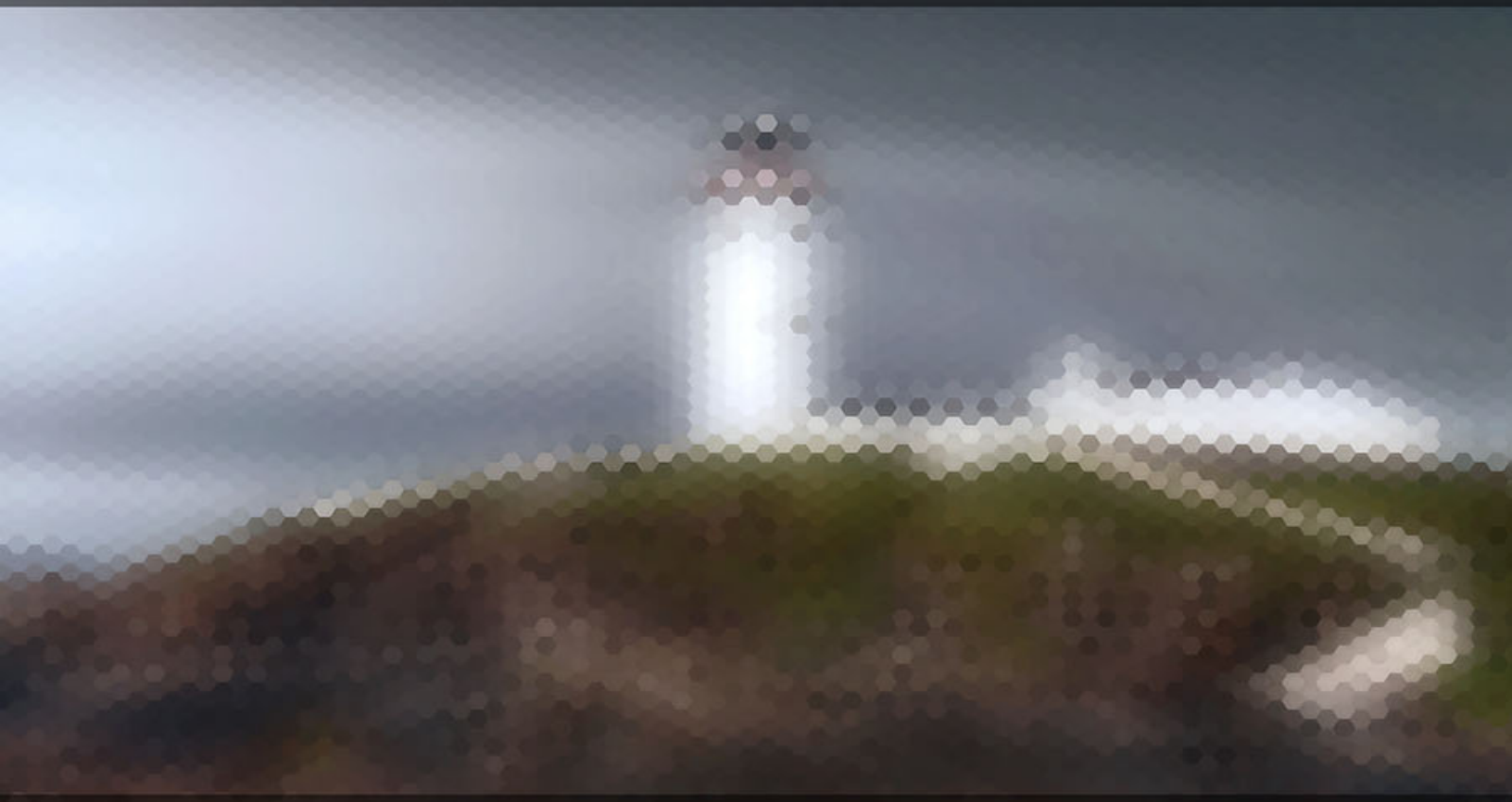
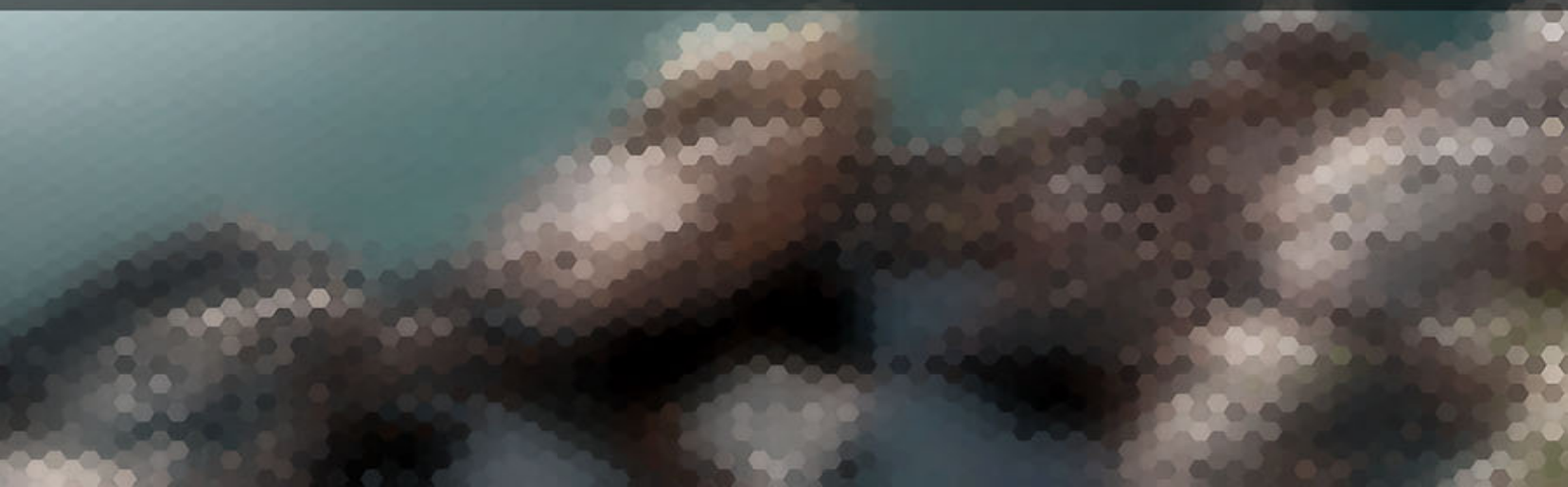
THOMAS D'ARCY MCGEE



THE HISTORY OF IRELAND



Thomas D'Arcy McGee

The History of Ireland

From the Earliest Period to the Emancipation of the Catholics

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CHAPTER I.
THE FIRST INHABITANTS.

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Ireland is situated in the North Atlantic, between the degrees fifty-one and a half and fifty-five and a half North, and five and a quarter and ten and a third West longitude from Greenwich. It is the last land usually seen by ships leaving the Old World, and the first by those who arrive there from the Northern ports of America. In size it is less than half as large as Britain, and in shape it may be compared to one of those shields which we see in coats-of-arms, the four Provinces—Ulster, Connaught, Leinster, and Munster—representing the four quarters of the shield.

Around the borders of the country, generally near the coast, several ranges of hills and mountains rear their crests, every Province having one or more such groups. The West and South have, however, the largest and highest of these hills, from the sides of all which descend numerous rivers, flowing in various directions to the sea. Other rivers issue out of large lakes formed in the valleys, such as the Galway river which drains Lough Corrib, and the Bann which carries off the surplus waters of Lough Neagh (*Nay*). In a few districts where the fall for water is insufficient, marshes and swamps were long ago formed, of which the principal one occupies nearly 240,000 acres in the very heart of the country. It is called "the Bog of Allen," and, though quite useless for farming purposes, still serves to supply the

surrounding district with fuel, nearly as well as coal mines do in other countries.

In former times, Ireland was as well wooded as watered, though hardly a tree of the primitive forest now remains. One of the earliest names applied to it was "the wooded Island," and the export of timber and staves, as well as of the furs of wild animals, continued, until the beginning of the seventeenth century, to be a thriving branch of trade. But in a succession of civil and religious wars, the axe and the torch have done their work of destruction, so that the age of most of the wood now standing does not date above two or three generations back.

Who were the first inhabitants of this Island, it is impossible to say, but we know it was inhabited at a very early period of the world's lifetime—probably as early as the time when Solomon the Wise, sat in Jerusalem on the throne of his father David. As we should not altogether reject, though neither are we bound to believe, the wild and uncertain traditions of which we have neither documentary nor monumental evidence, we will glance over rapidly what the old Bards and Story-tellers have handed down to us concerning Ireland before it became Christian.

The *first* story they tell is, that about three hundred years after the Universal Deluge, Partholan, of the stock of Japhet, sailed down the Mediterranean, "leaving Spain on the right hand," and holding bravely on his course, reached the shores of the wooded western Island. This Partholan, they tell us, was a double parricide, having killed his father and mother before leaving his native country, for which horrible crimes, as the Bards very morally conclude, his posterity

were fated never to possess the land. After a long interval, and when they were greatly increased in numbers, they were cut off to the last man, by a dreadful pestilence.

The story of the *second* immigration is almost as vague as that of the first. The leader this time is called Nemedh, and his route is described as leading from the shores of the Black Sea, across what is now Russia in Europe, to the Baltic Sea, and from the Baltic to Ireland. He is said to have built two royal forts, and to have "cleared twelve plains of wood" while in Ireland. He and his posterity were constantly at war, with a terrible race of Formorians, or Sea Kings, descendants of Ham, who had fled from northern Africa to the western islands for refuge from their enemies, the sons of Shem. At length the Formorians prevailed, and the children of the second immigration were either slain or driven into exile, from which some of their posterity returned long afterwards, and again disputed the country, under two different denominations.

The *Firbolgs* or Belgae are the *third* immigration. They were victorious under their chiefs, the five sons of Dela, and divided the island into five portions. But they lived in days when the earth—the known parts of it at least—was being eagerly scrambled for by the overflowing hosts of Asia, and they were not long left in undisputed possession of so tempting a prize. Another expedition, claiming descent from the common ancestor, Nemedh, arrived to contest their supremacy. These last—the *fourth* immigration—are depicted to us as accomplished soothsayers and necromancers who came out of Greece. They could quell storms; cure diseases; work in metals; foretell future events;

forge magical weapons; and raise the dead to life; they are called the *Tuatha de Danans*, and by their supernatural power, as well as by virtue of "the Lia Fail," or fabled "stone of destiny," they subdued their Belgic kinsmen, and exercised sovereignty over them, till they in turn were displaced by the Gaelic, or *fifth* immigration.

This fifth and final colony called themselves alternately, or at different periods of their history, *Gael*, from one of their remote ancestors; *Milesians*, from the immediate projector of their emigration; or *Scoti*, from Scota, the mother of Milesius. They came from Spain under the leadership of the sons of Milesius, whom they had lost during their temporary sojourn in that country. In vain the skilful *Tuatha* surrounded themselves and their coveted island with magic-made tempest and terrors; in vain they reduced it in size so as to be almost invisible from sea; Amergin, one of the sons of Milesius, was a Druid skilled in all the arts of the east, and led by his wise counsels, his brothers countermined the magicians, and beat them at their own weapons. This Amergin was, according to universal usage in ancient times, at once Poet, Priest, and Prophet; yet when his warlike brethren divided the island between them, they left the Poet out of reckoning. He was finally drowned in the waters of the river Avoca, which is probably the reason why that river has been so suggestive of melody and song ever since.

Such are the stories told of the *five* successive hordes of adventurers who first attempted to colonize our wooded Island. Whatever moiety of truth may be mixed up with so many fictions, two things are certain, that long before the

time when our Lord and Saviour came upon earth, the coasts and harbours of Erin were known to the merchants of the Mediterranean, and that from the first to the fifth Christian century, the warriors of the wooded Isle made inroads on the Roman power in Britain and even in Gaul. Agricola, the Roman governor of Britain in the reign of Domitian—the first century—retained an Irish chieftain about his person, and we are told by his biographer that an invasion of Ireland was talked of at Rome. But it never took place; the Roman eagles, although supreme for four centuries in Britain, never crossed the Irish Sea; and we are thus deprived of those Latin helps to our early history, which are so valuable in the first period of the histories of every western country, with which the Romans had anything to do.

CHAPTER II.
THE FIRST AGES.

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Since we have no Roman accounts of the form of government or state of society in ancient Erin, we must only depend on the Bards and Story-tellers, so far as their statements are credible and agree with each other. On certain main points they do agree, and these are the points which it seems reasonable for us to take on their authority.

As even brothers born of the same mother, coming suddenly into possession of a prize, will struggle to see who can get the largest share, so we find in those first ages a constant succession of armed struggles for power. The petty Princes who divided the Island between them were called *Righ*, a word which answers to the Latin *Rex* and French *Roi*; and the chief king or monarch was called *Ard-Righ*, or High-King. The eldest nephew, or son of the king, was the usual heir of power, and was called the *Tanist*, or successor; although any of the family of the Prince, his brothers, cousins, or other kinsmen, might be chosen *Tanist*, by election of the people over whom he was to rule. One certain cause of exclusion was personal deformity; for if a Prince was born lame or a hunchback, or if he lost a limb by accident, he was declared unfit to govern. Even after succession, any serious accident entailed deposition, though we find the names of several Princes who managed to evade or escape this singular penalty. It will be observed besides of the *Tanist*, that the habit of appointing him seems

to have been less a law than a custom; that it was not universal in all the Provinces; that in some tribes the succession alternated between a double line of Princes; and that sometimes when the reigning Prince obtained the nomination of a *Tanist*, to please himself, the choice was set aside by the public voice of the clansmen. The successor to the Ard-Righ, or Monarch, instead of being simply called *Tanist*, had the more sounding title of *Roydamna*, or King-successor.

The chief offices about the Kings, in the first ages, were all filled by the Druids, or Pagan Priests; the *Brehons*, or Judges, were usually Druids, as were also the *Bards*, the historians of their patrons. Then came the Physicians; the Chiefs who paid tribute or received annual gifts from the Sovereigns, or Princes; the royal stewards; and the military leaders or Champions, who, like the knights of the middle ages, held their lands and their rank at court, by the tenure of the sword. Like the feudal *Dukes* of France, and *Barons* of England, these military nobles often proved too powerful for their nominal patrons, and made them experience all the uncertainty of reciprocal dependence. The Champions play an important part in all the early legends. Wherever there is trouble you are sure to find them. Their most celebrated divisions were the warriors of the *Red Branch*—that is to say, the Militia of Ulster; the *Fiann*, or Militia of Leinster, sometimes the royal guard of Tara, at others in exile and disgrace; the *Clan-Degaid* of Munster, and the *Fiann* of Connaught. The last force was largely recruited from the Belgic race who had been squeezed into that western province, by their Milesian conquerors, pretty much as

Cromwell endeavoured to force the Milesian Irish into it, many hundred years afterwards. Each of these bands had its special heroes; its Godfreys and Orlandos celebrated in song; the most famous name in Ulster was Cuchullin: so called from *cu*, a hound, or watch-dog, and *Ullin*, the ancient name of his province. He lived at the dawn of the Christian era. Of equal fame was Finn, the father of Ossian, and the Fingal of modern fiction, who flourished in the latter half of the second century. Gall, son of Morna, the hero of Connaught (one of the few distinguished men of Belgic origin whom we hear of through the Milesian bards), flourished a generation earlier than Finn, and might fairly compete with him in celebrity, if he had only had an Ossian to sing his praises.

The political boundaries of different tribes expanded or contracted with their good or ill fortune in battle. Immigration often followed defeat, so that a clan, or its offshoot is found at one period on one part of the map and again on another. As *surnames* were not generally used either in Ireland or anywhere else, till after the tenth century, the great families are distinguishable at first, only by their tribe or clan names. Thus at the north we have the Hy-Nial race; in the south the Eugenian race, so called from Nial and Eoghan, their mutual ancestors.

We have already compared the shape of Erin to a shield, in which the four Provinces represented the four quarters. Some shields have also *bosses* or centre-pieces, and the federal province of MEATH was the *boss* of the old Irish shield. The ancient Meath included both the present counties of that name, stretching south to the Liffey, and

north to Armagh. It was the mensal demesne, or "board of the king's table:" it was exempt from all taxes, except those of the Ard-Righ, and its relations to the other Provinces may be vaguely compared to those of the District of Columbia to the several States of the North American Union. ULSTER might then be defined by a line drawn from Sligo Harbour to the mouth of the Boyne, the line being notched here and there by the royal demesne of Meath; LEINSTER stretched south from Dublin triangle-wise to Waterford Harbour, but its inland line, towards the west, was never very well defined, and this led to constant border wars with Munster; the remainder of the south to the mouth of the Shannon composed MUNSTER; the present county of Clare and all west of the Shannon north to Sligo, and part of Cavan, going with CONNAUGHT. The chief seats of power, in those several divisions, were TARA, for federal purposes; EMANIA, near Armagh, for Ulster; LEIGHLIN, for Leinster; CASHEL, for Munster; and CRUCHAIN, (now Rathcrogan, in Roscommon,) for Connaught.

How the common people lived within these external divisions of power it is not so easy to describe. All histories tell us a great deal of kings, and battles, and conspiracies, but very little of the daily domestic life of the people. In this respect the history of Erin is much the same as the rest; but some leading facts we do know. Their religion, in Pagan times, was what the moderns call *Druidism*, but what they called it themselves we now know not. It was probably the same religion anciently professed by Tyre and Sidon, by Carthage and her colonies in Spain; the same religion which the Romans have described as existing in great part of Gaul,

and by their accounts, we learn the awful fact, that it sanctioned, nay, demanded, human sacrifices. From the few traces of its doctrines which Christian zeal has permitted to survive in the old Irish language, we see that *Belus* or "Crom," the god of fire, typified by the sun, was its chief divinity—that two great festivals were held in his honour on days answering to the first of May and last of October. There were also particular gods of poets, champions, artificers and mariners, just as among the Romans and Greeks. Sacred groves were dedicated to these gods; Priests and Priestesses devoted their lives to their service; the arms of the champion, and the person of the king were charmed by them; neither peace nor war was made without their sanction; their own persons and their pupils were held sacred; the high place at the king's right hand and the best fruits of the earth and the waters were theirs. Old age revered them, women worshipped them, warriors paid court to them, youth trembled before them, princes and chieftains regarded them as elder brethren. So numerous were they in Erin, and so celebrated, that the altars of Britain and western Gaul, left desolate by the Roman legions, were often served by hierophants from Erin, which, even in those Pagan days, was known to all the Druidic countries as the "Sacred Island." Besides the princes, the warriors, and the Druids, (who were also the Physicians, Bards and Brehons of the first ages,) there were innumerable petty chiefs, all laying claim to noble birth and blood. They may be said with the warriors and priests to be the only freemen. The *Bruais*, or farmers, though possessing certain legal rights, were an inferior caste; while of the Artisans, the smiths and armorers

only seem to have been of much consideration. The builders of those mysterious round towers, of which a hundred ruins yet remain, may also have been a privileged order. But the mill and the loom were servile occupations, left altogether to slaves taken in battle, or purchased in the market-places of Britain. The task of the herdsman, like that of the farm-labourer, seems to have devolved on the bondsmen, while the *quern* and the shuttle were left exclusively in the hands of the bondswomen.

We need barely mention the names of the first Milesian kings, who were remarkable for something else than cutting each other's throats, in order to hasten on to the solid ground of Christian tunes. The principal names are: Heber and Heremhon, the crowned sons of Milesians; they at first divided the Island fairly, but Heremhon soon became jealous of his brother, slew him in battle, and established his own supremacy. Irial the Prophet was King, and built seven royal fortresses; Tiern'mass; in his reign the arts of dyeing in colours were introduced; and the distinguishing of classes by the number of colours they were permitted to wear, was decreed. Ollamh ("the Wise") established the Convention of Tara, which assembled habitually every ninth year, but might be called oftener; it met about the October festival in honour of Beleus or *Crom*; Eocaid invented or introduced a new species of wicker boats, called *cassa*, and spent much of his time upon the sea; a solitary queen, named Macha, appears in the succession, from whom Armagh takes its name; except Mab, the mythological Queen of Connaught, she is the sole female ruler of Erin in the first ages; Owen or Eugene Mor ("the Great") is remembered as the founder of

the notable families who rejoice in the common name of Eugenians; Leary, of whom the fable of Midas is told with variations; Angus, whom the after Princes of Alba (Scotland) claimed as their ancestor; Eocaid, the tenth of that name, in whose reign are laid the scenes of the chief mythological stories of Erin—such as the story of Queen Mab—the story of the Sons of Usna; the death of Cuchullin (a counterpart of the Persian tale of Roostam and Sohrab); the story of Fergus, son of the king; of Connor of Ulster; of the sons of Dari; and many more. We next meet with the first king who led an expedition abroad against the Romans in Crimthan, surnamed *Neea-Naari*, or Nair's Hero, from the good genius who accompanied him on his foray. A well-planned insurrection of the conquered Belgae, cut off one of Crimthan's immediate successors, with all his chiefs and nobles, at a banquet given on the Belgian-plain (Moybolgue, in Cavan); and arrested for a century thereafter Irish expeditions abroad. A revolution and a restoration followed, in which Moran the Just Judge played the part of Monk to *his* Charles II., Tuathal surnamed "the Legitimate." It was Tuathal who imposed the special tax on Leinster, of which, we shall often hear—under the title of *Borooa*, or Tribute. "The Legitimate" was succeeded by his son, who introduced the Roman *Lex Talionis* ("an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth") into the Brehon code; soon after, the Eugenian families of the south, strong in numbers, and led by a second Owen More, again halved the Island with the ruling race, the boundary this time being the *esker*, or ridge of land which can be easily traced from Dublin west to Galway. Olild, a brave and able Prince, succeeded in time to the

southern half-kingdom, and planted his own kindred deep and firm in its soil, though the unity of the monarchy was again restored under Cormac Ulla, or *Longbeard*. This Cormac, according to the legend, was in secret a Christian, and was done to death by the enraged and alarmed Druids, after his abdication and retirement from the world (A.D. 266). He had reigned full forty years, rivalling in wisdom, and excelling in justice the best of his ancestors. Some of his maxims remain to us, and challenge comparison for truthfulness and foresight with most uninspired writings.

Cormac's successors during the same century are of little mark, but in the next the expeditions against the Roman outposts were renewed with greater energy and on an increasing scale. Another Crimthan eclipsed the fame of his ancestor and namesake; Nial, called "of the Hostages," was slain on a second or third expedition into Gaul (A.D. 405), while Dathy, nephew and successor to Nial, was struck dead by lightning in the passage of the Alps (A.D. 428). It was in one of Nial's Gallic expeditions that the illustrious captive was brought into Erin, for whom Providence had reserved the glory of its conversion to the Christian faith—an event which gives a unity and a purpose to the history of that Nation, which must always constitute its chief attraction to the Christian reader.

CHAPTER III.
CHRISTIANITY PREACHED AT TARA—THE RESULT.

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The conversion of a Pagan people to Christianity must always be a primary fact in their history. It is not merely for the error it abolishes or the positive truth it establishes that a national change of faith is historically important, but for the complete revolution it works in every public and private relation. The change socially could not be greater if we were to see some irresistible apostle of Paganism ariving from abroad in Christian Ireland, who would abolish the churches, convents, and Christian schools; decry and bring into utter disuse the decalogue, the Scriptures and the Sacraments; efface all trace of the existing belief in One God and Three Persons, whether in private or public worship, in contracts, or in courts of law; and instead of these, re-establish all over the country, in high places and in every place, the gloomy groves of the Druids, making gods of the sun and moon, the natural elements, and man's own passions, restoring human sacrifices as a sacred duty, and practically excluding from the community of their fellows, all who presumed to question the divine origin of such a religion. The preaching of Patrick effected a revolution to the full as complete as such a counter-revolution in favour of Paganism could possibly be, and to this thorough revolution we must devote at least one chapter before going farther.

The best accounts agree that Patrick was a native of Gaul, then subject to Rome; that he was carried captive into Erin on one of King Nial's returning expeditions; that he became a slave, as all captives of the sword did, in those iron times; that he fell to the lot of one Milcho, a chief of Dalriada, whose flocks he tended for seven years, as a shepherd, on the mountain called Slemish, in the present county of Antrim. The date of Nial's death, and the consequent return of his last expedition, is set down in all our annals at the year 405; as Patrick was sixteen years of age when he reached Ireland, he must have been born about the year 390; and as he died in the year 493, he would thus have reached the extraordinary, but not impossible age of 103 years. Whatever the exact number of his years, it is certain that his mission in Ireland commenced in the year 432, and was prolonged till his death, sixty-one years afterwards. Such an unprecedented length of life, not less than the unprecedented power, both popular and political, which he early attained, enabled him to establish the Irish Church, during his own time, on a basis so broad and deep, that neither lapse of ages, nor heathen rage, nor earthly temptations, nor all the arts of Hell, have been able to upheave its firm foundations. But we must not imagine that the powers of darkness abandoned the field without a struggle, or that the victory of the cross was achieved without a singular combination of courage, prudence, and determination—God aiding above all.

If the year of his captivity was 405 or 406, and that of his escape or manumission seven years later (412 or 413), twenty years would intervene between his departure out of

the land of his bondage, and his return to it clothed with the character and authority of a Christian Bishop. This interval, longer or shorter, he spent in qualifying himself for Holy Orders or discharging priestly duties at Tours, at Lerins, and finally at Rome. But always by night and day he was haunted by the thought of the Pagan nation in which he had spent his long years of servitude, whose language he had acquired, and the character of whose people he so thoroughly understood. These natural retrospections were heightened and deepened by supernatural revelations of the will of Providence towards the Irish, and himself as their apostle. At one time, an angel presented him, in his sleep, a scroll bearing the superscription, "the voice of the Irish;" at another, he seemed to hear in a dream all the unborn children of the nation crying to him for help and holy baptism. When, therefore, Pope Celestine commissioned him for this enterprise, "to the ends of the earth," he found him not only ready but anxious to undertake it.

When the new Preacher arrived in the Irish Sea, in 432, he and his companions were driven off the coast of Wicklow by a mob, who assailed them with showers of stones. Running down the coast to Antrim, with which he was personally familiar, he made some stay at Saul, in Down, where he made few converts, and celebrated Mass in a barn; proceeding northward he found himself rejected with scorn by his old master, Milcho, of Slemish. No doubt it appeared an unpardonable audacity in the eyes of the proud Pagan, that his former slave should attempt to teach him how to reform his life and order his affairs. Returning again southward, led on, as we must believe, by the Spirit of God,

he determined to strike a blow against Paganism at its most vital point. Having learned that the monarch, Leary (*Laeghaire*), was to celebrate his birthday with suitable rejoicings at Tara, on a day which happened to fall on the eve of Easter, he resolved to proceed to Tara on that occasion, and to confront the Druids in the midst of all the princes and magnates of the Island. With this view he returned on his former course, and landed from his frail barque at the mouth of the Boyne. Taking leave of the boatmen, he desired them to wait for him a certain number of days, when, if they did not hear from him, they might conclude him dead, and provide for their own safety. So saying he set out, accompanied by the few disciples he had made, or brought from abroad, to traverse on foot the great plain which stretches from the mouth of the Boyne to Tara. If those sailors were Christians, as is most likely, we can conceive with what anxiety they must have awaited tidings of an attempt so hazardous and so eventful.

The Christian proceeded on his way, and the first night of his journey lodged with a hospitable chief, whose family he converted and baptized, especially marking out a fine child named Beanen, called by him Benignus, from his sweet disposition; who was destined to be one of his most efficient coadjutors, and finally his successor in the Primatial see of Armagh. It was about the second or third day when, travelling probably by the northern road, poetically called "the Slope of the Chariots," the Christian adventurers came in sight of the roofs of Tara. Halting on a neighbouring eminence they surveyed the citadel of Ancient Error, like soldiers about to assault an enemy's stronghold. The aspect

of the royal hill must have been highly imposing. The building towards the north was the Banquet Hall, then thronged with the celebrants of the King's birth-day, measuring from north to south 360 feet in length by 40 feet wide. South of this hall was the King's Rath, or residence, enclosing an area of 280 yards in diameter, and including several detached buildings, such as the house of Cormac, and the house of the hostages. Southward still stood the new rath of the reigning king, and yet farther south, the rath of Queen Mab, probably uninhabited even then. The intervals between the buildings were at some points planted, for we know that magnificent trees shaded the well of Finn, and the well of Newnaw, from which all the raths were supplied with water. Imposing at any time, Tara must have looked its best at the moment Patrick first beheld it, being in the pleasant season of spring, and decorated in honour of the anniversary of the reigning sovereign.

One of the religious ceremonies employed by the Druids to heighten the solemnity of the occasion, was to order all the fires of Tara and Meath to be quenched, in order to rekindle them instantaneously from a sacred fire dedicated to the honour of their god. But Patrick, either designedly or innocently, anticipated this striking ceremony, and lit his own fire, where he had encamped, in view of the royal residence. A flight of fiery arrows, shot into the Banqueting Hall, would not have excited more horror and tumult among the company there assembled, than did the sight of that unlicensed blaze in the distance. Orders were issued to drag the offender against the laws and the gods of the Island before them, and the punishment in store for him was

already decreed in every heart. The Preacher, followed by his trembling disciples, ascended "the Slope of the Chariots," surrounded by menacing minions of the Pagan law, and regarded with indignation by astonished spectators. As he came he recited Latin Prayers to the Blessed Trinity, beseeching their protection and direction in this trying hour. Contrary to courteous custom no one at first rose to offer him a seat. At last a chieftain, touched with mysterious admiration for the stranger, did him that kindness. Then it was demanded of him, why he had dared to violate the laws of the country, and to defy its ancient gods. On this text the Christian Missionary spoke. The place of audience was in the open air, on that eminence, the home of so many kings, which commands one of the most agreeable prospects in any landscape. The eye of the inspired orator, pleading the cause of all the souls that hereafter, till the end of time, might inhabit the land, could discern within the spring-day horizon, the course of the Blackwater and the Boyne before they blend into one; the hills of Cavan to the far north; with the royal hill of Tailtean in the foreground; the wooded heights of Slane and Skreen, and the four ancient roads, which led away towards the four subject Provinces, like the reins of empire laid loosely on their necks. Since the first Apostle of the Gentiles had confronted the subtle Paganism of Athens, on the hill of Mars, none of those who walked in his steps ever stood out in more glorious relief than Patrick, surrounded by Pagan Princes, and a Pagan Priesthood, on the hill of Tara.

The defence of the fire he had kindled, unlicensed, soon extended into wider issues. Who were the gods against

whom he had offended? Were they true gods or false? They had their priests: could they maintain the divinity of such gods, by argument, or by miracle? For his God, he, though unworthy, was ready to answer, yea, right ready to die. His God had become man, and had died for man. His name alone was sufficient to heal all diseases; to raise the very dead to life. Such, we learn from the old biographers, was the line of Patrick's argument. This sermon ushered in a controversy. The king's guests, who had come to feast and rejoice, remained to listen and to meditate. With the impetuosity of the national character—with all its passion for debate—they rushed into this new conflict, some on one side, some on the other. The daughters of the king and many others—the Arch-Druid himself—became convinced and were baptized. The missionaries obtained powerful protectors, and the king assigned to Patrick the pleasant fort of Trim, as a present residence. From that convenient distance, he could readily return at any moment, to converse with the king's guests and the members of his household.

The Druidical superstition never recovered the blow it received that day at Tara. The conversion of the Arch-Druid and the Princesses, was, of itself, their knell of doom. Yet they held their ground during the remainder of this reign—twenty-five years longer (A.D. 458). The king himself never became a Christian, though he tolerated the missionaries, and deferred more and more every year to the Christian party. He sanctioned an expurgated code of the laws, prepared under the direction of Patrick, from which every positive element of Paganism was rigidly excluded. He saw,