHOWING EMBROIDERY, NECKLACES, AND OTHER SILVER AND BRONZE ORNAMENTS SIMILAR TO THOSE FOUND IN IRELAND.
(FROM "THE KALEVALA IN ENGLISH," PUBLISHED BY JOHN B. ALDEN, NEW YORK: ORIGINAL PUBLISHED AT HELSINGFORS BY THE FINNISH LITERARY SOCIETY.)

[1] President W. K. Sullivan has noted the resemblance between *rudzi*, the name for rye among the Letts near the Baltic, and the Irish word *ruadan*. Wheat was called *tarai*. According to Pictet, the Mongolian for wheat is *taràn*.



"HEAVY-HEADED" PIN OF INLAID BRONZE USED BY MEN AND WOMEN.

child's doll. As St. Brigit has the honor of introducing nunneries into Ireland, her appearance in the amiable office of match-maker would not be easy to explain did we not now perceive that the pagans of Ireland, like the pagans of Peru and of Rome, were provided with similar establishments long before nunneries became general. The Vestal virgin did not marry while in office, but she was not debarred forever from matrimony, nor did her vows imply any horror for the married state. Hence the contradiction when a Christian saint took over the rites and superstitions proper to a heathen goddess or priestess. An ancient Gaelic poem in the Burgundian Library of Brussels attributed to this saint begins:

> I should like a great lake of ale
> For the king of kings;
> I should like the family of heaven
> To be drinking it through time eternal.

Another queen whose name signifies a race is Scota, the wife of that Miledh of Spain whose sons led the last great Keltic immigration. She is called the daughter of the king of Egypt, and from her the Scoti of Ireland and northern Britain are fabled to get their name. Certainly this swarm has Egyptian traces, such as the Lady Dil, daughter of Miledh, being also the wife of her brother Donn, like the Ptolemies of Egypt; but marriages of state between brother and sister are not confined to Egypt — they appear in Greek mythology. What is important to note about these earliest queens and heroines is the fact that they engage in battle and are often slain, just like any man of note, by warriors whose names are given in history without a sign of disapproval. They afford a clue to the Amazons of Asia Minor, who have been a great puzzle.

Divorce was easy under the old laws, and the wife took back with her the "tindscra," or marriage portion given by her parents, as well as the "coibche," or reward for her virginity received from the husband. Here are some of the reasons which might be alleged by a quick-tempered or a frail woman as a cause for separation: refusal of her rights in domestic matters, misconduct of her husband with other women, abandonment, a public charge of infidelity, ridicule from her husband, a mark on her person showing maltreatment. If a love-potion had been administered, it might be cited as a cause for leaving the man who gave it. In fine, divorce in heathen Ireland was so easy, and the laws were so favorable to the weaker sex, that the man who "caught a Tartar" must have had every chance of continuing to regret it.

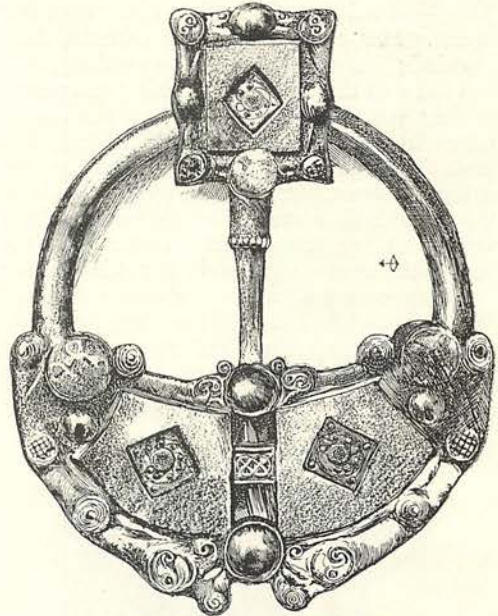
Yet the lateness of date at which we find women fighting in battles is surprising. One of the glories of the Church in Ireland was a law passed by the efforts of St. Adamnan, about A. D. 690, putting a stop to the employment of women in war. The legend runs that he was once carrying his mother on his back near a battle when a woman was seen to thrust a sickle into the breast of another and drag her off the field. Adamnan's mother bade him put her down, and refused to be carried farther until he should swear to free women from such services. This he promised, and at the next grand assembly obtained a passage of the law.

The Sidhe, that race which swallowed up the most important persons of the Firbolg and Dé Danann swarms when the latter gave way before the Kelts under the sons of Miledh, has many female representatives in history and legend. They were called in general Bansidhe, or "banshee," a word which has become narrowed down to a ghost that haunts certain old families and shrieks pitifully when one of the family is about to die. The banshee sometimes gave success to a chief by her wise counsels, sometimes lured him into vice, as did Shin, a banshee who seduced Muircheartach, son of Erca, a monarch who repudiated his wife

and drove his own children from Cleitech, his palace on the Boyne. In the Four Masters we hear of this king, A. D. 524, killing Sidhe (fairy), son of Dian (god). But under the date 526 we read of the revenge. For it appears that Shin was the daughter of Sidhe, and made love to her father's slayer until he had destroyed his home as we have seen. Then she burned his palace over his head and brought him to a terrible end.

The male fairy is a Fearsidhe (farshee). He would sometimes solicit and obtain aid from human beings in his wars with other supernatural tribes, just as the gods of Olympus were aided by Hercules. We know now that the Sidhe were early peoples and their gods, incorporated into the following races, who assumed in the eyes of the latter the character of supernaturals living in hills and under the water. Heathen Turks and Tatars of southern Siberia still worship their gods Kudai; on the Volga the Chuwasses worship Sjudtunzi. We find under the Arctic Circle and among the Finns and other "Altaic" or Turanian tribes of Russia the same belief in "Tshuds," or vanished supernatural inhabitants of the land, pointing to the same mixture of ideas we find in Ireland concerning dispossessed peoples of a different tongue but high civilization whose record remains only in legend. The "shee" of Ireland is the same word we find in Asia, but softened down in pronunciation. Among the early Russians and Irish we can safely infer the Turanian underfolk with its myths and manners of life, its subterranean dwellings and repute as magicians; in both we perceive remarkably clever members of the Finno-Ugrian womenfolk gaining a power over chiefs of the conquering hordes and going down into legend as supernatural Sidhes or Tshuds.[1] The foot-note considers the Gaelic words for woman and may well be forgiven, as it also relates to our common English term.

Unfortunately we cannot point to any pictures of early Irish women to aid us in calling up their appearance, the female figures of illuminated missals being conventional; but we must be content with the descriptions of Gaelic novelists and poets, whose ideals were necessarily more Keltic than Finno-Ugrian. But we can gain some idea of the earliest from Finland; accordingly a Finnish woman of the heroic period is reprinted from the picture in the Kalewala as published by the Finnish Literary Society of Helsingfors. The clothes of plebeian women found in Denmark and Ireland

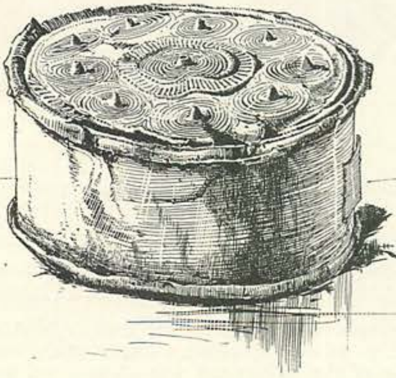


INLAID BRONZE BROOCH OF THE PAGAN EPOCH, THE FINEST EXAMPLES BEING FOUND IN IRELAND.

in oaken coffins, preserved by the action of oak-sap and peat, are not unlike those we see here, though a woolen girdle and a close-fitting

[1] The old word for daughter, *ni* or *nu*, which is now obsolete in the spoken language of Ireland, points to the Turanian peoples by its appearance among the Hungarians and other Finno-Turks as *nö*, wife. With regard to *bean* or *ban*, the ordinary word in Gaelic for woman, we find the root again in Latin *Venus* and *venia* with the meaning to love, venerate; in Sanskrit also as *van*, to love, serve, honor. From this we may provisionally class the living Irish word as Aryan, the obsolete as Turanian. According to Mr. Skeat we get it again in the English words to "win," "winsome." But though the great authority of Mr. Skeat upholds the ordinary derivation of "woman" from *wifman*, analogies are in favor of supposing that the spelling *wifman* in Anglo-Saxon arose from a mistake of the Saxon writers, who strove to explain in that way a word having no explanation in their tongue, which really came in from the Keltic spoken in Britain. When we find Irish turning *bean* into *wan* and *van* under certain circumstances, in accordance with those changes in consonants which are common to Keltic tongues, we have cause to suspect the old derivation of woman from *wifman*, leman from *leofman*, and incline to believe that when a proper study has been made of the Keltic and subject tongues, we shall find that the Keltic women of Britain brought into use in place of *wif* (German *weib*) a word which the old Saxon philologists forced into the unreasonable reading "wife-man." Whether they were married or enslaved by the conquerors would not alter matters; they would necessarily affect the tongue with words from their own language. An exact parallel is found in Irish Gaelic; for whereas the Kelts who entered Ireland had their own word *ban* springing from an Aryan root, they assimilated into their tongue the Finno-Ugrian *ni* or *nu* and used it as the feminine equivalent of *mac*, "son of," before proper names down to a few centuries ago. This is only one out of a number of words in English the origin of which might be traced through Keltic tongues if scholars would remove from their minds prejudices engendered on the one hand by politico-social matters, on the other by the wild assertions of the Keltic scholars before the time of Zeuss and his grammar.

cap of woven wool with strings to it are found in place of the decorated belt and headdress of this Finnish woman of property. So far as descriptions of attire are concerned, we get them in abundance for men of all ranks belonging to parts of Ireland and even to foreign countries; but also for women not a few. Thus when Queen Meave determined to go into Ulster and seize the wonderful bull for which the foray called Táin Bo Chuailgné was undertaken, she was surprised by an apparition seated on the shaft of her chariot. It was a woman engaged in weaving. "She had a green spot-speckled cloak upon her, and a round, heavy-headed brooch in that cloak over her breast. Her countenance was crimson, rich-blooded; her eyes gray and sparkling; her lips red and thin; her teeth shining and pearly so that you would think it was a shower of fair pearls that had been set in her head; like fresh coral were her lips; as sweet as the strings of sweet harps played by the hands of long-practiced masters were the sound of her voice and her fine speech; whiter than the snow shed in one night were her skin and her body appearing through her dress; she had long, even, white feet, and her nails were crimson, well-cut, circular, and sharp; she had long, fair, yellow hair; three wreaths of her hair were braided around her head and an-



BOX OF BEATEN GOLD TO HOLD JEWELS OR COSMETICS. PAGAN EPOCH.

other braid descending as low down as the calves of her legs." This lady was a fairy, but her specialty was prophecy, so that we must infer that only certain of the fairies were gifted in that way.

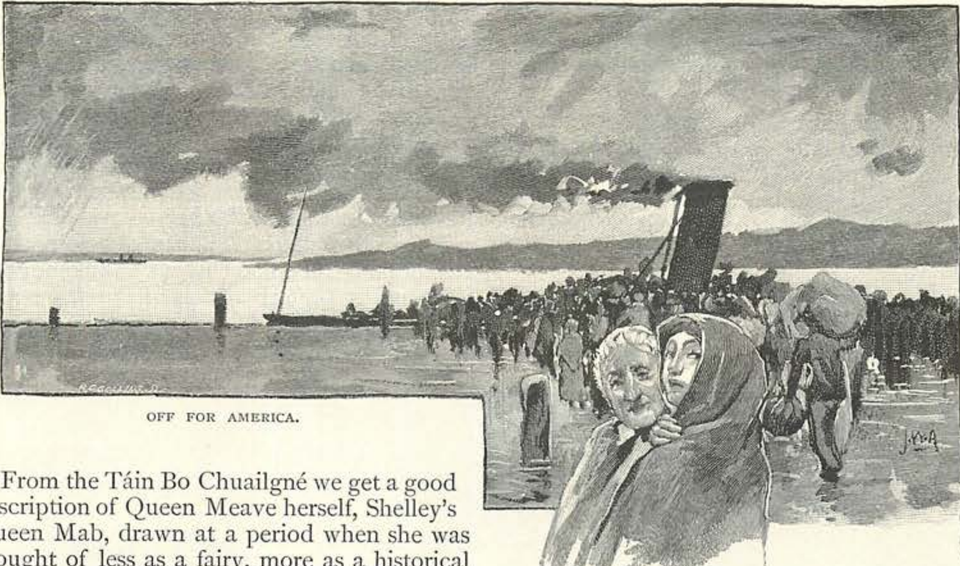
There are many objects in the museums of Dublin, Belfast, and other places the exact use of which is a problem owing to the lack of pictures of early men and women. The poets exaggerate and the medieval writers relate ancient events in the light of their own times without regard to probabilities; though it must be said that the Irish writers of legendary fiction have shown more of the historical sense than those of other northern nations, perhaps because of the existence in manuscript of sober histories from a very early period. The Irish had a musical instrument like the circle of little bells in a Turkish band, and many of these crotals have been found. But they appear at one time to have used them for the adornment of women, though now the crotal is only found as a cow-bell, sheep-bell, and as a sleigh-bell with us. There are strings of little bells in the Dublin Museum which can only have been worn by human beings. The tribes of Central Asia still decorate their unmarried women in this way, perhaps partly in order that their whereabouts should always be known from the sound, lest they steal away to lovers who come with no bride-price in their hands. Gold diadems for the hair, spirals of soft gold to twist round a thick plait, combs of bone ingeniously contrived, moccasins like those still used by the Lapps, oval decorated bosses of gold or bronze such as the Finnish medieval lady shows in the woodcut, are a few of the treasures from the ancient women of Ireland.

The pawnshop, or the Mont de Piété, of the present period is only the survival of a fashion which anybody might follow without loss of honor. The Brehon laws provide for the exact values a queen could demand if an article placed in pawn by her was not forthcoming when she demanded it, and the same for wives lower in the social scale. At Yule, or Christmas, at Easter, at the Midsummer festival, at a fair or other day of meeting, it was necessary to take jewels and other ornaments out of pawn in order to be appareled as befitted rank. Severe were the laws if these were withheld unjustly. The workbag of a queen was supposed to contain the following articles: a veil of one color, a crown of gold, a crescent of gold, a thread or cord of silver.

Should this bag be withheld, the fine is three cows. The fine for the complete contents of a workbag belonging to the wife of a chief is three heifers—reminding us of the first meaning of *pecunia*. These are its proper contents: one veil, a diadem of gold, a crescent of silver, a thread or cord of silver, a painted face or mask for assemblies, a kerchief of silk, gold thread.

O'Curry quotes a stanza from a ninth-century manuscript wherein it appears that blue was considered the proper and modest color for woman's dress, while fops had their garments dyed of many colors:

> Mottled to simpletons, blue to women,
> Crimson to the kings of every host,
> Green and black to noble laymen,
> White to clerics of proper devotion.



OFF FOR AMERICA.

From the Táin Bo Chuailgné we get a good description of Queen Meave herself, Shelley's Queen Mab, drawn at a period when she was thought of less as a fairy, more as a historical person, but yet with some traces of the supernatural about her. Cuchulinn having defended Ulster a long while against Queen Meave's army, and having killed at the ford his old schoolmate and friend Ferdiadh, whom Meave enlisted in her cause, has retired to Ulster to cure his wounds, when Cethern, also grievously wounded, joins him. Cethern describes to him and the physician the appearance of each hero who inflicted a wound on him; among these Queen Meave has a place.

"Look at this blood for me, my good Fingin," said Cethern. Fingin examined this blood. "This is the deed of a haughty woman," said the physician. "It is true," said Cethern. "There came to me one beautiful, pale, long-faced woman with long flowing, golden-yellow hair upon her; a crimson cloak with a brooch of gold in that cloak over her breast; a straight-ridged *slegh* [or light spear] blazing red in her hand. She it was that gave me that wound; and she got a slight wound from me." "We know that woman well," said Cuchulinn; "she is Medbh, the daughter of Eochaid Feidlig, high king of Erinn."

In one copy of the Táin the brooch which this Amazon carries on her breast, and which she offers to Ferdiadh as another bribe to induce him to fight Cuchulinn, weighs thirty ounces. The queen appears to have had a tart temper. She left her first husband, Conchobar mac Nessa of Ulster, returned to her father, was made by him sub-queen of Connaught, married and lost a second husband, and finally chose Ailill for his youth and beauty. Even with him she was prone to quarrel. It was envy of a wonderful bull in the flocks of her husband that made her long to own the bull of Chuailgné, about which the war waged. Yielding to her bribes, Ferdiadh agrees to fight Cuchulinn in the following stanza:

O Medb, abounding in venom,
Thou art not a sweet-tempered spouse to a consort.
It is true thou art the Brachial (shepherd?)
Of Cruachan of the ramparts,
With lofty speech and despotic power.
Send me the beautiful speckled satin,
Give me thy gold and thy silver,
Since to me thou hast proffered them.

The Tochmarc, or courtship, of Eimer by Cuchulinn, as we get it in Irish literature, has traces of customs of two great subdivisions of men, the Turanians as well as the Aryans. For though he sets to work to gain the hand of Eimer in the Aryan way, and is refused because he is a mere champion and a youth, he ends by taking her in the Turanian way, at the point of the sword. The nations roughly embraced by that term have preserved till a late date the habit of going outside of the tribe for a bride. The Esthonians have the word Tombamine for bride-seizure, though the practice has gone out. Although in the Kalewala the tribes of Pohjola, or the Lapps, are considered foul magicians, and ever the foe of the heroes of Kaleva, or the Finns, yet it is from Pohjola that Waïnamoïnen and his comrades always take their brides by force or by purchase. Waïnamoïnen and Ilmarinen generally take the civilized method and bribe the hostess of Pohjola for her daughters, but Lemminkainen seizes against her will the beauty who says:

Why come wooing at my fireside,
Wooing me in belt of copper?

Have no time to waste upon thee;
Rather give this stone its polish,
Rather would I turn the pestle
In the heavy sandstone mortar.

But Lemminkainen has not made himself a shepherd and fascinated the other dames and maidens of the village by his pranks and dancing for nothing. He comes in his wagon or sledge to the level meadow where the dance is to begin.

With the stallion proudly prancing,
Fleetest racer of the Northland,
Fleetly drives beyond the meadow
Where the maidens meet for dancing,
Snatches quick the maid Kyllikki,[1]
On the settle draws the maiden,
Quickly draws the leathern cover
And adjusts the birchen crossbar,
Whips his courser to a gallop,
With a rush and roar and rattle,
Speeds he homeward like the stormwind.

In another bride-seeking in the Kalewala the luckless Aino appears to have had no choice when Waïnamoïnen the rich asked for her hand; so she drowned herself. But Kyllikki disposed of her own life as she chose. So in Ireland the rule seems to have been that the parents of the bride decided when she should marry; but many exceptions are found. It is curious to note that the marriage between Lemminkainen and the coy Kyllikki, who presently resigns herself to her fate, turns out badly because the latter breaks her word and goes to the village dances after having made a compact with her husband that she should remain quietly at home while he refrained from war. When she breaks the compact Lemminkainen not only prepares for war, but says that he purposes to get another wife — plainly a wife from the same hostile tribe as before. This rule obtains still among Lapps and Samoyeds, poor and ignorant branches of the same race as the Finns, and among very many nations of the Turkish blood. We may look with confidence among the non-Keltic tribes of Ireland for traces of similar customs, which are founded on the true instinct against interbreeding.

MOTHER GRABALL'S BAY, OUTLET OF EMIGRATION FROM SOUTHERN IRELAND.

Eocaidh Ainkenn, a king of the province of Leinster, was so well pleased with one daughter of Tuathal Techtmar, the king of all Ireland, that he came for another before his first wife died. The king gave him his second daughter, Fithir, to wife, but when she reached her palace at Magh Lugadh and found her sister alive she fell dead from shame; whereupon Darinni, the first wife, lamented her for a time and died of grief. The story is obviously parallel with the classic one in Greece which accounts for the song of the nightingale, but is not necessarily an echo in Ireland of that tale; it may easily

[1] This maiden's name, Kylli or Kyllikki, means the "tinkling one," owing to the use of metal plates and even little bells on the clothes of a rich man's daughter. It appears in Irish as *kill*, "church," owing to the impression made on the pagans by the tinkling hand-bells of the missionaries, and comes obviously up out of the Turanian underfolk of Ireland. But it has been shown conclusively that our word church, which is "kirk" in the dialect of Scotland, derives through *kilicne*, *kiricne* from the same root "kil," and signifies the place of bells. *Kilkka* in Finnic, it became *cirice* in Anglo-Saxon. It is only one of a thousand instances where Turanian words, having become excellent Gaelic in Ireland and Scotland, have entered our own tongue very early and are to all appearance English from the old rock until their origin is shown.

be native there also. A volume were needed to cite the adventures of noted women in Irish history of the pagan and early Christian epochs, point out their Aryan qualities and habits and customs similar to those prevalent among women of Turanian stock in Central Asia, define their status before the law, and give particulars in connection with bride-buying, bride-seizing, elopements, childbirth, and customs at funerals. In a long poem on the Fair of Carmán the poet brushes aside all other derivations for that word, which O'Curry thought was the ancient Gaelic name for the site of Wexford, a late Norse colony:

It was not men, and it was not an angry man,
But a single woman, fierce and revengeful,
Loud her rustling and her tramp,
From whom Carmán received its first name.

This magician queen and her sons came to Ireland from Greece by way of Spain, so it would appear, and wrought frightful injuries to the fields and cattle of the Dé Danann tribes; but the Druids of the latter were too strong for them. They were forced to depart, leaving their mother Carmán in pledge. She was placed in a tomb alive, where apparently she starved to death. But her captors thought enough of her to come every third August to mourn her, and the wake of the old war-witch was the fair. Horse-races and trials of power between men were part of the triennial honors to "old crooked Garmán," her husband, as well as to Carmán, his wife, as another verse has it. These rites over the graves of great leaders are exactly the same among the Turkish tribes of Central Asia, according to Vámbéry. The fair of Carmán must have grown to very large proportions before A. D. 1000, if we are to believe the poet whose account of it is preserved in the Book of Leinster.

No man goes into the women's assembly,
No woman into the assembly of fair clean men;
No abduction here is heard of,
Nor repudiation of husbands nor of wives.

Seven mounds without touching each other,
For the oft-lamenting of the dead;
Seven plains, sacred, without a house,
For the sports of joyous Carmán were reserved.

Three markets were held within its borders:
A market for food; a market for live cattle;
The great market of the foreign Greeks,
In which are gold and noble clothes.

The slope of the steeds, the slope of the cooking,
The slope of the assembly of embroidering women.
No man of the happy host
Receives adulation, receives reproach.

A right understanding of the Irishman is difficult for Englishmen and Americans because those immigrants who are recognized as Irish are, as a general thing, from the rural population, and do not represent the educated classes. But to Americans the difficulty is much increased by the fact that Ireland furnishes also the great body of women servants, whose ignorance of our ways of life forms the despair of housewives. Americans who despair of Irish servants will do well to remember that the women of Ireland also present the most remarkable extremes of dullness and quickness. Some there are whom it is hopeless to train; but others, by the readiness with which they acquire skill in all the walks of life, show that their ancestry was an educated one.

The right of women to inherit property was admitted at a very early period, certainly long before their exemption from war, if we can be sure that it really was St. Adamnan who secured their freedom from obligation to serve, and not some early pagan legislator of whose act this is merely a Christian echo. Tradition states that it was a learned woman who secured for women in Ireland a part of any succession, namely, a third part of the landed estate if there were no sons. Later the whole property went to the daughters in default of male heirs.

The one who effected this change for women was Brig or Brigit Ambui, the daughter of Senchan, chief poet and judge to King Conchobar mac Nessa of Ulster, and the third of her name. For her mother was Brig Brethach, or Brigit of the Judgments, and her grandmother Brig ban Brughad, or Brigit the Farmerwoman. The name recurring so often makes one suspect that we have to do with matters so far back that the name of Brig the goddess of learning has been varied to suit poetic treatment. It also shows that there were women who practiced the profession of the law, as there were those who taught the military art, like Scatach the teacher of Cuchulinn, and female physicians like Eaba, a lady who accompanied the queen who led one of the first swarms into Ireland; teachers like Fuaimnech, a princess who brought up the sons of kings and nobles; and poetesses like Fedelm and Ailbhe.

The last mentioned was a bluestocking of the deepest dye. Grainné having preferred the beautiful Diarmait to her affianced lord, Fion mac Cumhal, and eloped, the latter finally made the best of it and sought consolation in a lady of mind, but, it is to be feared, of little physical beauty. Ailbhé, daughter of Cormac mac Airt, was reputed the wisest woman of her time, and with her Fion entered into a conversation designed to show each speaker as the wisest and most eloquent person in the world. Doubtless he wooed her with success; wisdom might inhere in one of the multitudinous variants on the sungod, while she was granddaughter of the constellation called the Great Bear. Nothing is more indicative of the

cultivation of Irish literature for a long period than the completeness with which cosmical ideas became humanized and filled up in all details — the dates, characters, appearance, and family relations being supplied. That this should go on without being extinguished by the changes of thought in the rest of Europe is most singular; it could only have existed among a people of imagination walled off from the rest of the world by straits of the sea and by prejudices of antique date.

We have poems by various ladies of early Ireland, generally daughters of kings. Another Meave, called the Half-red, has some of the characteristics of Queen Meave just noticed. "The strength and power of Meave was great over the men of Erinn," says the introduction to her poem over the grave of her first husband, whom she deserted for a better man; "for it was she that would not permit any king in Tara without his having herself as wife."

My noble king, he spoke not falsehood;
His success was certain in every danger.
As black as a raven was his brow,
As sharp was his spear as a razor,
As white was his skin as the lime.
Together we used to go on refections;
As high was his shield as a champion,
As long his arm as an oar;
The house-prop against the kings of Erinn sons of chiefs,
He maintained his shield in every cause.
Countless wolves fed he with his spear,
At the heels of our man in every battle.

Records of such women are all the more precious because few nations keep any account of early women famous for literature. The Japanese, however, have a mythical account of the beginnings of literature with a woman deity, and mention many famous ladies who were wits and authors. The Muses and Sappho represent the same idea among the Greeks. Despite the degraded condition of women in early times, the Irish appear to have given them more chance and encouragement than other races. When all seems brutality in other nations of northern Europe, the Irish have traces of a nobler outlook and seem to be cherishing the seed of ideas from which sprung later the romantic view of women in countries of greater size and wealth — the view we express by the word chivalry. In all probability it was from Ireland that the troubadours got the spirit and many of the subjects of their lays; from Irish impulse came the revival in Wales of music and the ballads and stories clustering round the name of King Arthur, mixed with a great deal of old British matter. The high view of women which is the honor of the present may be traced back through English, Italian, and French romancers to little Ireland, where we may confidently predicate living women of the highest character as the cause and continuance of such ideas.

In perfecting the Irish woman the Christian faith did a great deal, though it is only fair to paganism to say that virtues existed in the people even before St. Patrick. But if we can recall the existence of woman in family life under the old paganism by what we are now learning of her habits among the nomad, half-nomad, and settled tribes of Asia, who are practically heathen still, the picture is indeed dark. It was an existence of relentless toil, with few periods of festivity and rare chances to improve her condition. A rich and powerful husband could put away his wife or force her to accept a rival. Unless hired mourners could be engaged she was expected to do the mourning on occasion of a death. If her husband died she must shriek and wail for a year, or until a mound or cairn was raised over his corpse. A very crude morality existed in pagan times which permitted a chief or hero rights over the persons of women that are sufficiently startling when met with all their unconscious naïveté in the oldest tales. Christianity tried to put order into this promiscuous condition of affairs, but it would never have succeeded as it has, were it not that the material for the work was superior. In other matters heathenism held its own; but in morals, using the word in the stricter sense, it gave way. Christianity was not so successful in this particular elsewhere: the inference is that the Irish woman has high qualities by nature. From goddesses and banshees, from Druidesses who understand weapons as well as the black art, through queens and saints who are human in a gentler fashion, the line of brilliant and charming Irish women runs on unbroken from the very dawn of history to the present day. Surrey's poem on Elizabeth, the Fair Geraldine, might apply to many of the early women of Ireland, if we can judge by the adventures undertaken in their behalf and the expressions of bards in all centuries:

From Tuscane came my lady's worthy race,
Fair Florence was sometime her ancient seat,
The Western isle whose pleasant shore doth face
Wild Camber's cliffs did give her lively beat.
Fostered she was with milk of Irish breast,
Her sire an Earl, her dame of Prince's blood,
From tender years in Britain doth she rest.

One generalization may be added. Irish women resume in themselves a good deal of this trait of the nation, a temperament in extremes. They are found in the old literature very feminine or very masculine, never lukewarm or doing things by halves.

Charles de Kay.