IRELAND'S FAIRY LORE

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MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

TO

ONE OF IRELAND'S MOST FEARLESS AND

POWERFUL ADVOCATES

HIS EMINENCE

William Cardinal O'Connell

ARCHBISHOP OF BOSTON

PREFACE

THE following chapters appeared in the *Pilot* during 1910 and 1911, as a series of papers on "Ancient Irish Paganism" over the pen-name Gadelicus. The works principally consulted in the preparation of them were the "Social History of Ireland" and the "Irish Names of Places" by Dr. P. W. Joyce; the "Irish Mythological Cycle" by De Jubainville; volumes four and five of the long-since defunct Ossianic Society; the "Literary History of Ireland" by Dr. Douglas Hyde; Keating's "History of Ireland"; and a great number of Gaelic texts published by the Gaelic League and the Irish Texts Society, both of Dublin. Excursions have also been made into British and American Literature, as well as into Greek and Roman. The reader will discover that some of the topics are not treated in a very serious vein. The temptation to treat them in a light vein proved irresistible. While these papers were going through the *Pilot*, they were a source of much pleasure to many readers,

and we feel that they will continue to please, and, also, to enlighten. They give a fair idea of the general character of the remnants of the ancient Gaelic Literature that survive. When the writer commenced them he did not quite foresee that they would grow into a regular exposition of the Ancient Irish Mythological System.

THE AUTHOR

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IRELAND'S FAIRY LORE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Were there Christians in Ireland before St. Patrick's time?

"THE glorious St. Patrick," says Cardinal Newman, "did a work so great that he could not have a successor in it, the sanctity and learning and zeal and charity which followed on his death being but the result of the one impulse which he gave." It seems impossible to pronounce a more comprehensive eulogy on the character and enduring quality of St. Patrick's work than that contained in this one sentence. It covers the whole ground and gives due credit. It squares literally with the facts. A very common assertion with St. Patrick's Day orators is that St. Patrick found Ireland universally pagan and left it universally Christian. In this beautiful antithesis, rigorous truth suffers a little violence from the desire to secure rhetorical elegance.

St. Patrick could have no successor in his great life-work; but he had a predecessor; probably more than one. Their success, however, was so slight that it could not take away anything from his glory. Efforts had been made before his arrival to Christianize the country, but they were confined to particular localities. Palladius, who had been sent by the same Pope who afterwards sent St. Patrick, set out with the hope of converting the whole island. He succeeded in founding three little churches in the County Wicklow. Attempts have been made to identify the sites of these churches. Father Shearman, in an article in the Kilkenny Archaeological Journal for 1872–3, identifies these sites with Tigroney, Killeen Cormac and Donard in Wicklow, and Dr. P. W. Joyce says his identifications are "probably" correct. Here is what the Most Rev. Archbishop Healy of Tuam says on this matter: "A competent local authority, the late Father Shearman, identifies Teach na Roman with Tigroney, an old church in the parish of Castle MacAdam, County Wicklow. The building has completely disappeared; but the ancient cemetery still remains. Cell-fine Shearman identifies with Killeen Cormac, now an old churchyard three miles southwest of

Dunlavin; but, as might be expected after the ravages of the Danes, all traces of the relics have completely disappeared. The third church, Dominica Arda, as it is called in the old Latin, Shearman locates in the parish now called Donard, in the west of the County Wicklow. We do not assent to Shearman's location of the last two churches, mainly because we think it improbable that Palladius and his associates, remaining for so short a time in the country, penetrated the Wicklow mountains so far to the west. We think all these sites should be sought for in the neighborhood of the town of Wicklow, where Palladius landed; but while the matter is still doubtful, we may accept the suggestions of Shearman, as not by any means certain, but as "probable."

Teach na Roman, Irish for house of the Romans, Cell-fine, church of the relics, and Domnach arda, or church of the heights, were the churches which Palladius founded. Domnach, which is the Gaelic for Dominica, Sunday, was also used in ancient Irish to mean a church, and ard, high, is an adjective akin to the Latin arduus, difficult.

Domnach arda is noteworthy as the place where Sylvester and Solinus, the two holy

companions of Palladius, are buried, and we have it on the authority of Colgan, who flourished in the seventeenth century, that they were still held in great veneration there in his time.

Palladius, disheartened, gave it all up and went back to Britain, where he died soon afterwards. Many ancient Irish authorities say charitably, and, for all we may ever know, justly, that it was not destined for him to be the apostle of the Irish people; and the short and troubled career of the zealous missionary seems to bear out the statement. That there were Christians in Ireland even before the coming of Palladius is evident from the direct testimony of the Venerable Bede, and from allusions contained in some very ancient native traditions, preserved in the Lives of St. Patrick, notably in the Tripartite Life, which, with the single exception, perhaps of St. Fiach's biographical poem, is the most ancient extant life of the Saint. There is even a legend that Cormac MacArt, who died A. D. 266, was a Christian; and, curiously enough, the lost Saltair, or psalter of Tara, of which he was the compiler, or which was, at least compiled under his direction, has led to a great controversy

among eminent Gaelic scholars as to why it was called by the name of Psalter, which is unmistakably a Christian word; some maintaining that the compilation, coming down from pagan times, received its name in Christian times. If the legend about the compiler were once proven to be historic fact, the controversy would at once be settled. It may be that the moral excellence of this King has caused his memory to come down to us through all those ages with a halo of Christianity around it.

Regarding pre-Palladian Christianity we have also the testimony of St. Prosper, the Chronicler of Aquitaine, who lived at the time of the event which he records. He tells us that in the year 431, Pope Celestine sent Palladius "to the Scots, believing in Christ, to be their first bishop." It will be remembered that the Irish were called Scots or Scoti even as late as the fifteenth century. It may be safe historically to surmise that the number of Christians must have been fairly considerable and the prospect of native subjects for ordination to the sacred ministry fairly good, to make the sending of a bishop necessary. Now how did it happen that Christianity, even in isolated little spots, existed in Ireland at this early time? Roman civiliza-

tion or Roman arms had never touched Ireland, and so this avenue of an accidental introduction of Christianity into Ireland by Christian soldiers in the Roman legions was precluded. It must be borne in mind, however, that at this remote age, there were large numbers of Christians in the neighboring island of Britain, and that there was much and frequent communication between the two countries. It is even regarded as probable that there was a well established Church in Britain as early as the third century. That Christianity had been preached in Britain, ages before, no one doubts. Under these circumstances it was simply impossible for the ancient Irish not to have had some knowledge of Christ before Palladius or Patrick, and this process of elimination makes the theory that they received it from Britain the only tenable one.

Notwithstanding all this, it does no serious violence to truth to say that St. Patrick found Ireland pagan and left it Christian. The story of Ireland's early Christianity has been often told and told well. Learned writers have elucidated the extension of Christianity from Ireland to the Continent of Europe by St. Columbanus and his followers, as also its

diffusion in Scotland, Northern England, and even in islands still farther to the North through the agency of St. Columbkille and his monks.

The following chapters on Ireland's peculiar form of ancient paganism may be found interesting. A few feeble survivals of the ancient pagan customs are still found in Ireland, harmlessly and beautifully pervading innocent pastimes and customs of the present day. They are however beginning to fade away like the twilight over Ireland's western mountains. The traces of them that remain are powerful in their human appeal.

CHAPTER II

Idolatry. Cromm Cruach. King Tigernmas. Cromm Dubh. Sprinkling of blood. Emania. No human sacrifices in St. Patrick's time.

WE may begin with the most repulsive form of the ancient paganism, and ask the question, were idols ever worshipped in Ireland? Some writers of repute say that the Irish never knelt to an idol. But the weight of historic testimony goes to show that this is merely a pleasing delusion. It would have been strange if the ancient Irish had fully escaped this abomination. They would have been alone in the whole wide world in this regard. On the contrary we are told by St. Patrick in his "Confessions," that up to the time of his coming, the Scots, that is the Irish, worshipped only idols and abominations; and in the Tripartite Life of our Apostle, we are told that Tara was the chief seat of "idlact ocus druidect," that is, of idolatry and druidism. It also records many instances of the overthrow and destruction of idols by him as a part of his life-work.

The most famous of these idols was Cromm Cruach. It was erected on the plain of Magh Slecht in the County of Cavan and was surrounded by twelve minor gods. It was covered with silver and gold and the minor gods with brass or bronze. Cromm Cruach is mentioned frequently in the Book of Linster. There is no fact of ancient history better attested than his existence. The plain where he stood may mean the plain of genuflection or the plain of slaughter, *slecht* being susceptible of either meaning, that is, indiscriminate slaughter or profound adoration, and while it certainly served as a place where divine honors were given to an idol, it also had served as a scene of slaughter. King Tigernmas and a whole host of his people were killed in some mysterious way while adoring this idol on a certain Samain or November Eve.

Cromm Cruach was the King idol of Erin and was supposed to exercise a kind of primacy over all other hand-made gods. The Dinnsenchus, a topographical tract, preserved in the Book of Linster, tells us that "until Patrick's advent it was the god of every people that colonized Ireland." Cromm Cruach with "his sub-gods twelve" was miraculously destroyed

by St. Patrick. It could have been thrown down like any other structure. It might have been overthrown by an earthquake, like the Colossus of Rhodes, or destroyed during the night of the "big wind";* but St. Patrick took his own way of doing all this, to show forth the power of God.

In the ancient Irish Literature, there is frequent reference to another idol. It was Cromm Dubh and he seems to have been next in importance to Cromm Cruach. The people have a distinct tradition of him. It is most interesting to hear them call the first Sunday in August domnac Cruim Duib, or Cromm Dubh's Sunday, as if he were one of the saints of the Calendar. As a matter of fact they unwittingly celebrate on that day the destruction of this idol. The Ultonians looked to Cerman Kelstach as their local deity, just as the Connacians and Munsterites looked to Cromm Dubh.

It is a sure thing that idolatry never prevailed universally in Ireland at any time. Less repulsive forms of paganism were widely spread. It must, however, be admitted on the authority of the Tripartite that the highest in the land

* An anachronism, but we believe it excusable.

knelt before idols. That document tells us that Leary the high King who greeted St. Patrick had offered divine worship to Cromm Cruach.

We have seen the statement made by serious historians that human sacrifices were offered to these gods. Certainly not in St. Patrick's time. There is no reference to them in his writings or in the works of his biographers. If this practice or any trace of it had existed in Ireland then, there is little doubt that he or some of the other early Christian writers would have referred to it, as they all showed an anxiety to expose in detail the abominations of paganism, and show by contrast the beauty and glory of Christianity. There is, however, at least a show of evidence that at a period many centuries before St. Patrick's coming, human blood was spilt in sacrifice. The Dinnsenchus, referring to Cromm Cruach says, "To him they would kill their wretched piteous offspring with much wailing and peril to pour out their blood around Cromm Cruach. Milk and honey they would ask of him speedily in return for one third of their healthy issue. Great was the horror and the scare of him. To him noble Gaels would prostrate themselves.

From the worship of him with many manslaughters, the plain is called Magh Slecht." This testimony is not taken seriously by any of the great Gaelic scholars, because the document, from which it is taken, is completely and absolutely legendary and mythological in its accounts of the origin of place names. And it is in such a connection the above statement is found. The tract is generally correct in giving the name of the place, but unreliable in giving the historical reason of the name. The late Whitly Stokes, once the great Celticist of Oxford University, found a tradition in British India to the effect that in prehistoric times human blood was sprinkled on the foundations on which great buildings were to be raised. The purpose was to bring the boon of long duration to the edifice. This superstition pervaded the whole Aryan world. And even Cormac MacCullinan, Archbishop of Cashel and King of Munster, who died about the year A. D. 903, tells us that the palace of Emania, the famous royal residence of Ulster, was so called because human blood, which is in Greek "haima," had been sprinkled on its foundations. This explanation, no doubt, is far-fetched, but it shows that the superstition prevailed.

In this connection also an interesting story is found in the Book of Fermoy which, on account of its classical and scriptural analogies, we give here. Certain Irish druids recommended that a boy, distinguished by certain peculiar personal characteristics, be killed and his blood sprinkled on the door posts of Tara to remove a blight, which the crime of a certain woman had brought on corn and milk all over the country. The boy was saved by a wonderfully beautiful cow that had appeared at the last moment and was slain in his stead. The blight ceased. In Homer you have the story of Iphigenia; in the Bible, Isaac. What food for historical reflection does it not give to find that, as in all the distant Orient, so in ancient Ireland also, are found such traces, distorted indeed, but, nevertheless interesting, of the scenes and incidents and mysteries arising from the intercourse of the Creator with primitive man. The East was our cradle-land, the West evidently our destination.

CHAPTER III

Idolatry not very general. No National religion. The Fairies. Who were the fairies? November Eve excursions. Finn MacCumal's "thumb of Knowledge."

THE ancient Irish had an immense pantheon to select from. None of the gods enjoyed an unquestioned supremacy like Zeus among the Greeks, or Jupiter among the Romans. There was no well defined and connected system of religion. Nevertheless the ancient Irish were a very religious people. Each one worshipped whatever god or goddess he chose, prayed in whatever way he liked and wherever he liked. There were no temples and not much prayer. Under the slavery of paganism the Irishman was a free lance, following his own taste unquestioningly. Under the freedom and liberty of the Gospel truth, he is the firmest supporter of religious or ecclesiastical authority and the staunchest devotee of a beautiful, harmonious and logical religious system. But let us come

to the Fairies; we want to introduce them. And now, gentle reader, we are only bringing back to your recollection a class of beings who are, very likely, old acquaintances of yours. Perhaps you have seen them yourself, or have seen somebody who saw them. You spent your younger days in some country place or little town in Ireland and you remember distinctly what a source of terror, and of mysterious, indefinable awe these fairies were to you, and what an influence they had on your general behavior. Invisible themselves, they made you careful and circumspect in many ways, particularly if you were of an imaginative and nervous temperament. You little knew or thought that these very fairies were the object of religious belief and worship in Ireland before the introduction of Christianity.

You yourself knew very well there were no such things as fairies. You did not believe in them. Nevertheless a lurking fear that perhaps after all they were all around you haunted you; and if, in the dusk of evening, when the twilight had almost all faded away, you had to pass over Cnoc-an-t-sio-dain * or go by the Sgeac Mor (large tree) that stood all alone on the top of

* Pronounced "Cnuck a teeyawn."

the little lonesome-looking hill, in spite of all your efforts to brace yourself, a strange fear, enhanced by the awful silence prevailing, and an impulse to run for your life came upon you. But you would not be a coward. You would walk at your accustomed pace. You would be brave and manly, but it took an awful effort. Imagination played havoc with your better knowledge and judgment, and beads of perspiration stood out in bold relief on your brow. You certainly would have run; but you were afraid to let the fairies know you were afraid; and besides you knew they were a frolicsome, pranky little set, fond of a joke, and might give chase, and your last condition would be worse than your first. At last, in sight of your own door, you breathed more freely, a new accession of courage came to you, you felt you had a safe handicap for the run, you took to your heels, made a dash for home, rushed in the door, put the family in a panic, and brought the immediate conviction that you had "seen something." Whether there were fairies or not you were glad you were in-doors.

This incident, which is by no means all imagination, illustrates the mental attitude of many people towards the fairies, I should

say even yet, in some remote parts of the country.

Some writers speak of the tenacity of paganism. No denizens of the ancient Irish Pantheon can compare with the fairies in their hold on the Irish imagination, and in their persistency in clinging to their rights on Irish soil.

Who were, or rather who are, the fairies? Let us begin the answer to this question by the note from O'Curry's "Manuscript Materials of Ancient Irish History," where he explains the word Banshee: "The word 'beanside' (banshee) literally, 'woman of the fairy mansions' meant a woman from the fairy mansions of the hills, or the land of immortality. In other words it meant, according to the ancient legendary belief, a woman of that Tuatha De Danaan race which preceded the Milesians, and which, on their conquest by the latter, were believed to have retired from this life to enjoy an invisible immortality in the hills, lakes, fountains and islands of Erin where it was reported they were to remain until the last judgment. From this state of existence they were of old believed to be able to reappear at pleasure in the ordinary forms of men and women. And this ancient belief regarding the Tuatha De Danaan, whose

sudden disappearance from our ancient history seems to have been only accounted for in this manner, still lingers among the people of modern Ireland in the form of the superstitious reverence for what they now call the fairies or good people."

When one considers the immensity of the ancient Irish Pantheon, composed, as it was, of war gods and war goddesses, demons of the air, sprites of the valley, common ghosts, spectres and goblins, leprecawns, banshees, fairies of various kinds, one cannot help thinking that the mortal inhabitants were in constant danger of being crowded or scared into the surrounding seas. It was certainly high time for St. Patrick to come and tell these people of the *one true God.* It was Father Tom Burke who said that the Irish had a wonderful way of realizing or visualizing the unseen. This brings to mind the admonition of St. Paul: "Let your conversation be in heaven." Their conversation, the burden and trend of their thought was in heaven, even though a mistaken heaven.

No class of divinities received such widespread worship as the fairies. Some thought that the retired Tuatha De Danaan constituted the entire fairy body. But the weight of authority

goes to show that this is not so. These merely joined forces and cast in their lot with an already organized fairy kingdom. They were not absorbed by this pre-existing body. They retained their own distinct peculiarities. They remained a class in themselves. They are often described as gods or elves who had their dwellings on earth. Some of them were mortal, others immortal. These owed their immortality to Mannanan MacLir's ale which they drank copiously and to his swines' flesh which they ate with a relish. This particular diet was an antidote against disease and decay and death. This ale is not brewed at the present day. The recipe must have been lost, ages gone by. Some of the fairies that were mortal lived to an immense age. Those we find mentioned in the ancient Irish manuscripts are men and women of ordinary stature, having their troubles among themselves, and troubles with "mortals" too. They made love to mortals and were loved in return. They fought against mortals and mortals fought against them and often defeated them in spite of their immense natural and acquired advantages in war as in love.

Samain, or November Eve, must have been

a night of terror in Ancient Erin. The Ectra Nerai, or adventures of Nera, published by Kuno Meyer in the *Revue Celtique* says that "demons appear on that night," and that the "shees of Erin are always open at Samain."

The Fe Fiada was what made the fairies invisible. We do not know what this was; but it reminds us of the Tarnkappe, often called the Nebelkappe, which, in the Niebelungenlied, made Siegfried invisible when he donned it. The Fe Fiada was taken off on November Eve. The "good people" threw open their doors this night, kept open house and held high revel. Whole hosts of them rushed out of doors also and roamed whithersoever they chose all over the country. Many of these were vicious and malevolent and hence the more prudent among the mortals remained within doors. Most of the really good fairies remained in the duns or shees. These were favorably disposed towards mortals and were known to have treated them hospitably, according as the humor seized them. The shees were never entirely deserted or left unguarded. But if one got near enough he could look into them and see their grandeur and treasures. He could not be quite sure that he was welcome to

inspect them very closely, or, in fact, to inspect them at all. There was always more or less risk. For, if there was one thing more than another the fairies insisted on, it was that a man should mind his own business; or, at least, that he might not pry into their affairs however much he might want to extend his uninvited solicitude to the affairs of mortals like himself.

Finn MacCumal had an experience with a fairy which we insert here in the language into which Professor O'Curry translated it from an old Irish text. "The history of Finn MacCumal's thumb of Knowledge," says he, "as related in the ancient Irish tales, is a very wild one indeed; but it is so often alluded to that I may as well state it here. It is shortly this: Upon a certain occasion this gallant warrior was hunting near Slievenamon in the present county of Tipperary; he was standing at a spring-well when a strange woman came suddenly upon him, filled a silver tankard at the spring, and immediately afterwards walked away with it. Finn followed her, unperceived, until she came to the side of the hill, when a concealed door opened suddenly and she walked in. Finn attempted to follow her farther but

the door was shut so quickly that he was only able to put his hand on the door post, with the thumb inside. It was with great difficulty that he was able to extricate the thumb, and having done so, he immediately thrust it, bruised as it was, into his mouth to ease the pain. No sooner had he done so than he found himself possessed of the gift of foreseeing future events. This gift was not, we are told, always present, but only when he bruised or chewed his thumb." This was probably the reason why he never volunteered any information about the future. He had always to be asked for it.

The MacGniomarta Finn, or youthful exploits of Finn, a very ancient little tract, gives a different version of this story. It says that Finn went to the school of Finneigeas on the Boyne to study literature. Finn's name was then Demne. Finneigeas had been seven years trying to catch the salmon of the pool of Feic. It had been foretold that he would eat this salmon and then that there would "be nothing he would not know." The salmon was finally caught and turned over to Demne to be cooked. Demne was strictly ordered not to eat a bite of it. But in the act of cooking it, he burned his

thumb, which he forthwith put in his mouth to ease the pain. He reported the incident to Finneigeas who at once changed his name from Demne to Finn, that is the Fair, and declared that it was "his privilege to eat the fish and acquire the gift of prophecy which he himself had missed."

CHAPTER IV

Quarrels of the fairies. Irish Mythology. Friendly and matrimonial relations between fairies and mortals. The Banshee. Mangan. Moore.

AN illustration of the quarrels of the fairies among themselves is given in the Rennes Dinnsenchus. A serious quarrel had happened between two parties of fer side, or fairy men. They decided to fight it out. They assumed the shapes of deer and met on the plain of Moenmagh in Connaught. The battle that ensued was so terrific and the numbers slain on either side so vast that hoofs and antlers enough were left to form several large fairy mounds.

Our readers will take this, as a matter of course, for what it is, a fairy story. Our ancestors, when they were pagans, believed it to be an historical fact. Otherwise they would not have taken it seriously, and their writers would not have committed it to writing as a piece of serious history. It is not mere im-

agination or Irish exaggeration. It is not, of course, history to us. It is mythology, pure and simple.

All the great nations of antiquity, like Ireland, have their mythological and heroic, as well as historical periods. The admirable, the terrible, the horrible, the repulsive, as well as love and war, figure in the Irish mythology as they do in the mythologies of ancient Greece and Rome.

But to return to the fairies. We find them in constant intercourse with men, sometimes to the advantage, but more frequently to the detriment of the latter. Fairies and mortals even intermarried. It happened frequently that a man or woman had his or her *leanan side*,* or fairy follower, which was in reality a fairy lover.

It is said of Fingin Mac Luchta, who was King of South Munster in the second century, that his *leanan side* used to visit him every Samain or November Eve, and take him to see the fairy palaces and their treasures.

Ancient writers record innumerable instances of such attachments. In the Sylva Gadelica, published by Standish Hayes O'Grady, it is

* Pronounced lanawn shee.

recorded that Fachna, a King of Ulster, had a *fer side*, a fairy man or friend, who told him even of things that were yet to happen.

By far the most frequent and familiar kind of leanan side was the *bean side* (banshee), whose wail was heard when her mortal protege was about to die, or when some mortal affliction was about to visit the family over whose destinies she exerted a watchful and loving care.

What a wonderful kind of pagan guardian angel was she; or, rather, is she; for very many Irish people do not find the courage or the heart to say or to believe that the last banshee has yet disappeared.

In fact, until very recent times, and we might safely say that even up to the present, in some places, there are many splendid families who would feel as if they had sustained some mysterious loss, or injury to their family pride, if they had to abandon definitely the lurking belief that this devoted sprite still loved them.

Tom Moore introduces the banshee in the melody in which he sings:

"How oft has the banshee cried!
How oft has death untied
Bright links that glory wove,
Sweet bonds entwined by love!

Peace to each manly soul that sleepeth;
Rest to each faithful eye that weepeth;
Long may the fair and brave
Sigh o'er the hero's grave."

But as Moore's special reference is to Admiral Nelson his introduction of the banshee is far-fetched. Nelson was not an Irishman.

CHAPTER V

Cave or palace of Cruachan. Virgil's harpies. Whittier's "haunted glen." Mysterious disappearances. Nora Hopper's poem. Ossian and Tir na n-og.

THERE are many people who think that, outside of the infernal regions, there is no hell-gate anywhere except in the East River, near New York City. This is a mistake. On the banks of the Shannon, in the County of Roscommon, Ireland, stood the ancient palace of Cruachan, the residence of the kings and queens of Connaught for many centuries.

Near this palace was a cave which figures in many an ancient *Togbail* or siege story. The cave is still there, of course, and traditions of those ancient fights linger round it. It would have been hard to understand why great hosts of brave soldiers should have fought for this cavern, if mythological history had not made it clear that this place was, itself, a residence,

and that fairies fought against fairies for it; and mortals frequently became mixed up in those fights, sometimes fighting on their own responsibility to dispossess the fairies or to oust other mortals.

The cave of Cruachan figures principally in that age when the mythological cycle was fast disappearing and its dark shadows yielding to the dawn of the heroic period.

The cave is, perhaps, best remembered as the abode of the most malignant of the fairy elves or demons. It was called the hell-gate of Ireland because it was from it that, on November Eve, the most terrifying and noxious of the spectral hosts, that made that night hideous, burst forth. Copper-red birds, three-headed vultures and other demons, terrible to behold, issued from it and, with their poisonous breath, blasted and blighted everything with which they came in contact.

This reminds us of Virgil's Harpies, which in their flight corrupted the very atmosphere with their filth. To bring matters nearer home, that cave itself recalls the "Weird Gathering" of Whittier, that fearful assemblage of demons, witches, sorcerers and hideous spectres which he describes as gathering at the sound of the

blood-curdling, midnight trumpet, and coming together for an unholy purpose in that

"—— wild and haunted glenn,
'Twixt Saugus and Naumkeag." *

We do not know exactly where that glen is; but we surmise that the poet only picked out some definite cavern so as to give the picture in his mind "a local habitation and a name" and, incidentally, without intending it, to give some undefined spot a very bad name.

As for the Irish fairies, even the "good people" or benevolent elves made themselves objects of terror by their propensity to steal people away. They did this in various ways. Mysterious disappearances, whether for a time or for all time, were as a general thing accounted for in this way.

Many of our readers will remember also that many people who died in Ireland, at least apparently, and whom they had seen dead, did not really die at all, but were carried away to the nearest fairy mansion, a real fairy having assumed the role of corpse for a blind and to supply a wake and funeral.

This suspicion was deep and serious when a promising young person pined away.

* The Indian name for Salem.

We believe, however, that this particular relic or adjunct of the ancient pagan belief has passed away. The tradition exists, notwithstanding, that the person thus carried away found life in fairyland indescribably pleasant and hence the concluding lines in Nora Hopper's beautiful little poem on the "Girl from Faeryland":

"For half my heart's in Faeryland.
And half is here on earth,
And half I'm spoiled for sorrow,
And half I'm strange to mirth,
And my feet are wild for dancing,
And my neighbor's feet are slow —
Why did you take me, Gentle Folk?
Why did you let me go?"

We find the same tradition spun out into a delightful Gaelic poem of 740 lines by Michael Comyn of Clare about the year 1750. The poem is called "Tir na n-og," or "The Land of the Youth" — that is, of perpetual youth — and tells how Ossian, the famous Irish poet and hero of the third century, went away willingly with "Niam of the Golden Hair" to that blissful land and lived there in happy wedlock with her for over two hundred years; when finally becoming anxious to know what had become of the Feni or heroes he had left, and

particularly of his father Finn, he came to Ireland on a milk white steed and was told by all the people he met and questioned that Finn and the Feni had passed away ages before.

Accidentally touching mother earth, against which he had been particularly cautioned, the fairy bloom of youth left him, and he became suddenly afflicted with all the decreptitude of his enormous age. A great anachronism is solved and he is made a contemporary of St. Patrick; and a semblance of foundation in fact, or at least in poetic fancy, is given to the quaint and beautiful and at times humorous dialogues between the saint and "the helpless, hopeless, blind, old man."

One of the reasons, if not the only reason, for the composition of Tir na n-og was to explain away this anachronism, which the "Ossianic poems," magnificent as they are, had created, by making Ossian and St. Patrick engage in dialogue. From this point of view it is a most beautiful literary contrivance.

The Ossianic poems, to which we refer, are of comparatively modern date, but founded on the ancient legends and tales.

The extent to which religious worship was given to the fairies in ancient times is very well

attested by the fact that in modern Ireland seventy-two townlands have the word "shee" as a prefix or affix to their names. The fairies were called the "good people," "na daoine maite" to propitiate them. The latter day hold of this belief on the popular fancy is due more to its poetry than to its philosophy. It is no violent transition, however, to pass from a belief in the banshee to a belief in a guardian angel. In St. Fiac's metrical life of St. Patrick there is a phrase worthy of consideration. It refers to the people as "tuata adorta side"; a people adoring the "shee" or fairies. Windisch in his "Irische Texte," has, instead of this reading, "tuata adorta idla," substituting "idols" for "shee." This poem was written during St. Patrick's own lifetime. Its author was bishop of Sletty. In the Tripartite Life of our Apostle there is a passage which runs thus: Patrick went afterwards to the fountain, i.e., Clibech, on the slopes of Cruachan at sunrise. Leary MacNeill's two daughters, Eithne the Fair, and Feidelm the red went early to the fountain as they were wont to, when they found the synod of clerics at the well, with white garments and their books before them. They wondered at the

appearance of the clerics and imagined they were "fire-side" or phantoms. They questioned Patrick: "Whence are you and whither have you come? Is it from the 'side' (shee)? Are you gods?" The passage goes on to relate the conversation of the maidens, their questions having given the Saint an excellent opportunity to enlighten their enquiring minds about the one true God. How natural it was that the strange and unexpected habiliments and general make-up of the Christian bishops caused the pagan maidens to take them for fairies. It gives us a new idea of this belief as it existed in the fifth century. So solidly was it established that it has taken fifteen hundred years to eradicate it completely.

As to the etymology of the word "side" or "shee," Dr. Todd, in his "Life of St. Patrick" says, "It is doubtful whether the word is cognate with the Latin 'sedes,' a seat or habitation, or whether it comes from the Celtic 'side,' a blast of wind." We connect it with the 'sedes.' It is not that the Irish borrowed the word from the Latin. The Latin may have borrowed it from the Irish. "Shee" is rarely, if ever, employed in the modern language for a blast of wind. Instead, *Sinean*, a modification of it,

is used. The word "shee" originally applied to the fairies themselves. Colgan says, "Fantastical spirits are by the Irish called 'side,' because they are seen, as it were, to come out of beautiful hills to infest people, and hence the vulgar (common) belief that they reside in certain subterraneous habitations within these hills, and these habitations and sometimes the hills themselves are called by the Irish 'side.'"

We beg our readers to observe that the "d" in this word is silent. The "d" and the final "e" show that the "i" is long. "S" before a slender vowel has an "sh" sound; hence the pronunciation "shee." Any simplification of the spelling of Irish words by eliminating what seem to be unnecessary letters would make an attempt to get at their etymology extremely difficult.

CHAPTER VI

Universality of the belief in fairies. Plato's theory. Oriental types. Moral cleanliness of Irish Mythology. Shelley's Queen Mab. Shakespeare's fairies; Puck. Milton's Comus. Irish language and Christianity. Spencer's Faery Queen.

THERE was no nation of antiquity that had not a fairy belief of some kind. We find fairies and demons in Hesiod and Plato. We find them in the Peris of the Orientals. We find them in the rural districts of Greece and Rome. The Romans had their Lares to preside over their homes and lands; and their Penates, whose functions were almost identical with those of their Lares. Their Manes were mostly the spirits of their dead and sometimes also the word was applied to the abode of the dead. Plato thought that the crimes of men lived after them in palpable or tangible shape; and these, in his opinion, were the Manes, which tormented the shades of those that had committed them.

As to the Oriental types of fairies, who has not read with astonishment of some Arabian genie developing from a huge column of smoke, released from condensation in a little shrine or casket of some kind, and where is the one whose memory could lose all trace of the little men, a foot and a half in height, appearing before the court in enchanted palaces, carrying bars of iron, forty feet long, across their shoulders, and knocking their enemies far into the hereafter with a blow from one of those terrible weapons?

The Aryan world had its distinctive pantheon. It was grave and sombre and terrible. When it reached Ireland it became invested with a poetical fascination. It was also cleansed, considerably, from the voluptuousness that had defiled it in its eastern home. It became thoroughly Irish and soon comprised within its walls the great Tuatha De Danaan race. We know the primitive fairies only as a class or kingdom. We know the Tuatha De Danaan fairies by the names of their chiefs or leaders.

One of the most remarkable things about the mythological literature of Ireland is its comparative moral cleanliness. We sometimes meet with a primitiveness of expression with which we can hardly quarrel at this distance of time.

There are also, as shown by De Jubainville, a few, very few cases of sexual crime; but instead of being laughed at or condoned, as they would be by Homer's gods, they are made the cause of relentless strife and sometimes of desolating wars.

This alone would show that Irish mythology was clean in itself and that it did not, as some claim, owe its purification to the zeal of the saints of later days, who were largely the transcribers of its records.

The unexpurgated editions of Shakespeare alone, and even of the Catholic Dryden, contain more impure suggestiveness than is to be found in all of Ireland's pagan literature.

These productions of modern times are a thousand times more of a menace and a danger to weak human nature; and as for Shelley's teachings of free love and of other doctrines that naturally go with this, and are intrinsically subversive of all social order, you seek in vain for anything like them in the pagan literature of Ireland.

Of Shakespeare and Dryden we speak with profound respect and with deep reverence for their genius and we feel that if they were writing in our times they would, in delicate

matters, have accommodated their phraseology to our more refined ears and keener moral sensibilities.

Mention of Shelley brings to mind the disappointment a man feels when he first goes to read "Queen Mab." It is a grand poem, sublime in conception, rich and powerful in expression. At least that is our recollection of it. But to one who retains a more or less laudable respect for the clean mythology of ancient Ireland, it seems a little less than a sacrilege to introduce the hazy and venerable fairy queen of antiquity and make her the prophetess of a socialism of the rankest kind, inveighing against "King" and "Priest," and in their persons, against all constituted authority, and against all the powers that go to keep society together.

Queen Mab takes with her in her airy chariot, and carries even beyond the orbits of the planets of our solar system, to her fairy palace in the ether of inconceivable distance, a temporarily disembodied spirit which she indoctrinates, reaching a climax in what we shall call a bitter denunciation of the institution of marriage. We call it by this name, because to adhere too closely to the diction of the original would be

all the more offensive to ordinarily refined and modest ears by the power and majesty and clearness of its expression.

With Shakespeare's fairies, almost everybody is acquainted. There is Ariel, the trusty, and Oberon and Titania, both benevolent and magnificent sprites. And Puck; what shall we say of him? He is undoubtedly the Pooka brought into Ireland by the Danes; but, perhaps, the Danes brought a Pooka into England too. This is our opinion, and we wish they had left him there. The Irish pooka is far more villainous than his English brother. His chief diversion consists in scaring people out of their wits, and all for the pure deviltry of it.

We shall allow an Englishman, Charles Lamb, to describe the tricks of the English pooka. "Puck," says Lamb "(or, as he was sometimes called, 'Robin Goodfellow') was a shrewd and knavish sprite, that used to play comical pranks in the neighboring villages; sometimes getting into the dairies and skimming the milk; sometimes plunging his light and airy form into the butter churn, and while he was dancing his fantastic shape in the churn, in vain the dairy-maid would labor to change her cream into butter: nor had the village swains

any better success; whenever Puck chose to play his freaks in the brewing copper, the ale was sure to be spoiled.

"When a few good neighbors were met to drink some comfortable ale together, Puck would jump into the bowl of ale in the likeness of a roasted crab, and when some old goody was going to drink, he would bob against her lips and spill the ale over her withered chin; and presently after when the same old dame was gravely seating herself to tell her neighbors a sad and melancholy story, Puck would slip her three-legged stool from under her, and down toppled the poor old woman, and then the old gossips would hold their sides and laugh at her, and swear they never wasted a merrier hour."

We remember to have seen Milton's Comus somewhere referred to as a fay or fairy of the Middle Ages; and if the blind old Puritan bard presented to the world this sprite whose purpose in life seemed to have been to lure to a doom worse than death any maidens who happened to be lost in the woods, he made up for the offensive obtrusion, to some extent, by introducing Sabrina, the real fay or fairy of the benevolent kind, the nymph who gave her services to the rescuing of such hapless mortals.

We find it difficult to determine when the word "fairy" was introduced into the English language. But we know that it came through the French. "Feer" means to enchant, and the noun "fee" means fay or fairy, a class of beings which are represented as being, as a general thing, extraordinarily beautiful. Like the muses and graces and nymphs of ancient classic literature, there is a poetical fascination about them, and they lend a charming character to medieval romance.

One might suppose that the fairies and spirits of Shakespeare might have been suggested by the fairies of Ireland; but it is far more probable that they are the traces or relics of the great mythology left all over the face of Europe by the great Celtic migration which started from Scythia, or more remotely from Asia, on the southwest bank of the Indus, and reached its "Ultima Thule" in Ireland and in the highlands of Scotland, in both of which places its most distinctive traditions are found to-day.

Where the Irish language is most prevalent as a spoken language is where the fairy traditions exist most clearly; and this, notwithstanding the fact that that language became per-

meated and pervaded by the spirit of Christianity to such an extent that in the presence of a calamity that might be thought to be of fairy origin, the sign of the cross is at once made, and the sacred names of Jesus and Mary invoked.

To such an extent was the Irish language bound up with Christianity that the interests of the one became the interests of the other; they were both subjected to the same common proscription; and we can say there is no doubt whatever that that tongue, differentiating the Catholic Irishman from the English-speaking Protestant, was a powerful human agency in the hands of Providence to help divine grace in preserving the faith in Ireland.

But we came near forgetting to state that the French "fees" were the "fata" of Low Latin and of the Italian, and are supposed to have been suggested by the "Parcae" or "Fates" of ancient Rome. The Irish fairies are largely of the same genus, but are so distinctively Irish that they form a class in themselves. They spoke the Irish language as the Catholics did, and some of the most interesting and amusing stories of the peasantry in Gaelic Ireland, even now, represent the fairies as good

Catholics, particularly averse to swearing and profanity. Why the fairy traditions, — we hate to call them superstitions — among the unlettered are co-existent and co-extensive with Irish as a spoken language is a psychological fact that we cannot undertake to explain here.

There is hardly a doubt but that it was in Ireland Shelley got his Queen Mab, for it was there she was queen; and if there is anybody who does not know where Spencer got his notions of the "Faery Queen," let him remember that Queen Elizabeth, in her plantation of Munster, gave that poet something over three thousand acres in that fertile province; that he lived there and that after the publication of his poem, or of some considerable portions of it, he was given an annual pension of fifty pounds, an enormous revenue for those times.

The fact is, it was not an Irish Fairy Queen Spencer portrayed at all, but an English one; that one was Elizabeth herself. His brilliant imagination enriches her character with all the virtues, and endows her person with all the charms of the ideal fairy queen. He embellishes the Court of St. James with treasures stolen from the fairy mansions of Ireland.

CHAPTER VII

Fairy belief in ninth and succeeding centuries. Two classes of gods. Pessimistic and optimistic views of fairies. Evils they could inflict. The Book of the Dun Cow.

RATHER than dwell any further here on middle age and modern conceptions of the fairies, we retire again into the mists of antiquity and ransack a few more references made to them in our ancient literature. In the tale of the "Sick Bed of Cuculain," in the "Book of the Dun Cow" (Libur na h-Uidre), we find the following: — "For the demoniac power was great before the faith; and such was its greatness that the demons used to corporeally tempt the people, and they used to show them delights and secrets such as how they might become immortal. And it was to these phantoms the ignorant used to apply the name Sidhe (Shee)."

The passage we quoted from the Tripartite Life some time ago gives an idea of the fairy belief that prevailed in the fifth century. This

present citation shows what it was in the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries; but the idea it gives of the "good people" is entirely too gloomy. The "Sick Bed of Cuculain" was published in the *Atlantis;* and O'Curry, editing it in that magazine, was so influenced by its reference to the "Shee" and their demoniac power as to get the same pessimistic notion of them. In Appendix No. 21, page 504, of his "Manuscript Materials of Ancient Irish History," he says: "Of the fir-shee, fairy men, and the ben-shee, or man-shee, fairy women, there were, however, two classes. One of these was supposed to consist of demons, who took on themselves human bodies of men or women, and by making love to the sons and daughters of men, and revealing to them delusive views of a glorious prospective immortality, seduced them into a fatal union by which they were forever lost from God.

"The second class consisted of the Tuatha De Danaan, a people said to have been devoted altogether to the practices of Druidism and the Black Art. This people in fact were the possessors of Erin at the coming of the Milesian Colony; and having been conquered by the Milesians, and disdaining to live in subjection

to a more material and less spiritual power than their own, their chiefs were imagined to have put on the garb of a heathen immortality, and selecting for themselves the most beautiful situations of hills, lakes, islands, etc., throughout the land, to have built for themselves, or caused to spring up, splendid halls in the midst of those chosen situations, into which they entered, drawing a veil of magic around them to hide them from mortal eyes, but through which they had power to see all that was passing on earth.

"These immortal mortals were then believed not only to take husbands and wives from amongst the sons and daughters of men, but also to give and receive mutual assistance in their battles and wars respectively."

It is clear that O'Curry thought the aboriginal fairies to have been demons in the darkest sense of the word, and that the passage in "Book of the Dun Cow" represented them as such; while the Tuatha De Danaan accession to the fairy kingdom might be considered to have brought considerable human goodness with it.

The pessimistic idea was probably induced by the Christian clergy in their zealous desire to detach the people from a superstition that was evidently clinging to them.

The idea of the "shee" given by the writer of the Tripartite is thoroughly bright and optimistic; there is no reason for supposing that he ever thought of distinguishing between the two classes of fairies, if, indeed, he knew anything about these divisions.

The idea, however, we have found handed down to us from antiquity is that whether these beings are benevolent or otherwise, intercourse with them was regarded as boding evil to mortals. Very little good has been known to result from it. They were dreaded rather than loved. And the deference shown them was intended to propitiate them, or avert the evil they might do.

They could make themselves visible to some, while remaining invisible to all others standing around, just as Pallas Athene talked with Achilles and was seen by him, while none of the other Greeks in his company saw her at all; or just as Prospero in the "Tempest" takes precautions not to have his daughter Miranda see him talking with Ariel, because he knows she cannot see the sprite, and that she would, therefore, think her father was talking to himself.

It is this sense of the presence of the fairies

and the thought that they might be eavesdropping that made people speak of them with deference.

The manifold evil they could do is mentioned in such ancient documents as the "Seanchus Mor," and the story of the Voyage of Bran. They could cause a blight of the crops or strike cattle with disease. Even to this day, when cattle or human beings, by depredation or in any other way, desecrate a haunted liss or fairy fort, and get sick afterwards, their misfortune is attributed to fairy vengeance, no matter how clear the natural cause of the malady may be.

And there has been a race of impostors who profited financially by encouraging this superstition among the people. They pretended to have learned from the "good people," themselves, ways and means of counteracting the effects of fairy malignity, and these ways and means were as weird and uncanny as anything ever concocted by Shakespeare's witches.

"The Book of the Dun Cow," so called because written on the hide of a brown cow, was compiled about the year 1100. Its contents are Pagan and Christian, historical and romantic, but principally romantic. It has also some

gloomy pieces, such as the history of the pagan cemeteries, and the elegy on Saint Columbkille, supposed to have been written by Dallan Forgail, his contemporary and friend.

The eleventh century compiler interlined this elegy with a gloss, explaining the words then obsolete. The gloss itself is now obsolete. Its presence, however, gives the poem great philological importance.

The whole compilation has been published in facsimile by the Royal Irish Academy with preface and description of contents. The Libur na h-Uidre has the distinction of being one of those books for which a battle was fought. It was "forcibly" taken from the men of Connaught, into whose hands it had fallen "in ransom for O'Doherty."

This is another evidence of the high value set on learning and on books by the ancient Irish.

CHAPTER VIII

The Irish called Scoti and Ireland Scotia. Caledonia called Scotia Minor. Irish and Erse languages. Landing of the Milesians in Ireland. Amergin's decision.

ON page 175 of the fifth volume of the publications of the long since defunct Ossianic Society, we find Porphyrus, the platonic philosopher; Claudian, the Latin poet of the fourth century; Ethicus, the Cosmographer; Saint Prosper, who died A.D. 466; Orosius, the Spanish historian, who flourished in the beginning of the fifth century; Gildas Britanicus in the sixth century, and Saint Isodore and Venerable Bede in the seventh; and Saint Donatus, Bishop of Fiesoli who died A.D. 840, all referred to as calling the Irish Scoti and Ireland Scotia, or saying, as Ethicus did, that Ireland was inhabited by the Scoti.

And we know from Roden's "Insel der Heiligen" that the Irish were called Scots even as late as the fifteenth century, in several cities of Germany, Belgium, France and Switzerland

where "Schottenkloester" or Irish monasteries had been founded, and were still largely supplied with religious from Ireland. And of course we know very well that the great John Duns Scotus, and the lesser lights Scotus Erigena and Marianus Scotus were so called in the Middle Ages to distinguish their nationality.

It was about the eleventh century, according to many eminent authorities, that the name became fixed on Scotland, or Caledonia, which then, and for a long time after, was known as Scotia Minor, on account of the predominant influence obtained by Ireland there through her colonies.

At that time the Gaelic language of Scotland and the Gaelic of Ireland were identical. Now the Erse, or Scotch, is a dialect of the Irish. And, anterior to that time, the Scotch Gaelic has no literature of its own as distinct from the ancient Irish literature.

The Milesians, or original Scots, had much trouble in effecting a landing in Ireland. Coming from Spain where they had been for ages, they approached the Irish coast, to find the magical arts of the Tuatha De Danaan in full operation to prevent their landing. Now the island is made invisible; now it is seen, but

only as a thin long ridge of land almost submerged; and, somehow, impossible to approach.

Finally, however, they were able to anchor their ships at the mouth of the river Slaney in B.C. 3505.

Ireland at the time was governed by three Tuatha De Danaan kings, MacCoill, MacCecht and MacGreine; and their queens were respectively Eire, Fodla and Banba, each of whom gave her name to Ireland; but the name, Eire, is that which sticks, to the present day. The other two names are beautiful, indeed, but have almost ever been relegated to the fields of romance and poetry.

The Milesians accomplished little or nothing from their location at the mouth of the Slaney. They were driven out to sea by a magical storm, and we next hear of them landing at Inver Skene or Kenmare Bay. They marched north to Drumcain, which was afterwards called Tara, met the three kings there and demanded that they surrender the sovereignty of Ireland or fight for it.

The De Danaan kings pretended to have been taken by surprise, and complained that that was not a fair and square way of waging war or demanding surrender. They wanted at

least three days to consider whether they would give up the island and leave it, or submit to the Milesian yoke, or raise an army and give battle; and in the interval they wanted the invaders to leave the island altogether.

Amergin, one of the sons of Miled, and chief brehon and bard of the colony, was appealed to as to the justice of the claims of the De Danaan, and the appeal came from the De Danaan themselves. As we are getting this information from the introduction to Amergin's poems in the Books of Lecan and Ballymote, we prefer to give some of the dialogue.

"We," said MacCoill, son of Cearmad, "will abide by the decision of Amergin, your own brehon, and should he pronounce a false judgment it is certain that he will be killed by us."

So sure were they that injustice would not pass unpunished.

"Pronounce the judgment, Amergin," said Eber Donn, the Milesian.

"I will," said Amergin, "let them have the island."

"What direction shall we take?" said Eber Donn.

"We are to set out nine waves to sea," said Amergin.

"That," says the scribe, "was the first judgment pronounced by the Milesians in Ireland."

Amergin delivered this judgment in a poem of eight verses. By means of a gloss interlined by a later scribe, Owen Connellan of the Queen's College, Cork, about the middle of the last century, was able to translate or rather, as he himself expresses it, to interpret, this most interesting and curious relic of antiquity. Here is his translation:

"The men whom we found dwelling in the land, to them is possession due by right. It is, therefore, your duty to set out to sea over nine green waves; and if you shall be able to land again in spite of them, you are to engage them in battle, and I adjudge to you the land wherein you found them living. I adjudge to you the land in which you found them dwelling, by the right of battle. But although you may desire the land which these people possess, yet yours is the duty to show them justice. I forbid you from injustice to those you have found in the land, however you may desire to obtain it."

CHAPTER IX

Contest of Milesian valor with Danaan magical art. Donn. Aranan. Milesians nine waves out to sea. Great storm raised. Digression to Amergin's poems and ancient Irish metre. Milesians, after several losses, land. Battles of Slieve Mish and Taillte.

THE Milesians were much disappointed at Amergin's decision. "If my advice were taken," said Donn, the son of Miled, "the matter would be decided by battle; for if it be in the power of the Druids of the Tuathe Da Danaan, we never shall be able to regain Erin."

The Milesians had no fear in open battle, but against Druidical enchantment they had misgivings about being able to land. It was a contest of valor against the resources of magical illusion and power.

"The Book of Ballymote" and the "Great Book of Lecan" give Amergin's poems, with an introduction. From the introduction we learn that "The Milesians then departed from Tara

southward and arrived at Inver Fele (the mouth of the River Feal, or Cashin on the Shannon in the County of Kerry) and Inver Skena (the Bay of Kenmare) where their ships were at anchor, and they set out over nine waves to sea.

"The Druids and Files of Erin then chanted incantations, by which they raised such a storm as caused everything that was at the bottom of the sea to be raised to its surface, and by the violence of the storm the fleet was driven from the coast far westward to sea and was separated."

"This is a Druidic wind" said Donn, the son of Miled.

"It is," responded Amergin, "if it does not blow above the masthead."

Whereupon Aranan, the youngest of the sons of Miled, went up the mast to ascertain the fact, but was thrown therefrom, and while in the act of falling he said that the wind did not prevail beyond the masthead.

He (Aranan) was the pilot of Donn's ship and was the pupil of Amergin.

"It was deceitful in our soothsayers," said Donn, "not to have prevented this magic wind."

"There was no deception," replied Amergin, and standing up he said as follows: —

"Ailim iat nereann,
Ermac muir motac,
Motac sliab sreatac," etc.

The poem is in the Conaclon Versification, in which the last word of each line is the first word of the next. This metre seems to have been peculiar to ancient Ireland, and might easily seem to us to be a kind of verbal jugglery; although it may have been justly regarded as highly artistic for the remote age to which it is ascribed.

As a matter of fact the ancient Irish bard was supposed to deliver his verses at very short notice, if not spontaneously, as we see Amergin doing here.

This poem of Amergin's is a prayer that the Milesians may regain the land of Erin "whose mountains are great and extensive; whose streams are clear and numerous; whose woods abound with various fruits; whose rivers and waterfalls are large and beautiful; whose lakes are broad and widely spread; which abounds in fountains on elevated grounds." "May we gain power and dominion over its tribes," he

continues. "May we have kings of our own ruling at Tara," etc.

It is remarkable that the Milesians concluded that the storm that dispersed them was a magical one, because it did not blow above the mast-head, because, as they thought, there was nothing to destroy above that point; whereas if it were a natural tempest, it would fill the surrounding air without any regard to what it might, or might not, destroy. It is remarkable also that this piece of shrewdness is transmitted to us with such circumstantial detail through a period of perhaps 3000 years or more.

The Milesian fleet was wrecked along the rocky coast. Remnants of it landed in such widely separated places as the coast of Kerry and the mouth of the Boyne. Terrific battles were fought at Sleive Mish in Kerry and at Taillte in Meath. In both of them the Milesians were victorious. Although only three of the sons of Miled and a correspondingly reduced number of their people had landed they were able to overthrow the Tuatha De Danaan and take possession of the island.

The annalists give the year A.M. 3500 as the date of the first attempt of the Milesians to capture the island, and the year 3501 as the

date of its subjugation; so that there must have been about one year's warfare. MacCoill, MacCeacht and MacGreine, the De Danaan kings who had governed Ireland in rotation, the period of the sovereignty of each being one year in his turn, were killed in the battles; and what disposition more worthy of themselves could the chivalrous Milesians have made of the three queens Eire, Banba and Fola than to send them into the fairy mansions of the island they would not leave?

CHAPTER X

Amergin. The Gods. Amergin and Hesiod. The philosophy of Amergin's poems. Amergin's poetical prayer on landing in Ireland. De Jubainville's comments. An analogous Welsh poem. Scotus Erigena. O'Molloy on Conaclon. Amergin and St. Patrick.

BEFORE looking into the councils of the Tuatha De Danaan, after they were conquered by the Milesians, and noticing the plans they made for their future, it will be well to give a little more attention to the poems of Amergin, associated as these are with the very beginnings of the Milesian history of Ireland.

It was on the first of May the Milesians began their conquest. This day was sacred to Beltene. Beltene was one of the names of the god of death, the god who gave life and also took it away.

Amergin felt profoundly that his people's fight was against gods in the persons of the Tuatha De Danaan; and his four extant poems derive all their force and character and tone

from that conviction. He believes with Hesiod that matter precedes the gods, that they are not independent of it, that science or general knowledge which may have come from the gods may be used to overthrow them, that the great phenomena of visible nature are above them, and may also be turned against them.

He identifies science with its object, regards it as Being itself, of which the forces of nature and all sensible being are but visible manifestations. "Thus it is that the file, who is the visible embodiment of science in human form, is not only man but eagle, vulture, tree, plant, sword or spear."

Amergin glorifies this science by which he hopes to overthrow the gods; and he identifies himself with it and with everything to which it is extended. When he speaks, he speaks for some undefined power back of all the gods. His philosophy is regarded as pantheistic and he speaks for God in all his poems.

In the poem or prayer he recited on first landing in Ireland, he says:

"I am the wind which blows over the sea;
I am the wave of the ocean;
I am the murmur of the billows;
I am the ox of the seven combats;

I am the vulture upon the rock;
I am a tear of the sun;
I am the fairest of plants;
I am a wild boar in valor;
I am a salmon in the water;
I am a lake in the plain;

. . . . . .

I am a word of science;
I am the spear-point that gives battle;
I am the God who creates in the head the fire (of thought).
Who is it that enlightens the assembly on the mountain, if not I?
Who telleth the ages of the moon, if not I?
Who showeth the place where the sun goes to rest, if not I?
Who can direct you to where the waters run clearest, if not I?
Who can bring the fish from its recesses in the sea, as I can?
Who can cause the fish to approach to the shore, as I can?
Who can change the hills, mountains or promontories, as I can?"

The phrases "if not I" and "as I can," are supplied from explanatory glosses. The poet's reasoning is something like this: "God does all these things; God is all these things; they are inseparable, I might say, indistinguishable from him; they are but the manifestations of him in action, they are identical with him, as I am;

if they are ascribable to him they are ascribable to me, because I am but one more external evidence of him."

And then comes the higher, the special claim, when Amergin says: "I am a word of science." "The file," says De Jubainville, "is the word of science, he is the God who gives to man the fire of thought; and as science is not distinct from its object, as God and nature are but one, the being of the file is mingled with the winds and the waves, with wild animals and with the warrior's arms."

An analogous poem is found in a Welsh manuscript of the fourteenth century. It is ascribed to the poet Taliesin. Amergin says, "I am a tear of the sun." Taliesin says, "I have been a tear in the air." Amergin says, "I am the vulture upon the rock." The Welsh bard says, "I have been an eagle;" and so on, wherever Amergin says "I am" the Welsh man says "I have been," thus substituting the idea of successive metamorphoses for what De Jubainville styles the vigorous pantheism of Irish philosophy.

If De Jubainville had said Celtic, and not Irish, in this connection we would be inclined to find no fault. But we have good reason to

think that he regards the ancient Celtic pantheism as tainting Irish philosophy to a very undesirable extent even in early Christian times.

The particular poem of Amergin that we have been analyzing is not in Conaclon. O'Molloy, who wrote his Grammatica Latino-Hibernica in Rome, and published it there in 1677, tells us that Conaclon is the most difficult species of composition under the canopy of heaven.

Nevertheless, what depths of philosophy Amergin was able to cram into that sententious and monotonous metrical style! Mere translation was not enough to develop the meaning of such verse; it had to be interpreted in the light of every circumstance that threw, or could throw, any light on it.

Two other poems of Amergin are extant. In one of them, in Conaclon, already noticed, and beginning "ailim iat n-Erend," he invokes the earth and the sea, mountains, woods, rivers and lakes. It is an invocation addressed to Ireland deified.

In the other poem, not in Conaclon, the sea is mentioned first, but the earth is next referred to as a divinity that it would not be well to slight. He appeals to the "fish-abounding sea," "to the fruitful earth," "to the irruption of

fish," "to the fish under the waves," and the object of the appeal, as we are left to gather from the circumstances and from the tenor of the poems, is to get all these forces to aid his people in their fight against the Tuatha De Danaan gods. His prayer is heard and the gods are overthrown.

Who can contemplate those appeals of Amergin, made at the very dawn of our history, without being reminded of the "Lorica" of Saint Patrick, sung on his way to Tara; perhaps, over a thousand years later on?

Amergin appeals to the elements for aid. Saint Patrick appeals to Christ to protect him from the elements, and to turn all their powers and properties to his advantage.

How pathetic is the figure of Amergin, standing away back in the "cloudland," appealing to the forces that are anterior to all the gods, appealing over their shoulders to a higher power, and in the helplessness of heathenism confounding this power with visible nature and her forces and laws! What could it all have been but the feeling away down in the depths of his soul that back of all these gods there was One in whose hands they were all but common clay!

From the old Celtic philosophy of Amergin, how easy is the transition to the true philosophy! The one is suggested in the other. This old Celtic philosophy was the kind that would yield at once to the "Kindly Light" of Christianity. It was made in the designs of Providence, a preparation for it.

CHAPTER XI

The Fairies. Banba, Fola and Eriu. Why Irish manuscript books named after places, etc. A manuscript really a library. Ireland's literature, in its preservation, an indication of Ireland's destiny. Ogham characters. Book of Ballymote. Banba, Fola and Eriu in succession ask each that the island should be named after her. Fate of Donn.

OUR readers may be curious by this time to know why the old Irish books or manuscripts, we have been citing, were called by such peculiar names. It was the habit of the old Irish writers or scribes to state four circumstances in particular about the books they were writing or copying. The copyist made no alteration in these circumstances, if he found them already stated in the work he was copying, but merely added his own name as scribe or compiler, with any new circumstances that had arisen in connection with the compilation and which he considered worthy of notice.

These circumstances were the place in which the book was written or compiled, the date of its compilation, the name of the author and the occasion or circumstances that led to its being undertaken. This continued to be the custom of those who wrote the Gaelic language, even down to the time of the Four Masters.

Sometimes compilations are named after the compilers as well as after the place. The "Annals" now known as the "Annals of Ulster" were formerly better known as the "Annals of Senait MacManus," and the "Annals of the Four Masters "are sometimes called the "Annals of Donegal."

These huge tomes or 'Books' are not confined to any one subject, but include a vast variety of subjects, having no connection with each other at all, beyond the fact that they are bound up in one great manuscript. They are thrown together promiscuously. You find a love story or a courtship, or a voyage or a vision in the same parchment with a pitched battle or a treatise on medicine or astronomy. The "Book" is really a library.

When one considers the patience and care with which these books were copied and re-copied and the high appreciation in which they were

held, the thought becomes irresistible that Almighty God Himself had, by a special providence, decreed that Ireland should not be entirely divested of the internal evidence she bore of the mighty influence she was destined to wield in the civilization of the world.

The "Book of Ballymote" is peculiarly valuable as containing a grammatical tract and a key to the Ogham cypher-writing. It has also many translations and adaptations from the Greek and Roman classics, genealogies of saints and other hagiological and much biblical matter.

A book-collector named O'Donnell bought it from one of its last private owners, a man named McDonough. The price paid was 140 milch cows. McDonough parted with the book willingly. Nevertheless he seems to have regretted having to part with it. Either that, or the scribe thought the price too high: for he says that "although the book is good, buying a book from McDonough is a purchase from a churl."

The Gaelic text of this great book which belongs now to the Royal Irish Academy would make 2500 pages of such a work as the "Annals of the Four Masters," large quarto.

"The Book of Lecan," compiled by a member

of the famous literary family of the MacFirbises in the County Sligo in A.D. 1417, is very much like the "Book of Ballymote" in its contents. Nearly every one of these great collections includes a copy of the "Libur-Gabala," or "Book of Invasions."

In this latter, we find a more detailed account of Banba, Fola and Eriu, or Eire, as the word is now spelled. These were the Tuatha De Danaan goddess-queens. The Libur tells us that the Milesians had to fight against demons; and says that these demons were the Tuatha De Danaan.

Some copies of this book represent the contending forces as having fought the battle of Sleive Mish, in Kerry, on the occasion of the first landing of the Milesians, before the appearance at Tara and consequently before their temporary retirement from the island. While marching northward to Tara after this battle, we are told, they met first Queen Banba and she told them that if it was to conquer Ireland they had come, their expedition was not just.

"It is for that indeed we came," said Amergin. "Then," said Banba, "grant me at least one favor, that the island be called by my name."

"It shall be so," said Amergin. But the island did not bear her name very long; for proceeding a little farther, they met Fola and she asked the same favor and Amergin granted it.

Ireland did not long enjoy Fola's name either; for, at Usnech, the Central point of Ireland, they met Eire. She was the only one of the three who gave them a cordial greeting. "Welcome, warriors," said she, "you are come from afar. This island will belong to you for all time, and from here to the farthest East there is none better; no race will be so perfect as yours." "It is not to you," cried Eber Donn, the eldest of the sons of Miled, "that we owe any thanks, but to our gods and our own prowess." "What I announce has no concern for you," said Eire, "you shall not enjoy this island; it will not belong to any descendants of yours." She then begged that the island be called after her and Amergin granted the request.

After the grudging reception given the warriors by Banba and Fola it might appear surprising and even startling to find Eire giving them a cordial welcome. But, then, her name was to last forever, associated with them and with their destinies. In song and story it was to

become one of the most beautiful names in the world. She welcomed the Milesians as her own, as the race over whom she was to be the presiding divinity.

As the Greeks gloried in the name of Hellenes, given them after their god, Hellen, so the Milesians gloried in the name of Eireanaig, taken from that De Danaan goddess away back in the mythological ages.

CHAPTER XII

Amergin; his character and office; Eire's prophecy. Death of Banba, Fola and Eire. Lug and the games of Taillten. Practice of putting a term to the lives of the gods. Pagan stories have Christian redactions. "Lir's lonely daughter." Paganism has left its mark on place names.

AMERGIN was the eldest son of Miled. He was the ollam, or man of all learning, as well as brehon, or judge and counsellor, to the whole colony. It is very likely that he was also their druid or priest. He was certainly their file or poet; a kind of primeval poet-laureate, and in this capacity he incited them to battle by his songs, encouraged them by his appeals for the favor of the unseen powers, celebrated their prowess when they were victorious, and recited elegies for them when they were dead. As their ollam, he was the depositary of their highest wisdom and knowledge, the one who preserved

their genealogies, and to the old family tree added each new ramification.

At first all these offices were centred in one man; but in the course of time, rigorous lines were drawn to distinguish them; and we find that the three great, general offices of Druid, brehon and file came each to have its own representative. Strict precautions were taken to prevent the interference of anyone of these personages in the functions of the others.

Donn was next to Amergin in age, and, from the prominence given him in the ancient tales, it is clear that he was the commander-in-chief of the expedition. Eire's prophecy regarding him came true. In the course of the magic storm he and his whole crew were lost. The sand hills on which his ship was wrecked on the western coast of Munster still bear his name, and the tradition of the catastrophe is vivid in the minds of the people of that place.

The most ancient copies of the Libur Gabala, that we still have, go back to the twelfth century. These tell us that Banba, Fola and Eire were killed with their husbands at the battle of Tailltinn. This ancient place in the County of Meath is Anglicized Telltown. Its ancient name came from the goddess Taillti who was

the foster-mother of Lug, one of the greatest of the Tuatha De Danaan gods. In his affection for her, Lug had games and great festivities celebrated here, beginning on the first of August of each year.

On this account, August is to this day called Mi Na Lugnasa, or the month of the Lugnas; lugnas meaning Lug's gathering. The aonach Tailltinn, or Fair of Taillti, always brought an enormous concourse of people together in ancient Erin. It is impossible to read much of the ancient Irish literature without noticing the great frequency of the occurrence of the name Lug (Loo) or Lugaid (Looey).

With regard to the death of the three goddess queens, it is to be observed that the practice of putting a term to the lives of the gods was introduced into Ireland in Christian times. The early Christian converts, in their zeal, wanted to put every thought of the ancient paganism out of the minds of the people, and they thought that one of the best ways to do this would be to destroy the ancient pantheon and reduce the gods to the level of ordinary men and women.

The Fomorians, or African pirates, were gods. The Tuatha De Danaan were gods; and there is no doubt but that all the Milesian

chiefs would have reached us as gods, were it not for this process. With all respect for the ancient Christians, we think it regrettable that the ancient pagan tales were tampered with. They could do no harm. Perhaps we ought to be thankful that they were spared to us at all.

To convert them from pagan to Christian classics was impossible. Their Christian redactors appreciated them as literature, and as reflecting the peculiar character of the ancient Irish mind, when it rested on religion; and therefore they would not, if they could, expurgate the paganism out of them altogether. Besides, these pagan tales were comparatively clean as far as the moral conduct of their heroes was concerned.

A very great number of these stories have Christian redactions. The story is generally told in the old pagan way, but new developments are added, by which the hero or heroine, or a whole group of these, is brought down to Saint Patrick's time, and made to receive baptism, and then die.

It is in this way that Finoola, "Lir's Lonely Daughter," and her equally ill-fated brothers, Aod, Conn and Fiacra, are made to live at least nine hundred years, and that "Eithne

the Fair" after living fifteen hundred years with her fairy companions, is at last made to stray away from them, so that she, like the Children of Lir, received baptism and Christian burial from Saint Patrick or some one of his disciples.

As already indicated these Christian redactions of the old tales were intended to eradicate paganism, and to make the tales themselves conform to Christian ideas.

Paganism has disappeared, but its traces remain; and as Christianity is written in the Irish language all over the face of the old land, in the names of places, so is the ancient paganism written there, also, indelibly.

When the archaeologist goes to explain a place name he will find very frequently that his explanation, to be intelligible, will take on the very form of an old myth or pagan fable. The Tuatha De Danaan, whether they were gods or men, left their footprints, not on the shifting sands, but on the hard bed-rock of the Irish topographical nomenclature.

The Christian redactors of the pagan tales, and many of the annalists, tell us that the gods died. Nevertheless these gods lived on in the popular imagination and acted as the tutelary

deities of the districts in which they were buried.

This superstition, if indeed it ought to be taken seriously enough to be called a superstition, suggests a beautiful Christian reflection. Wonderful things have happened, and are always happening, where the bodies of the saints are laid. The typical Irish mind, whether pagan or Christian, had always an exquisite sense of the fitness of things.

CHAPTER XIII

Euhemerism. Gods that were always such, and men who after death became gods. Mythological, heroic and historic cycles easily distinguishable in Irish history. Gilla Keevin and Flann of the Monastery greatest Irish Euhemerists. Some account of their work. Tigernach.

AT the court of Cassander in Macedonia, in the early part of the third century before Christ, there lived a Greek writer named Euhemerus. He wrote a book to prove that the ancient myths were all genuine historical facts, and to show that the gods were all, originally, men who had distinguished themselves in war, or in beneficence to their fellowmen, and who, in consequence, were gratefully regarded as gods after their death, and considered worthy of divine honors.

This writer's success in reducing gods to the level of men was only partial. Every classical scholar knows that the Greek mythology still stands apparently intact, and that there is very

little confusion there between gods and men. One never has to ask which is which. But among those who received divine honors after their death he probably wrought some havoc. There is a certain grim humor in the reported conduct of the Roman tax collectors operating in Greece after this country had become subject to Rome. They exempted from taxation all lands belonging to the immortal gods or in any way sacred to them; but refused to regard as immortal gods those who became gods only after their death.

The process of making the gods out to be ordinary men is called euhemerising, after Euhemerus. Many of the ancient Christian writers of Ireland did very much of this kind of work, and in this way threw much obscurity on the lines of demarcation between the mythologic and the heroic or human. They can hardly be considered a help to the historian.

One would imagine they would rather confuse him. The Irish euhemerists never tried to explain away the entire system of mythology. This would have been impossible, and the attempt unworthy of thinking men. But they injured that system a little, by puncturing it here and there, thus causing confusion. It

seems to be a new thing in the world to have the mythological, heroic and historic cycles distinguished at all in Irish history; and the fact that these cycles are now distinctly marked is due to the work of the great Celtic scholars of the last seventy years. It is quite natural that this should be so.

Formerly when the Irish historian told us some impossible story as a piece of Irish history, we laughed at him, or we thought how puerile, or silly our fathers were to accept such stuff as history. But now when the profound and discriminating Celtist tells us the same story, and shows us where it fits like a mosaic in one magnificent whole, in one grand system of mythological lore, we no longer laugh; we take it seriously.

We stand in amazement in the presence of a fact that has at last dawned on us that as a distinct race, we appeared on the horizon of history in very much the same fashion as all the other great races that have accomplished great things and fulfilled evident destinies in this world.

Among the great races, it was only in the case of the Jews that God, for His own wise purposes, kept the remotest antiquity as clear,

historically, as the present day. No "cloud-land" in the divinely inspired history of the ancient world.

According to De Jubainville, the writers who wrought the most destruction in the Irish Pantheon were Giolla Caomghein, pronounced approximately Gilla Keevin, and Flann Mainistreach, both of the eleventh century. In any age or country the erudition and work of these men would have commanded respect. The synchronisms of Flann of the Monastery go back to the remotest ages, and are referred to in highly commendatory language by such writers as Usher, Ware, Lynch, better known as "Cambrensis eversus," O'Flaherty and Charles O'Connor.

There can be no doubt about the value of a commendation from Archbishop Usher, or Father Lynch, or, in fact, from any one of these men. Charles O'Connor (of Ballyinagar) has not been always a great success in his translations from old Irish. Flann was connected in some way with the Monastery of Monasterboice, and the weight of evidence is to the effect that he was not in Sacred Orders. His synchronisms form an excellent abridgment of universal history down to his own time.

He synchronizes the Kings of the Medes, Persians, Assyrians, Greeks and the emperors, and previous rulers, of the Romans with the Irish Kings; and, in places, relieves this dry record with scraps of valuable information regarding the countries or the kings. Flann of the Monastery died, A.D. 1050; so says O'Curry. Douglas Hyde tells us that "the greatest scholar, chronologist, and poet of this period (Clontarf to Norman Invasion) is unquestionably Flann Mainistreach who died in 1056."

Giolla Caomghein's work is very much like that of Flann Mainistreach. He wrote a great chronological poem "giving the annals of all time from the beginning of the world down to his own period." He also synchronizes Eastern with Irish rulers. He died in 1072. He is also the translator into Gaelic of Nennius' history of the Britons, a work of the eighth century.

The works of Giolla Caomghein are extant; but the synchronisms of Flann have suffered from the friction of time, and are only found in a scattered and imperfect way, bound up with other ancient manuscripts. Tigernach, the most brilliant and learned annalist of the eleventh century, has made much use of them.

By way of comparison of these two men

O'Curry says:* "It is to be observed that Flann was the predecessor of Tigernach; and without in the least, derogating from the well earned reputation of that annalist, enough of the works of Flann remain to show that he was a scholar of fully equal learning, and a historic investigator of the highest merit."

Again we are forgetting the fairies; but we feel perfectly justified in turning aside occasionally to give a short account of the great mortals who either built up or tore down their mansions. In our next chapter we shall begin to give an account of the great Tuatha De Danaan gathering at the famous Brugh on the Boyne.

* In his "Manuscript Materials of Ancient Irish History."

CHAPTER XIV

The Fairies. De Danaan meeting at Brug na Boinne. Digression on Tain Bo Cuailgne. Cucullain and Ferdiad. "Conquest of the Sid." The Dagda. Manannan MacLir. Poem of Kinaeth O'Hartigan. The Bulls fight. O'Curry's translation of the account of that fight.

AFTER their defeat at Taillti, the Tuatha De Danaan set about reconstructing themselves. Their chiefs held a great meeting to determine precisely what they should do. The place where the meeting was held was the Brugh on the Boyne. Brugh means a fairy palace; at the present day the form "bruighin," * which is a grammatical inflection of it and is pronounced "breen," is more generally used. In those parts of the country still most haunted by fairies, the word "side," for their palaces, is very generally supplanted by "breen."

We may take occasion here to notice the Tain Bo Cuailgne or Cattle Spoil of Cooley. Notwithstanding the serio-comic name of this story

* Often written bruighean.

it is the greatest of the Irish Epic tales. As a result of the raid on Donn, the famous brown steer of Cualgne in Ulster, with the object of bringing him to Connaught to add him to the possessions of Queen Meave, and thus establish her supremacy in wealth over her husband, Ailill, who was the proud owner of the no less famous Finnbheannach, or white horned bull, the King of Ulster, Conor MacNessa, becomes involved in a protracted war with Meave and her Munster allies. This war develops the heroes Cucullain and Ferdiad and a host of others, and astonishes the reader with the keen sense of manly honor and soldierly chivalry in the heart of anyone in ancient Erin who had the courage to call himself a man. Even in their paganism death had no terrors for these heroes, but a breach of chivalrous honor or a failure to stand by their plighted word was the one thing, under heaven, they dreaded.

Anyone reading Mrs. Hutton's English version of this wonderful story or Windisch's German version is forced to the conclusion that all the middle ages did for chivalry was to Christianize it and exalt its motive to the supernatural. But, of course, it is Christianity alone that could do this.

Attached to this semi-historic tale is a short tract called the conquest, or the seizure, of the "sid"; "Gabail Int Sida," meaning literally the capturing of the fairy palaces. The tract is extant and a copy of it in the "Book of Leinster" has escaped euhemerization. There is a Christian redaction of it, but we shall first consult the thoroughly pagan version.

In this version the principal part in the capturing and subsequent distribution of the fairy palaces is ascribed to the Dagda who was, in the Tuatha De Danaan world, what Zeus was to the Greeks and Jupiter to the Romans. His name is interpreted by De Jubainville as the "good god," and if that interpretation be correct, it would be written "Deag-dia" in modern Irish; *deag* being one of the four or five adjectives that come before the noun to which they refer.

His name does not imply that there was a "bad god" as such, but was given him as a reward for great services done for his people. There is no certain proof of a positive pagan Manichaeism having prevailed among the ancient Irish.

The Dagda retained great influence even among the victorious Milesians, who were not

entirely able to free themselves from certain disabilities inflicted by the De Danaan, until they succeeded in making a treaty of peace with him. By this treaty they were enabled to gather the corn of their fields and to get and drink the milk of their cows. Both these foodstuffs had been blighted by the incantations of the Tuatha Da Danaan.

The pagan version of the "Gabail Int Sida" also makes the Dagda the leading figure in the deliberations at Brug Na Boinne, the palace of the Boyne, but the Christian redactions of the tale give the greater prominence to Manannan MacLir.

The Dagda is made by the pagan story to reserve this famous palace to himself and distribute the various other underground sids or sidi to the numerous chiefs of the Tuatha De Danaan, after they and their people had decided not to leave Ireland but to retire into this kind of invisible immortality.

A poem attributed to Kinaeth O'Hartigan of the tenth century represents the Dagda as occupying this same palace even before the Milesian occupation of the country. He had dwelt there with his goddess-queen Boana, after whom the famous river is named, and who

is really nothing more or less than the Boyne deified.

Here we again digress. We may as well tell our readers something about the bulls we mentioned in our references to the Tain. We may not have so graceful an opportunity soon again. The reader knows very well, in advance, that the bulls fought. We cannot improve on O'Curry's description of it.

In his analysis of the great story as found by him in manuscript form, and after dilating on Meave's satisfaction at having obtained possession of the Donn and punished her old foe, Conor MacNessa, O'Curry continues: — "This wild tale, however, does not end here; for it gravely informs us that when Donn Cuailgne found himself in a strange country, and among strange herds, he raised such a loud bellowing as had never before been heard in the province of Connaught; that on hearing those unusual sounds, Ailill's bull, the Finnbheannach, or White-horned, knew that some strange and formidable foe had entered his territory; and that he immediately advanced at full speed to the point from which they issued, where he soon arrived in the presence of his noble enemy.

"The sight of each other was the signal of

battle. In the poetic language of the tale, the province rang with the echoes of their roaring, the sky was darkened by the sods of earth they threw up with their feet, and from the foam that flew from their mouths; fainthearted men, women and children hid themselves in caves, caverns and clefts of the rocks; whilst even the most veteran warriors but dared to view the combat from the neighboring hills and eminences.

"The Finnbheannach at length gave way and retreated towards a certain pass which opened into the plain in which the battle raged, and where sixteen warriors bolder than the rest had planted themselves; but so rapid was the retreat and the pursuit that not only were all these trampled to the ground, but they were buried several feet in it. The Donn Cuailgne, at last, coming up with his opponent, raised him on his horns, ran off with him, passed the gates of Meave's palace, tossing and shaking him as he went, until at last he shattered him to pieces, dropping his disjointed members as he went along.

"And wherever a part fell that place retained the name of that joint ever after. And thus it was (we are told) that Ath Luain, now Ath-

lone, which was before called Ath Mor or the Great Ford, received its present name from the Finnbheannach's luan, or loin, having been dropped there.

"The Donn Cuailgne, after having shaken his enemy in this manner from his horns, returned into his own country, but in such a frenzied state of excitement that all fled everywhere at his approach. He faced directly to his old home; but the people of the baile or hamlet fled and hid themselves behind a huge mass of rock, which his madness transformed into the shape of another bull; so that coming with all his force against it he dashed out his brains and was killed." We doubt very much if there is in the whole range of the world's literature anything to compare with this in strenuosity.

CHAPTER XV

The Fairies. Distribution of the fairy palaces. The Dagda and Oengus. Mac Int Oc. Greek and Irish mythological legends. Food of the gods. Immortality of the gods. Knowth, Newgrange and Dowth. Monuments of the Cyclops. Cruachan.

THE Conquest of the Sid tells us that although the Dagda kept the palace of the Boyne for himself, it was for ages after known as the Sid Maic Int Oc, or fairy mansion of the Son of the Young.

This Mac Int Oc was Oengus, the son of the Dagda himself and of Boand, and was so called because his parents as well, of course, as himself, were supposed to enjoy perpetual youth or immortality.

How the Brug came to bear his name is explained by an ancient legend. When the distribution of the "sides" was going on, he was absent. He was at the home of the god Midir to receive an education. His father, in the confusion and hurry of work and business, had forgotten all about him.

When Oengus returned and found that his father had no sid left for him, he was surprised and indignant. As a last resort he asked to be allowed to remain over night in the Brug.

The Dagda graciously assented, saying that to the night he could also add the day, meaning of course the next day. The next day towards evening Oengus discovered that he was expected to leave after the expiration of the day and the night.

Although the legend does not say so directly, it is clear that he was finally ordered to decamp. This he stoutly refused to do, claiming that as the palace was given him a day and a night it was thereby ceded to him in perpetuity, as all time is made up of days and nights.

His father was evidently unprepared for this logic. He had no argument to overcome it, and so he admitted the justice of his son's claim, and allowed him to hold Brug na Boinne in his own name, which the delighted youth did indefinitely.

A most wonderful place indeed was this palace. Three trees grew there and were always laden with fruit, reminding one of the gardens of the Hesperides, beyond the sunset where the golden apples grew for the gods of ancient

Greece; reminding one also of the garden of Phoebus, at the ends of the earth where Night has her home and where the vault of the heavens begins.

It is remarkable indeed how the Irish mythological legend, by placing fruit trees at the couch of the Dagda, at the Brug on the Boyne, reminds one of the Greek legend that also places trees at the couch of Zeus in the gardens of the gods.

What can we see in it all but a vestige, as it is a distortion, of the Biblical description of the Garden of Eden?

In the palace of the Boyne are also three swine, one living and the other killed and ready to eat; and alongside this a jar of excellent ale. The swine were the ambrosia and the ale the nectar of the gods of ancient Erin.

No one who tasted of these viands could ever die and they were no sooner eaten than they reproduced themselves, so that the store of provisions, apparently small, lasted indefinitely and fed an indefinite number of gods.

It is clearly seen that the pagan version of the Conquest of the Sid teaches the immortality of the gods without restriction or reservation. It was in later days in manuscripts of

the eleventh century and in Christian redactions of other tales as well as of the Sid itself that the Tuatha De Danaan are represented as dying and receiving burial at the Brug on the Boyne.

There are three remarkable mounds on the banks of the Boyne and all three bear evidence of having been artificially constructed. They are the heights of Knowth, Newgrange and Dowth.

Newgrange is identified as the ancient Brug na Boinne where the Euhemerists, or Christian exterminators of the gods, have buried the Dagda and Lug and Ogma and all the great chiefs of the Tuatha De Danaan.

This eminence is unquestionably artificial. It covers two acres and contains one of the largest funeral chambers in western Europe. It is near the place where the battle of the Boyne was fought. This veritable Irish Catacomb was, with Knowth and Dowth, used as a burial ground even in the remotest times.

De Jubainville thinks that all three mounds were raised for this purpose by some colony that antedated far the coming of the Milesians. This would bring the date of their construction back to Tuatha De Danaan times and even farther back still.

He finds a parallel instance in Greek mythology and tells us that "the Greeks attributed their prehistoric monuments to the Cyclops who were originally mythological beings."

The monuments raised by the Cyclops, however, were not of earth or loam, but enormous masses of unhewn stone, of which specimens are still to be seen at Mycenae in Greece and also in several places in Italy.

The theory at present about these is that they were built by the Pelasgians, but that on account of their grandeur they were anciently attributed to the fabulous or mythological race of Cyclops.

In historic pre-Christian times the high Kings of Ireland were buried at Cruachan in Connaught on the banks of the Shannon; but for the first four centuries of the Christian era they were buried at the Brug on the Boyne.

The first high King of the Milesian race to be buried there was Crimthan MacNair, and he very probably owed this distinction to the fact that his wife was of the Tuatha De Danaan race and a fairy.

CHAPTER XVI

The Brug on the Boyne. The Tain regarded as one of the great epic studies of literature. The story of Polyphemus. Ulysses acts like an Irishman.

IN our examination of the records that throw light on the pagan religion of the ancient Irish, we have had occasion to refer frequently to the "Tain Bo Cualigne." We wish to state our belief here that that story is destined to receive universal recognition as one of the great epics of the world.

That it is worthy to be so regarded, the treatment it has received at the hands of competent French and German scholars leaves no doubt. The whole English-speaking world is now fast falling into line with the nations of continental Europe in according it its rightful place.

Henry Adams Bellows in an oration, delivered at Harvard, June 29, 1910, during the commencement exercises, dilated on the reason why so many of the names of the authors of some of the great masterpieces of medieval

literature are lost to us, and, in the course of his remarks, said: "Chretienne de Troyes we know, and Wolfram Von Essenbach, Caedmon, Bernart de Ventadorn and Snorri Sturluzon; but of the men who gave us the Niebelungenlied, the Chanson de Roland, the ballads of the Cid, the Beowulf, *the Tain*, or the Eddic poems, we know practically nothing."

We quote this passage because it is the first we have seen in which an American scholar of high standing places the Tain where it ought to be, among the great epic studies of literature, and because it is an indication of the hold that the cultivation of Celtic studies is sure to take in this country.

As we had occasion to mention the Cyclops, we may as well tell a story that lingers in our memory about Polyphemus, who was one of the most remarkable of them. He lived alone on an island.

Ulysses, King of Ithaca, coming home from the Siege of Troy, landed on that island, fell into the hands of the one-eyed giant, and was shut up by him in his cave, with his sheep. There was no means of escape, as the door was too heavy to be thrown open by ordinary human power.

Ulysses discovered that Polyphemus himself slept in that cave, and remembering that he had only one eye, which was located in the centre of his forehead, thought he could make short work of that eye and crowd out his light. While Polyphemus was snoring after an enormous meal, the wandering Greek heated a great spit he had found in the cave, and, plunging it into the upturned eye of the giant, completely destroyed his sight.

He darted away, and during the night in the great cave, eluded all the efforts of the groping Polyphemus to get his hands on him. Next morning the giant resorted to his last strategic move, which he thought would baffle the ingenuity of his wily captive.

He threw back the enormous rock from the door, and, as he let the sheep out, one by one, felt of each carefully, knowing that Ulysses would hit upon some astute plan to escape while the door was open.

But he only felt of the backs and necks of the sheep, not having the least idea that his prisoner would escape under their feet. This, however, was what happened.

Burying his hands deep in the wool of the underbody of an enormous animal and prac-

tically dragging himself along on his back, as the animal moved, Ulysses made his escape.

Once outside, he took to his boat, and when, as he thought, at a safe distance, yelled back at his former captor and told him in unexpurgated language what he thought of him.

The latter, in rage and disappointment, tore a piece off the mountain and threw it in the direction the voice came from. It struck uncomfortably near Ulysses, raising mountainous waves that nearly swamped him.

But he would not be daunted. He yelled again and another piece of the mountain came his way and raised dangerous waves again.

He kept up the good work, nevertheless, and kept the giant busy for some time; but the danger for Ulysses was growing less and the giant's aim was growing poorer, and at last he had to put his hand to his ear in an effort to locate the voice that was growing feebler as his tormentor was getting more and more out of range.

This story is to be found in Homer's Odyssey. It is suggested to us by De Jubainville's parallelisms between the Irish and the Greek system of mythology.

And our only excuse for giving it here is the

impression that has remained with us since we first read it; that there must have been a Celtic strain in Ulysses. One would think that, like a cunning Greek, he would have been glad to get away quietly, taking no more risks and courting no further danger.

But the fact that he yelled back and yelled again and kept it up as long as there was a possible chance of being heard and adding fresh fuel to the wrath of the enormous Cyclopean monster — sustains, we believe, our contention.

CHAPTER XVII

The Brug more closely described. Kings buried there. Ancient burial ceremonies. Veneration of the ancient Irish for the memory of their dead. Burial of Finoola and her brothers. Finoola, the Irish Penelope.

THE ancient cemetery of the Brugh lies on the northern bank of the Boyne, and extends about three miles along its course. It consists of about twenty burial mounds of various sizes. These cover artificial caves or chambers, containing shallow saucer-shaped stone coffins or sarcophagi, in which the bodies of the dead were deposited.

This continuous ridge or height includes the three distinct mounds of Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth; but Newgrange, as already indicated, is identified as the Brugh proper, the famous fairy palace. Many modern writers rob the whole place of much of its poetry by calling it the burial place of the De Danaans; and some say that to this system of cemeteries belonged the ancient mound now called Mill-

mount in the town of Drogheda, situated on the southern bank of the river.

The caves or chambers these mounds cover are supported by pillars, and the great stones that form their sides and roofs are ornamented with carvings of various designs such as spirals, lozenges, circles and so forth. There is an absence of Christian ornamentation, which shows they were not used as cemeteries in Christian times.

The field where Newgrange stands is now called Broo, or Bro Park, thus perpetuating the ancient name of the fairy palace of Oengus Mac-in-t-Og.

But it is not to be supposed that all the burials of kings either before the time of Christ or after, took place within these caves. Many were interred outside on the slopes and in the surrounding country. This, however, cannot be proved to a certainty.

It is merely the opinion of many who have made a deep study of the place. No human bones are found to support the theory. The human bone does not last so long. It soon crumbles to dust. It has not the power of the skeleton of the Irish elk or of the geological mastodon to resist the friction of time.

These reflections bring to mind a thought that we must not pass by — the tenderness of the regard in which the ancient pagan Irish held the memory of their dead, and the sacred solemnity of the ceremonies with which they placed the dead body in the grave.

In this particular, as in many others, their pagan ritual was a beautiful preparation for the Christian, not, however, because it was pagan, but because it was human; and the statement that the human heart is naturally Christian has been a truism since it was uttered seventeen hundred years ago.

No matter how pagan the ancient Irish story is, if it tells of a burial, the funeral ceremonies are sure to be described. The reader will find: "togad a lic os a leacht, ocus fearad a cluitce caointe," "his flagstone or tomb was raised over his grave and his ceremonies (literally, games) of lamentation were celebrated."

One cannot help seeing in this ancient custom something analogous to the beautiful modern custom of sounding taps at the grave of a soldier. The "cluitce caointe," or tribute of lamentation, was the noblest effort of the poor human heart, striving to give expression to its purest feelings on the solemn occasion of death.

It was the best that human nature could do, till the Requiem Mass and the Pie Jesu, the Christian Cluitce Caointe, came and satisfied its holiest aspirations.

Another of the ancient ceremonies was the writing of the name of the deceased in Ogham letters on a pillar stone at the grave. This Ogham writing or cipher would probably have remained forever a sealed book were it not that a key to it was found in the ancient Book of Ballymote.

Very often warriors falling in battle asked that a "cairn" or heap of stones be placed over their graves, and, if dying far away from honored parents, requested that these should be told they died with a name untarnished by the slightest blemish, or even suspicion of cowardice.

The veneration of the ancient Irish for the memory of their dead is further illustrated by the fact that from the wreckage of ancient Irish manuscripts there is preserved, in the "Book of the Dun Cow," a tract called "Senchas Na Relec," or the "History of the Cemeteries."

It is concerned with the history of the pagan cemeteries only.

As an example of a pagan burial, christianized

by the redactor of the ancient pagan story, we translate the following paragraph from the story of the Children of Lir.

After the misfortunes and many metamorphoses and miseries they had undergone for a period of nine hundred years, the Christian redactor, who brings them down to St. Patrick's time, tells us that "they were baptized, and they died and were buried and Fiachra and Conn were placed at either side of Finoola, and Aod before her face, as Finoola had ordered, and their tombstone was raised over their grave, and their Ogham names were written, and their lamentation rites were performed, and heaven was gained for their souls."

Finoola, Tom Moore's "Lir's lonely daughter," is in Irish, Fionnghuala, meaning the fair-shouldered. She was the eldest of the four, and we doubt if there is in literature a more charming character, as seen in her self-sacrifice and solicitude — truly motherly — for her three younger brothers and her care of them in their common misfortune. If Chateaubriand took Penelope for the highest type of marital fidelity that pagan literature could advance, he certainly would have taken Finoola, if he had known the beautiful story, for the highest type that pagan

literature actually did portray, of the best qualities associated with single womanhood.

To show Mannanan presiding over the gathering at Brug na Boinne and distributing the sids; to prove our assertion that there were previously existing fairies, and that the Tuatha De Danaan became associated with them, is a task that still confronts us.

CHAPTER XVIII

Another account of the distribution of the fairy palaces. Origin of fairy belief. Aboriginal fairies or gods. Accession of Tuatha De Danaan to their ranks. Fairy palaces. "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table" on holes in the ground. Manannan. Bow Derg. Some of the Shees. Knock-Ma. Road from Headford to Tuam. Tuam Cathedral.

IN the Christian redactions of the Conquest of the Sid, the Dagda is left out of sight altogether in the account of the distribution of the fairy palaces. The implication is that he was dead before this happened. Hence we have two versions of the story, agreeing substantially, but differing in matters of detail.

There is another tract bearing on the same subject, and preserved in the "Book of Leinster." It bears the strange name of "Mesca Ulad or Intoxication of Ulster." It gives the credit of the distribution to Amergin.

He divided Ireland between the conquerors and the conquered. "And he," the Mesca

says, "gave the part of Erin that was underground to the Tuatha De Danaan and the other part to his own 'corporeal' people, the sons of Miled, after which the De Danaans went into hills and fairy palaces."

There is another version of the same tract that agrees with the "Conquest." This version says, "the Tuatha De Danaan went into fairy palaces (sidbrugaib) so that they spoke with 'Side' under ground."

There are other ancient stories such as the "Sick Bed of Cuculain" that represent the Tuatha De Danaan as visiting the palaces of previously existing gods. These were evidently the local gods of the aboriginal inhabitants, the tutelary deities of races that preceded the Tuatha De Danaan in Ireland, and which, we venture to say, antedated even what we now know as the mythological period or cycle.

We can never know how far back into the existence of peopled Ireland this fairy belief extends. It is an astounding thing that a belief going so far back into the past should have existed as a harmless superstition until so recently in some places, and should seem destined to exist as an interesting tradition for ages to come. It is one of the evidences of the

tenacity of paganism and of the conservative character of the Irish as a race.

As for the association of the De Danaan with the "Shee" and the distinct existence of the "Shee," or aboriginal fairies, before the De Danaan retirement, the passages we have quoted give ample evidence.

In the story of the Children of Lir we are made acquainted with Bow Derg, the Tuatha De Danaan King, and we see his two sons riding along at the head of the Marcra Side, or fairy cavalcade, which, we are told, are their own people. And in the "Senchas Na Relec" we are told that it was the Siabra that killed Cormac Mac Art, and that "it was the Tuatha De Danaan that were called Siabra." The Siabra were the most undesirable class of the fairies.

But we are not to understand that the Tuatha De Danaan were associated with this class alone. They distributed themselves among all classes, and imparted to the original deities a human interest, which, otherwise, they never would have acquired.

Otherwise, in fact, we never would have heard of them. They were at least brought nearer human kind by the accession to their ranks of beings, which, although regarded as

gods, were nevertheless invested in popular fancy with human shapes and human passions.

The Siabra was a contemptible fairy, and one could hardly show greater disappointment at the conduct of a boy or girl, than by addressing the one or the other as "you little sheevra."

In the "Book of Fermoy" there is a tract which tells us that after losing two disastrous battles, the Tuatha De Danaan met at the Brug on the Boyne, that Manannan presided at the meeting, that Bodb (pronounced Bough) was made King to preside over their future destinies, and that they retired into the palaces so often mentioned, which were really holes in the ground, or caverns within mounds, distributed among them by Manannan.

"The Book of Fermoy" does not call them holes in the ground, but of course they could be nothing else to mortal eyes. To the Shee and Tuatha De Danaan occupants they were palaces ablaze with light, and glittering with gems and gold. Some of them were under lakes and wells and even under the sea. The fairies had ways of their own by which they were able to endow any kind of place with preternatural beauty.

We do not associate anything very desirable

with holes in the ground; and we are, as a general thing, liable to shrink from the thought of beings that appear only in the dark. We are considering holes in the ground as residences or places of refuge, and are reminded by them of the following passage from the "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table":*

"Did you never, in walking in the fields, come across a large flat stone, which had lain, nobody knows how long, just where you found it, with the grass forming a little hedge, as it were, all around it, close to its edges, — and have you not, in obedience to a kind of feeling that told you it had been lying there long enough, insinuated your stick or your foot or your fingers under its edge and turned it over, as a housewife turns a cake, when she says to herself, 'it's done brown enough by this time'?

"What an odd revelation and what an unforeseen and unpleasant surprise to a small community, the very existence of which you had not suspected, until the sudden dismay and scattering among its members produced by your turning the old stone over!

"Blades of grass flattened down, colorless,

* By Oliver Wendell Holmes.

matted together, as if they had been bleached and ironed; hideous, crawling creatures, some of them coleopterous or horneyshelled, — turtle-bugs one wants to call them; some of them softer, but cunningly spread out and compressed like Lepine watches (Nature never loses a crack or a crevice, mind you, or a joint in a tavern bedstead, but she always has one of her flat-pattern, live timekeepers to slide into it); black, glossy crickets, with their long filaments sticking out like the whips of four-horse stage-coaches; motionless, slug-like creatures, young larvae, perhaps more horrible in their pulpy stillness than even in the infernal wriggle of maturity!

"But no sooner is the stone turned and the wholesome light of day let upon this compressed and blinded community of creeping things, than all of them which enjoy the luxury of legs — and some of them have a good many — rush around wildly, butting each other and everything in their way, and end in a general stampede for underground retreats from the region poisoned by sunshine."

We do not quote this scene, for that is what it really is, to disparage the fairies or their chosen places of residence; but merely to

illustrate one of the reasons why we do not quite like them. Who, after lifting that large flat stone, would think of lighting a cigar or eating his dinner without having previously washed his hands carefully?

And who would not feel like keeping away from any mound or hill, if he had any reason to think, that at any time of the night, strange beings might issue from it to conciliate his favor or play tricks on him?

The "Mesca Ulad," from which we have quoted, is a tract, the very existence of which seems to be a slander on a whole province of sober and respectable people. It is a story of the meeting of the Ulster men at a feast at the palace of Emania.

When they became heated with feasting, they arose from the table and set out in a body to settle an old dispute with Curoi MacDaire, King of West Munster, whose palace, Teamhair Luachra, in Kerry, they burned to the ground. The Mesca is classed among the historical tales.

Although Bow Derg was made King of the Tuatha De Danaan, Manannan still remained their chief counsellor. He assigned to each chief the mansion he and his tribe were to occupy. Many of these places are still pointed

out as fairy haunts. The names they bear make it impossible to disassociate them from the "Shee."

Some of them are named after Bow or Bodb himself, but his principal residence or the great Sid-Buidbe seems to have been situated on the shore of Lough Derg, near Portumna, in the County Galway. Rafwee in the same county is nothing more or less than the rath or fort of Bow; as Bodb, under grammatical inflection gets the sound of "wee." Knockavo, near Strabane in County Tyrone, is explained in a similar way as the Hill of Bodb.

Other places are named after Bugh (Boo) the daughter of this King, as for instance, Canbo, in Roscommon, which is written Ceann Buga, or Bugh's head, by MacFirbis. So thoroughly have the "Shee" impressed themselves on the language and topography of Ireland that almost any hill one meets is liable to be called a shee-awn, and sometimes Zion or Sion, and the traveller is liable to think that the Mount Sion, pointed out to him, may be a name borrowed from the Hebrew.

A little to the east of the village of Slane on the Boyne is Sid Truim, which was placed by Manannan under the guardianship of the God

Midir, but the legends connected with it are now forgotten. Sid Neannta near Lanesborough in Roscommon is now known as Mullaghshee, anglicized Fairymount.*

But there is a mountain five miles southwest of Tuam, called Knock-Ma, which some translate as Hill of the Plain. We are of the opinion that its right name is Knock-Meave or Meave's Hill.

There is no legend known to us which says that Meave, who flourished as queen of Connaught at the time of Christ, retired into the Fairy Kingdom; but there are legends which show that such powerful fairies as the Dagda sought her assistance in matters of great importance, although, to do so, he had to remain alive for ages after the euhemerists had attended his funeral.

She and the fairies were very much and very often interested in each other and consequently our opinion that this hill is named after her is very probably well founded. Besides it is the tradition held by the people of the vicinity, and they ought to know. The hill had been assigned to the famous Finvara by Manannan. The fairies are very powerful there still.

* Dr. Joyce's Irish Names of Places.

On the northeastern slope of this hill, or rather mountain, there are thick woods, and after a drizzling rain, when the sun comes out, the summit of the mountain is enveloped in a heavy mist. The people say this is when the fairies are distilling their "potheen," although it does not quite appear whether the mist is smoke from the concealed distilleries or whether the belief is not founded on the fact that its presence obscures or hides the smoke, thus giving the fairies an opportunity to pursue their labors undetected.

On the road from Headford to Tuam, when passing by this steep elevation to the right, one would never know what blast of wind would bring a host of fairies, bearing right down upon him. This, of course, is particularly so at night; and in the pale moonlight one would be especially uneasy, and could not help casting furtive glances up the mountain side, to see if they were coming.

On a dark night one would not be so apt to think he would see them, but he would not be surprised at any time to hear them. You would pray, good reader, and pray fervently too, until you got past that mountain that for ages has stood there in solitary grandeur

and concealed within its unexplored recesses the hosts of the gods of ancient Erin.

You would not pray to them; but you would pray to be kept safe from them; and on a moonlight night when the very moonlight itself gives an appearance of weirdness and calm, but awful, dignity to such a scene, and the silence itself has an element of terror in it, you would thank your stars when you got where you could see the plain all around you again on both sides of the road; but still every fresh breeze would make your heart beat faster, and renew the uncanny fears.

We were told by a young man who used to take long walks to the top of that mountain that, ascending it from the southwestern side, where there are little or no woods, but here and there large stone cairns, and pits choked up with thickets, he, at one time, started a hare.

Can't one imagine the despair, the haste, the panic with which he darted around, looking for a small stone, found it, and, in a fraction of a second, sent it whizzing through the air after the fleeing leveret and had the breathless satisfaction of seeing him dodge it. But oh, the after-thought.

Perhaps that hare was not a hare at all, but a

fairy in disguise. The thought brings out the cold perspiration on the face of the young savage. He says a devout prayer; but never feels entirely secure until the next morning when he wakes up and finds that the fairies have not stolen him.

From this Olympus of the West one looks to the northeast and gets a grand view of the magnificent Cathedral of Tuam. Its noble tower surmounted by eight pinnacles, the vast profusion of these and of other architectural ornamentation all over its cruciform roof, make it a beautiful structure. Not only is it a thing of beauty, but its whole make-up gives one a sense of dignity and majesty. It is a veritable Te Deum Laudamus in stone. And well it might be; commenced, as it was, in 1828 and finished in 1836, just as Ireland had emerged from the Penal Laws.

There they stand, five miles apart, each alone in its grandeur, and that grandeur enhanced by the comparative insignificance of everything else around; there they stand in very significant juxtaposition and contrast, the pagan Olympus of the remote past and the grand Cathedral of the Ancient See of Saint Jarlath, the disciple of Saint Benignus, who was himself the beloved disciple of Saint Patrick.

CHAPTER XIX

Elcmar. Manannan. Oengus. Goibniu. Luchtine and Creidne. De Danaan artificers. Story of Eithne. Irish Paganism comparatively clean.

THE Christian redactions of the "Sid" say that the Brug on the Boyne, instead of being appropriated by the Dagda, was given to Elcmar, the foster-father of Oengus, but that Oengus, assisted by Manannan, soon ousted Elcmar, took possession and is living there ever since.

He is, of course, invisible, having on the Fe Fiada, which, the Christian redactions insist, is the gift of Manannan. The swine the gods ate were also particularly his property, and are always associated with his name, while the ale they drank was called the ale of Goibniu, the smith.

Just exactly how these two things came about we cannot clearly understand. The preparation of the beverage was undoubtedly entrusted to Goibniu. He was a kind of kitchen

god, somewhat like Hephaestus, who is mentioned in the first book of the Iliad, and who was a smith also and served the gods with drink. There is an old story called the "Fled Goibniu" or "Feast of Goibniu." It describes a jollification at which the gods were all "ic ol" or drinking.

There is no evidence that anything more substantial than drink was consumed at this feast. The beverage used is, in other texts called "lind," which is the ancient form of the modern "leann" or "lionn," which means ale. This drink, with the swine's flesh, conferred immortality on the consumers.

We may observe that although there are many "fleds" or "feasts" in ancient Irish literature, the ancient Irish, whether gods or people, had no Bacchus and no Bacchanalian orgies. It cannot be denied that they were always ready for a fight; and if the hero was not recognized at the festive board by the "hero's portion" in quantity and quality there would be trouble, right there and then, and nothing but blood would atone for the insult.

It was not that the hero wanted better things than any of the others. But he was so jealous of his prestige and of the position he had gained by his prowess that he was unwilling to forfeit

any part of the recognition that the code of honor of those times had accorded him.

The pagan Irish served the god of war and combat, but there was no Venus in their pantheon. They were sports to the heart's core, but their sport was clean.

The modern word corresponding with Goibniu is Goba, pronounced "gow," a smith. Goibniu was smith to the Tuatha De Danaan; Luchtine was their carpenter and Creidne, their brazier. The way these three would manufacture a battle spear and finish it out would astonish modern artificers. With three strokes of his hammer Goibniu fashioned out the spear head and at the third stroke it was perfect. With three chippings Luchtine fitted out the spear handle and at the third chipping it was perfect, and Creidne, the brazier, turned out the rivets with equal rapidity and finish.

Then Goibniu picked up the head with his pinchers and cast it at the lintel of the door, and it stuck there fast, with the socket protruding; and Luchtine at once threw the handle at the head and it stuck in the socket, a perfect fit; and Creidne, holding the rivets in his hands, cast them as fast as he could throw them, one by one, and they stuck in the holes

made for them in the spear head and went fast into the wood of the handle.

They did this work with astonishing celerity; and it was largely owing to their quickness and dexterity that the Tuatha De Danaan were able to triumph over the Fomorians at the second battle of Moytura.

Before we leave Brug na Boinne we shall take a last look into its chambers, and, as its fairy splendors are hidden from our view and we see nothing but darkness, we shall have the satisfaction of seeing the first faint ray of Christianity that the Christian redactor of its ancient story lets in upon its gloom. Curcog was the daughter of Manannan.

She lived at the Brug. Eithne was the daughter of the steward of Elcmar. She also continued to live at the Brug after her father's master had been obliged to cede the palace to Oengus. She acted as lady-in-waiting to Curcog.

One day it was discovered that she took no nourishment at all, and as the loss of appetite continued, her health became impaired and finally she began to pine away. Manannan soon discovered the cause of her melancholy. A slight had been cast upon her by a neighboring

Tuatha De Danaan chief, and she resented it so bitterly that her guardian demon fled and was replaced by an angel sent by the true God. From that moment she ceased to partake of the enchanted ale and the magic swine; but her life was miraculously sustained by the true God. Soon, however, this miracle was rendered unnecessary. Oengus and Manannan made a voyage to India and brought back two cows that gave an inexhaustible supply of milk. India, being a land of righteousness, had nothing in it of the demoniac character, that tainted the food of the De Danaans.

The cows were placed at the disposal of Eithne. She milked them, herself, and lived for ages on their milk. Those events are calculated to have happened in the eleventh century before Christ. About fifteen hundred years afterwards, Curcog, and her maidens, Eithne among them, went to bathe in the Boyne.

When they returned it was discovered that Eithne was not with them. While disrobing for the bath, she had taken off the Fe Fiada or veil of invisibility. Her companions had become invisible to her, and she sought in vain for the enchanted road that led to the palace. She wandered along the river banks for some

time, not knowing where she was, and bewildered at the wonderful change that had come over her.

She was no longer a fairy, but had become an ordinary woman. She came upon a walled garden in which there was a house, and at the door of the house sat a man, clothed in a robe, such as she had never before seen. The house was a church and the man a priest. He heard such account as she could give of herself, received her kindly and brought her to Saint Patrick. He instructed and baptized her.

Sometime afterwards she was kneeling in this same little church near the banks of the Boyne, when suddenly she heard a great clamor and great lamentation outside. She could see no one, but she could distinguish the voices.

It was Oengus and Curcog and the maidens from the Brug, seeking her, and lamenting her as lost forever to them. As they were invisible to her, she was invisible to them on account of the influence of Christianity. Nevertheless, they brought back old memories, some pleasant and some unpleasant.

She swooned away; and on recovering consciousness it was discovered that an incurable disease had fallen upon her. We cannot help

surmising that it was consumption. It is a singular fact that "eitinne" is the Irish word for phthisis or "decline." We do not know its etymology. The disease may have been so called by the Irish after her.

At last Saint Patrick himself administered the last sacraments to her, and she died in his presence. She was buried in the little church of the priest who had first received her, and that church was afterwards called "Cill Eithne's church" easily anglicized Killine or Killiney.

Such is a synposis of the concluding part of one of the Christian redactions of the famous pagan story of the "Conquest of the Sid."

CHAPTER XX

Individual Gods. The Dagda. Brigit. The love of Oengus for Caer. Ailill and Meave. Nuptials. Music.

SO far we have been discussing the gods or fairies collectively. We now proceed to give individual attention to those of them we know by name. A great deal of this has been anticipated, especially in the case of the Dagda, Manannan and Bodb Berg.

The Dagda and other gods may be identified with the deities of Greek, Iranian and Indian mythology. But this is not surprising, as the Irish people are of oriental origin. It is not within our scope to develop or verify this identification. Enough to say that the departures and differentiations that have occurred in the case of particular gods are what had to be expected from the well-known fact that stories that have nothing more than human vigilance to protect them are pretty sure to gain or lose as they travel.

A study of mythology clearly points to One God, just as a study of philology points to one original language.

We have already indicated the position of the Dagda in the Irish pantheon. He was the supreme ruler. He was still more distinguished in his posterity. Dana, the "mother of the gods," was his daughter. She was also known by the name of Brigit or Brigid. This word is connected with the old Irish word "bargh" and the Sanscrit "brih," and conveys the idea of power, increase, vigor. The modern equivalent is "brig," which means strength or energy. This goddess was known under slightly different names throughout the entire Celtic world.

There was a Gaulish or Gaelic general named Brennos, who burned Rome four hundred years before Christ; and there was another general, of the same name, who captured Delphi, the innermost sanctuary of Greece, about a hundred years later.

Their names are supposed by many scholars to be variants of the name Brigit; and it is quite probable that Brigantia (Braganza), the city founded in Spain by the Milesians on their way to Ireland, was named primarily after her.

It was from its towers that Breogan is said to have seen the "Island of Destiny" or Inisfail.

Cormac's Glossary says of this goddess: — "This is Brigit, the female sage, or woman of wisdom, that is Brigit, the goddess whom poets adored, because her protecting care was very great and very famous." Cormac interprets her name as "fiery arrow," but this is regarded as fanciful. Strangely enough her two sisters bore the same name.

One of them was the goddess of doctors and medicine, and the other the goddess of smiths and smith-work. According to the same authority, their father, the Dagda, "had the perfection of the human science." He was "Mac-na n-uile n-dan," the son or disciple of all the sciences.

According to the pagan stories that have not been tampered with, his wife was Boan, with whom he lived at the famous Brug. According to other stories he was married to a woman who was known by the three names of Breg, Meng and Meabal, meaning respectively "a lie, guile and disgrace." Whether these names were given to Boan or to some previous or succeeding wife, we do not know; but they seem to indicate that his married life was not happy.

He himself was a benevolent god, but perhaps he married some Irish Xanthippe to try his patience. The euhemerists say he reigned over Ireland eighty years, as King of the De Danaan.

There is a story that keeps him alive down to the time of Christ. It runs thus: —

His son Oengus had become enamored of a beautiful woman he had seen in a vision. She had played music the like of which he had never heard. It surpassed even the "Ceol shee"* to which he was accustomed. Not being able to discover where she dwelt, he fell sick. A search of the kingdom was made, but to no avail, although the search lasted a whole year.

At last by the advice of a cunning physician, the Dagda "who was King of the 'Shee' of Ireland," was consulted.

"Why have you sent for me?" said he.

Thereupon Boan explained to him the cause of their son's malady.

"What can I do for the lad?" said he.

"I know no more about that than you do," said she.

Then the physician spoke up and as the result of his advice, Bodb, King of the Munster

* Ceol shee-fairy music.

Shee, and vassal of the Dagda, was given a year in which to find the missing lady. Celebrated throughout all Ireland for his science, this king or god was successful in his search.

But new difficulties developed. It was by no means certain that the father of the lady would give her up. She lived in Connaught; and the Dagda had to secure the aid of Ailill and Meave, joint rulers of that Kingdom, to induce Ethal Anubal, her father, to give her in marriage to Oengus.

At first the Connaught sovereigns refused to interfere, saying they had no jurisdiction over the king of the local fairies. But when hostilities finally broke out, they — mortals as they were — joined forces with the Dagda in besieging the enchanted palace of Ethal Anubal. He and sixty others were taken prisoners and carried to Cruachan in Connaught. Even then he would not consent to give up his daughter; but he explained that she had as much power as he had, and that on the first of November she would be on a certain lake in the form of a swan, with a hundred and fifty other maidens, similarly metamorphosed.

The Dagda and Anubal became reconciled. Oengus went to the lake indicated, called out

Caer, the name of the girl, and received a response, made known his suit and was accepted. He, too, was changed into a swan and in that form they flew to the palace on the Boyne, where they sang such sweet music that all who heard it fell asleep and did not wake up for three days.

We may remark here that ancient Irish music was divided into three great classes according to the effects it produced. There was the "suantraige" that caused sleep, the "goltraige" that caused lamentation or grief, the "geantraige" that caused merriment and laughter.

This story, which is an example of the thoroughly pagan class of stories, is called the "Aislinge Oengusso" or Vision of Oengus, and has been published in the *Revue Celtique.*

The name of Brigit, daughter of the Dagda, is splendidly perpetuated in Christian Ireland in the great Abbess of Kildare.

CHAPTER XXI

Diancecht. Buanann. Ana. Aine. Cleena. Aibell. Grian.

ONLY a cursory account can be given of the gods that are now less known. It will help, in some measure, to rescue them from total oblivion. The fact that their names are mentioned and some account of them given in inaccessible manuscripts, or equally inaccessible printed volumes, does not mean that the average reader would ever hear of them or attain to anything like a complete knowledge of the religious character of the ancient Irish mind.

To understand the rapid and thorough conversion of the Irish people to Christianity one should know what that was from which they were converted. To understand their uninterrupted loyalty to the Vicar of Christ, it is necessary to study the conservatism and constancy with which they clung to such religious ideas as they could have gleaned from nature before the light of Christianity illumined their

way. This constancy and conservatism was a solid foundation for the superstructure of divine grace.

Our chapters on the ancient paganism would be incomplete without a mention of the gods we know by name; but we must pass by for the present, the many legends connected with them.

One of the best known of these gods was Diancecht, the mighty physician and god of medicine. We have seen that there was also a goddess of medicine, Brigit.

And in this connection it will not be out of place to touch on a fact not widely known about the cultivation of medical knowledge by the ancient Irish. "Laege" is the Scandinavian word for physician at the present day, and "Liag" is the Irish word corresponding. It is well known that the early Germanic races or Teutons borrowed words from the older Celtic.

The grammar of their language was already formed when they met the Celts, but, although the structure was pretty well filled in they had room here and there for a brick from Celtic yards. These loan words were taken principally from the technical language as well as from the current language of polite life, civil government and war, and from the phraseology

of the learned professions. It was thus that the Danish and Norwegian word for physician came to be really Celtic.

Taylor, in his "Origin of the Aryans," tells us that these loan words, referring to "laege" and others, "can hardly be later than the time of the Gaulish empire founded by Ambicatus in the sixth century before Christ."

The family name Lee is derived from Liag, a physician. The Irish word for "doctor," most generally in use at the present day, is "doctur" or "doctuir," a corruption of the English word.

The same inexorable law was in operation. The ancient Germans borrowed from the more cultured Gaels; and during the days of enforced illiteracy, the Irish language was obliged to borrow some words from the English. Laege still goes current in Denmark and Norway.

Diancecht, the Irish Aesculapius, was brother to Goibniu, Creidne and Luchtine.

Then there was Buanaan, "the good mother," and Ana, identified with Dana or Danu, otherwise known as Brigit, the mother of the gods Brian, Iucharba and Iuchar. As Danu and Dana, she was worshipped in Munster as the goddess of plenty. She is commemorated in "Da Chich Danaine," "the two paps of

Danaan," a mountain near Killarney. The name is suggestive of the maternal nutritive function.

Then there was Aine, who gave her name to Knockainy hill and village in the county Limerick. She ruled, and still rules, that district as fairy queen and banshee. In the second century of our era, she cut off the ear of Ailill Oluim, King of Munster. It was on this account he was called Oluim, from "o," an ear, and "lom," bare; bare of one ear.

Two others who were at the same time fairy queens and banshees were Cleena and Aibell, or Aibinn. Cleena was the powerful ruler of the fairies of South Munster.

The Dinnsenchus tells us that she was a foreigner from fairyland, and that she was drowned in Glandore harbor in South Cock. At the spot where the accident happened there are cliffs rising up from the sea; and from the caverns in these, a loud melancholy roar issues at times, and is supposed to be the ocean's expression of its grief for Cleena's tragic death.

It was often noticed, also, that this roar presaged the death of a Munster King. The surge that lashes these cliffs has been called from time immemorial, tonna Cleena, or Cleena's

waves. Cleena lived on as a fairy and has still a magnificent palace at the center of a great pile of rocks five miles from Mallow.

Aibell is the fairy goddess that presides over North Munster. Her name is sometimes written Aoibinn, which means "Happy," and is considered by some to mean also "Beautiful." Her chief occupation among mortals seems to have been to take care of the O'Briens. Her efforts to dissuade certain members of Brian Boru's family from going to certain death at Clontarf were a credit to her devotedness as a banshee. Her palace, two miles north of Killaloe, is generally called Craglea, or the gray rock, but is also known as Crageevil or Aibell's rock.

Although it was a peculiarly suitable home for her, she is probably no longer there. It was situated in a deep and silent valley, but when the woods that covered it were cut down, she is said to have left it in a huff. Tobereevil, or Aibell's well, still springs from the side of the mountain that faces her erstwhile palace.

Another famous queen, "Grian of the bright cheeks," holds her court at the top of Pallas Green Hill in Tipperary. Grian is the Irish for sun. So, if she is not named after the sun, the sun is named after her.

Slieve-na-m-ban,* as its name implies, is a feminine Olympus, too.

When we think of "Cleena's wave" and the beautiful legend connected with it; when we think of any one or all of these beautiful, though pagan, associations, connected with every mountain and hill and beauty-spot of our motherland, we cannot help wondering why "Tommy Little," otherwise known as Tom Moore, should have gone to India† to look for poetical inspiration, when his own country, from a thousand fountains and a thousand heights, richer than Parnassus, was giving out that inspiration in inexhaustible draughts, as if craving to be noticed, and looking for consolation to the genius that God had given to so many of her children.

The Melodies, of course, redeemed him a little.

* The mountain of the women.

† Tom Moore himself in "Lalla Rookh" calls the topography of that poem, in a general way, India.

CHAPTER XXII

War Furies. The Morrigan. Badb, etc. Demons at Battle of Magh Rath. Fled Bricrend. Fight of champions with geniti Glinni. Finger and toe nails as weapons.

THERE were war furies in the ancient Irish pantheon. The names of a few of these goddesses have reached us. There was Ana or Anan, but she must not be confounded with the benevolent goddess of that name; and there was Macha who must not be confounded with the foundress of Emania. There was the Morrigan or great queen, a name very much in evidence, and there was the Badb, pronounced "Bweeve," which seems to have been a generic name for them all.

They were all "bweeves." The bweeve used to appear in the form of a carrion crow or vulture over the place where slaughter was going on, as in a terrible battle. And hence in all Ireland and in parts of Scotland and Wales, that bird is still regarded with superstitious horror. The very sight of it brings to mind

the dim tradition of the gruesome part played in the battles of ancient Erin by the bloodthirsty war goblins. The word "bweeve" is still used in Ireland for a scolding woman.

The badb also took the form of a loathsome hag, joyful when the women of Ireland were sad. Her delight consisted in the battle carnage that made them widows. One shudders to think of her, as he would at the thought of the witches in Macbeth or Meg Merriles in "Guy Mannering."

At the battle of Clontarf she appeared in the form of a lean, nimble hag, hovering in the clouds over the contending armies, hopping on the ground or perched on the swords and spear-points of the warriors. Her shriek was heard in anticipation of battle, and her foul form seen sating herself with the blood of the slain.

Whitley Stokes describes her in the *Revue Celtique* as "a big-mouthed, swarthy, swift, sooty woman, lame, and squinting with her left eye." Aed, King of Oriell, in the second century, had a shield called the Dubgilla, or black servant. It was the "feeder of ravens," and was so called because it was hardly ever without a war fury, perched on its rim.

The accounts of these deities that have come

down to us are very confused. But the following passage from the "Battle of Magh Rath"* gives a good idea of their activities. Describing Suibne, who was about to engage in battle, this seventh-century narrative says that "fits of giddiness came over him at the horrors, grimness and rapidity of the Gaels. . . . Huge, horrible, aerial phantoms rose up, so that they were in cursed, commingling crowds, tormenting him; and in dense, rustling, clamorous, left-turning hordes, without ceasing; and in dismal, regular, aerial, storm-shrieking, hovering fiendlike hosts, constantly in motion, shrieking and howling as they hovered above both armies, in every direction, to cow and dismay cowards and soft youths, but to invigorate and mightily rouse champions and warriors; so that from the uproar of the battle, the frantic pranks of the demons, and the clashing of arms, the sound of the heavy blows reverberating on the points of heroic spears, and keen edges of swords, and the war-like borders of broad shields, the noble hero Suibne was filled and intoxicated with tremor, horror, panic, dismay, fickleness, unsteadiness, fear, flightiness, giddiness, terror

* Published with a translation by Dr. O'Donovan, for the Irish Archæological Society in 1842.

and imbecility; so that there was not a joint of a member of him from foot to head which was not turned into a confused, trembling mass from the effect of fear and the panic of dismay."

"His legs trembled as if shaken by the force of a storm. His arms and various edged weapons fell from him, the power of his hands having been weakened and relaxed around them and made incapable of holding them. The doors of his hearing were quickened and opened by the horrors of lunacy; the vigor of his brain, in the cavities of his head, was destroyed by the din of conflict; his speech became faltering from the giddiness of imbecility; his very soul fluttered with hallucination, and with many and various phantasms; for the soul was the root and true basis of fear itself.

"He might be compared then to a salmon in a weir, or to a bird caught in the close prison of a cage. But the person to whom these horrid phantasms and spectres of flight and fleeing presented themselves had never before been a coward or a lunatic without valor; but he was thus confounded because he had been cursed by St. Ronan and denounced by the great saints of Erin, because he had violated their guarantee (or sanctuary) and slain an

ecclesiastical student of their people over the consecrated trench, that is, a pure, clear-bottomed spring, over which the shrine and Communion of the Lord was placed for the nobles and arch-chieftains of Erin, and for all the people in general, before the commencement of the battle."

The battle of Magh Rath took place in A.D. 637, and the account of it from which the above is translated is one of the most ancient historical tales we possess, as its language shows. It was fought between Domnal, King of Tara, and Congal Claon, King of Ulster, who had many foreigners on his side.

The curse, referred to in this tale, was probably an excommunication. This is, of course, the only reasonable explanation of it. It is interesting to note how the writer regards the change in Suibne as a divine visitation, and how he brings in the demons of ancient Erin as instruments in the hands of Providence.

Besides the Bweeves, there were many other classes or species of war demons. There were "geniti glinni" or sprites of the valley; Bocanachs, or male, and Bananachs, or female, goblins; and Demna Aeir, or demons of the air. When a battle was raging, they shrieked all

around the scene of slaughter or howled with delight in their distant haunts.

At the "Fled Dun na n-ged"* or "Feast of the Ford of Geese" two of these demons, described as a man and woman from hell, appeared and were received hospitably as strangers, ate up all that was on the tables or within reach, and caused the quarrel that led to the great battle of Moyrath or Magh Rath.

Some of these demons sided with Cuculain in one of his attacks on Meave's army, and her men were so terrified "that they dashed against the points of one another's spears and weapons and one hundred warriors dropped dead with terror."

In the "Fled Bricrend," "Feast of Bricriu" published in his Irische Texte by Windisch, we are told that when a dispute arose as to which of the three heroes Laegaire, Conall Cearnach or Cuculain should get the "champion's bit" as his right, they were sent, one by one, by decision of Samera, to attack a colony of geniti glinni that infested a neighboring valley. Laegaire started the fight, got the worst of it, escaped without his armor or arms, and with his clothes torn in tatters.

* Published with a translation by Dr. O'Donovan. Under same cover with Magh Rath in 1842.

Conall Cearnach tried next, was put to flight, saved his sword, but left his spear and shield with the victors. Cuculain was next, and the redoubtable champion came near going down, but, incited by his charioteer, he continued the conflict, as if determined to fight to the death. He came off victorious, but with his clothes all torn, and his body bruised and scratched in many places.

It was the most terrible fight he was ever in; but the valley ran red with the blood of the goblins before he got through with them. The reason of the peculiar injuries inflicted in these fights was that these furies fought with their toe nails, finger nails and teeth. The toe nails and finger nails were allowed to grow for purposes of offence and defence.

We remember to have read in an Irish wonder-tale, of a champion, fighting a "hag" or she-demon and finding his spear too short for her finger nails. Seeing that by fighting at long range he could accomplish nothing, and that close quarters meant certain death, he took refuge behind a tree, hoping to jab at his assailant from either side of that oak trunk, three hundred years old. But to his surprise and dismay, she drove her finger nails through

that tree with perfect ease, driving him from his vantage ground. We remember with satisfaction that he finally won out in this apparently ignoble contest, but how he did it, we do not remember.

CHAPTER XXIII

Manannan. Fand. Emer. The Fairy Branch. Manannan and Cormac MacArt.

NONE of the ancient Irish gods can compare with Manannan in popular remembrance and esteem. Many old Irishmen remember him better than they remember their great-grandfathers. He is surnamed "MacLir," which means "Son of the Sea"; and although it was well known that his dwelling place was in the ocean, either at the surface or at the bottom, no one ever discovered its precise location.

Bran, the son of Febal, was one of the famous voyagers of ancient Erin. On one of these voyages, when two days and two nights out on the sea, he saw a chariot coming over the surface of the waters and bearing right down on him. He hailed it and enquired who was its occupant, and Manannan answered that he was its occupant; and in the course of the conversation declared that the sea was to him "a happy plain with profusion of flowers, seen from the chariot of two wheels."

This legend is beautifully and somewhat amusingly preserved in Christian Ireland. St. Scutin used to go to Rome every day and come back the next day. The way he did it was by walking over the ocean or skimming over it like the wind. One day while thus on his way to the Eternal City, he met St. Finbar of Cork, coming back to Ireland in a ship.

St. Scutin is somewhat better known by his Latin name Scotinus.

The good St. Finbar accosted Scotinus and asked him why he travelled in that peculiar way, why didn't he go in a ship? Scotinus answered and said that to him it was not the sea at all but a "vast shamrock-bearing plain," and in proof of his assertion, he stooped down and picked up a bunch of flowers and threw them to Finbar. The latter, still maintaining that it was the sea, stooped down and picked up a salmon and threw it to Scotinus.*

How the controversy was settled, or whether it was ever settled at all, we do not know. Insignificant and fabulous as the little story is, it does its own little service in illustrating, in the midst of the enormous mass of other

* See Dr. Joyce's Social History of Ireland, Chap., Paganism.

evidence, how completely wrapped up the Christian Irish mind was in the thought of Rome, and how perseveringly and faithfully the face of early Christian Ireland, as of Ireland at all times, was turned toward the Centre of Unity.

As for Manannan, any one travelling along the Irish coasts may even yet see his "white-maned steeds." Of course, they are apt to be taken for the "white-caps" that appear on the crests of the waves in a storm. But this is all a mistake. When the night is dark and a storm raging, all the voyager, or the man standing on the shore, has to do is to look out over the tossing sea, and although he may not see Manannan himself, he will see that that god is in his glory on such a night, and he will see his steeds careering with a certain wild regularity over the face of the deep.

One of the islands of the pagan heaven is described as "an isle around which sea-horses glisten."

Manannan differed a little from the rest of the fairies in physical construction. He had three legs; and, with these, when on land, he rolled along like a wheel, and with such speed that he easily "caught up with the wind that

was ahead of him, while the wind that was back of him never caught up with him." His singular anatomy is still commemorated in the three-legged figure that is stamped on the Manx half-penny.

He was the Irish Neptune. Neptune carried a trident, which, we suppose, was a kind of sceptre, not shaped exactly like a fork, but with the prongs forming the apices of an equilateral triangle. Manannan dispensed with the use of a trident, as he was built in that shape himself. Cormac MacCullinan was a Euhemerist of the first class.

In his Glossary he makes Manannan a mere man. He describes him as a celebrated merchant who abode in the Isle of Mann, and had the distinction of being the best pilot in the west of Europe. "He used to know by studying the sky," continues the Glossary, "the period which would be the fine weather and the bad weather, and when each of these two times would change. Hence the Irish and the Britons called him the "God of the Sea," and also MacLir, i.e., 'Son of the Sea,' and from the name of Manannan the 'Isle of Mann' is so called."

The "Coir Anman," however, which is a

much later authority, says that it was the Isle of Mann that gave its name to Manannan. He was king of this island and hence the figure on the coin.

One of his names was Oirbsen, and Lough Corrib in Galway was anciently called Loc Oirbsen, because he was drowned there. Still, like all the gods who suffered death at the quill-points of the Euhemerists, he lived on. We find him in the Heroic Cycle involved in the entanglements of human love, and we cannot say that his conduct was quite worthy of a god.

He repudiates his faithful wife, Fand, and she, in revenge, makes love to Cuculain, who is already married to the beautiful and chaste Emer. There is trouble for a while, but at last Manannan becomes reconciled to Fand, and the cloud that hung over the happiness of Cuculain and Emer was also dissipated. It is not unlike many a modern romance, except that, when the unmitigated paganism of its background is considered, it must be admitted to be much cleaner.

Manannan gets mixed up in human affairs again in the Ossianic Cycle. Cormac Mac-Art, who was high king of Ireland in A.D. 266,

is put down in the Annals of Tigernach as having been absent or missing on one occasion for seven months. How it happened is recorded in an old story entitled "Toruigeacht Craoibe Chormaic Mhic Airt," or "Seeking of the Branch of Cormac MacAirt." It was one of Manannan's tricks.

One day that Cormac was looking out from a window of his palace at Tara, then called Liathdruim, he saw a handsome young man in the "faitce" or plain adjoining the palace. The youth held in his hand a most beautiful branch on which nine golden apples were hanging. When the branch was shaken, these apples beat against each other and produced music so strange and sweet that all who heard it forgot all pain and sorrow at once and were lulled to sleep.

Cormac took a great liking for the fairy branch and went out and asked the young man if it belonged to him.

"It does indeed," said the young man.

"Wilt thou sell it?" said Cormac.

"I will," said the young man. "I never have anything that I would not sell."

"What is thy price?" said Cormac. "I will give thee anything thou thinkest right."

And the young man replied: "Thy wife, thy son and thy daughter."

"I will give them to thee," said the king.

The youth went over to the palace with Cormac, who told his family about the bargain. They had admired the branch and its musical qualities very much, but when they heard the price that was paid for it, their expostulations and lamentations were very great indeed. But at the sound of the chimes from the golden apples they forgot it all and went to sleep.

The news of their contemplated departure for Fairyland, or some strange country, passed over Ireland and caused universal grief, as they were very popular. But the fairy music from the golden apples drowned all sorrow in peaceful slumber.

Soon Eithne, Cairbre and Ailbhe went away with the stranger. The branch and the apples remained with Cormac. After one year had passed he longed to see his wife and children. He set out in the direction in which he had seen them going. Soon a "ceo draoideacta" or fog of enchantment and invisibility enveloped him, although he was totally unaware of its presence. He was under fairy influence and saw many things in his journeyings that were utterly incomprehensible to him.

At last he came to a house, which, on invitation of the "woman of the house," he entered. She took him for a distinguished stranger "of the men of the world," and called for her lord and master who was a tall and handsome man. In fact they were both tall and handsome and dressed in garments of many colors. The couple said it was an unseemly hour for travel on foot, and so invited Cormac to enjoy their hospitality until the morning.

The man went out and carried in on his back a huge pig, and in his hand a log. He threw the pig and the log on the floor and divided each into four equal portions.

"Now," said he to Cormac, "you take a quarter of the log and make a fire with it, and take a quarter of the pig and put it on the fire and then tell us a story and if the story be a true one the meat will be cooked when it is all told." But Cormac maintained that it was not his place, in that presence, to tell the first story, that his host should begin, that the lady should come next, and that the third story would be his turn.

Manannan admitted his claim and proceeded to tell that he had seven of these pigs, and that with them he could feed the whole world;

for all he had to do after one of them was eaten was to gather its bones and put them back in the sty and the next morning he would find the pig entire. His story was a true one and the first quarter of the pig was cooked.

Then the second quarter was put on and his wife related that she had seven white cows and that with the milk of these cows she could fill all the men of the world "if they were on the plain drinking it." The story was true and the second quarter of the pig was cooked.

"If your stories be true," said Cormac, "thou, indeed, art Manannan and she is your wife, for no one upon the face of the earth possesses those treasure but only Manannan, for it was to Tir Tairngire (The Land of Promise) he went to seek that woman and he got those seven cows with her." Manannan admitted his identity and asked for Cormac's story. The third quarter of the pig was put on the fire, and Cormac went on to relate how he had bartered away his wife, his son and his daughter for the fairy branch.

"If what thou sayst be true," said Manannan, "thou art Cormac, son of Art, son of Conn of the hundred battles." "Truly I am," said Cormac and it is in search of these three I am now."

That story was true and the quarter of the pig was cooked. Cormac, however, refused to eat in a company of only three, and when asked if he would eat if three others were added, he said he would if he liked them.

Thereupon his wife, son and daughter were brought in, and Manannan admitted that it was he who had carried them away and that his object was to bring Cormac himself to that house. Great was the joy of Cormac.

After the host had explained to him the meaning of the different wonders he had seen in his travels, Cormac and his wife, Eithne, and his son Cairbre, and his daughter Ailbhe sat down to the table and ate heartily. Before them was a tablecloth on which appeared instantly any kind of food they thought of or desired.

And Manannan, putting his hand in his pocket, pulled out a goblet, and explained to them that if a lie were told in the presence of that goblet it would break into four pieces, but if the truth were told it would come together again, perfectly whole.

"Let that be proved," said Cormac.

"It shall be done," said Manannan.

"This woman that I took from thee has had another husband since I brought her with me."

The cup went to pieces.

"Verily my husband hath lied," said Manannan's wife.

This was true and the cup was restored to its original self and looked as if nothing had ever happened to it.

After affectionate greetings with Manannan, and pledges of eternal friendship, Cormac and his family retired to their respective couches, and when they woke up they found themselves in Liathdruim with the musical branch, the bountiful tablecloth, and the sensitive cup in their possession.

The language in which we find this tale is modernized from a tenth-century text. De Jubainville, who is not a cynic and hardly ever sneers, says: "I can hardly recognize as ancient the passage referring to the fidelity of Cormac's wife. Celtic paganism is not so chaste." We would respectfully remark on this that the very fact that it cannot be proven unchaste is in itself quite an argument that Celtic mythology, or at least Irish mythology, was very comparatively clean.

CHAPTER XXIV

The Leprechaun. Ancient references to him. Modern conceptions of him.

THERE are very few references to the luchrupan in our ancient literature; but there are some, and they are enough to show that he has a prescriptive right to exist and thrive on Irish soil, and that he is not a creation of medieval or modern imagination. Modern fiction has, indeed, taken liberties with his person and habits, which he would certainly resent if his dignity as a god and a proper sense of personal security had not made him decide to keep himself in retirement. He differs from the other gods in his absolute physical helplessness when in the grasp of a mortal. "lu" is the Irish for "least" and chrupan is for "corpan," a little body; hence his name "a wee little body."

We find his name generally spelled leprecawn, lurrigawn, and sometimes clooricawn, lurrigadane, luppercadane, and loughryman, which are all corruptions of luchorpan.

We find a reference to him in "Libur na H-Uidre." It gives him a human pedigree. It tells us that "luchrupans, and Fomorians and goat-heads and every sort of ill-shaped men were descended from Ham."

A colony of leprecawns lived in a beautiful country, under Lough Rury, now Dundrum Bay, in County Down. Fergus MacLeide, as we are told in an ancient tale, captured their king. The little monarch ransomed himself by presenting Fergus with a pair of shoes that gave him the power to dive into the water as often as he pleased and remain under the surface as long as he wished.

It is on this incident, probably, the tradition is founded that the luchorpan is shoemaker to the fairies; and that if he is caught he will buy his freedom by showing his captor where to find a "crock of gold." This seems to have been, in the minds of the story tellers, the acme of good luck.

The leprecawn is not malicious. But if ill-treated, he'll take his revenge, like the other fairies; he'll wither the corn, set fire to the house or snip the hair off the head of his tormentor. This is the punishment he generally metes out to women, whenever one is found

courageous enough to bother him. He is very small; but Miss Hull, in her "Cuculain Saga," calling him a "brat," is entirely wrong. This is no translation of his name. He comes by his name legitimately, and would not be a true scion of the ancient and honorable race of leprecawns if he wasn't small.

The ancient accounts make him about six inches tall. He is well proportioned, and very strong for his size. A knock on the head from his hammer is something one would never forget. He has been known to cut a thistle in two, with one blow from his sword, but he rarely carries this.

Notwithstanding what the "Libur na h-Uidre" says about his stature, we are strongly of the opinion that it makes him more diminutive than he really is. From our general reading we feel that we can add at least three inches more to his height.

We believe there is not an Irishman living that has not at some time or another, thought of him; and we believe, furthermore, that there is not an Irishman living who would not like to catch him. But that is where all the trouble comes in. And even if you did catch him, good reader, you would have to keep your

eyes fixed on him till you had the money; for, if you blinked, he was gone and your sudden hopes of sudden wealth would have vanished with him. He has disappointed many men.

"Oh, how many times," says Henry Giles, the famous lecturer of sixty or seventy years ago, "oh, how many times, in those golden days of youth which are given once to the most wretched, and are never given twice to the most blessed, have I looked for that miniature Son of the Last, — watched for his red cap amidst the green grass of the hill-side — spied around to catch the thumb-sized treasure-knower, that I might have guineas to buy books to my heart's content, or wealth enough to go, like Aladdin, and ask for the Caliph's daughter. But I must honestly confess that, though no one ever looked more diligently than I did for a leprechaun, I never found one." Such has been the experience of many others. We never met any one who saw him, but we have met people who knew for certain about others who had either seen him or heard him, tapping away at a shoe-heel. We often thought of him ourselves in our strollings about the hills and valleys of old Ireland, and wondered if we really would have the courage to grab him if

we saw him. There is something so uncanny and unearthly in chasing this elusive little being that one would hardly consider it a delightful pastime, even with enormous wealth in view.

There is hardly a doubt but that some people have been a little more fortunate than Mr. Giles. They have seen him, captured him, made an effort to secure the treasure, but, as far as we know, they all lost. In fact, he has often been caught, but in every instance he has proved more than a match for the mortal who caught him.

Except in the case of Fergus Mac-Leide, in ancient times, he has never yet been in any predicament that he has not been able to get away from, by the resources of his own cunning nature.

He could not, of course, have thrived so long on Irish soil without some of his tricks becoming known, and it is well to caution mortals against these. Sometimes when in the grasp of a courageous person he has been known to make the best of the situation by looking cheerful and pretending that he is the one really favored. He directs his delighted captor to the place where the "crock of gold" is hidden, and

in the course of a most pleasant series of questions and answers, and in a most off-handed and matter-of-fact way, offers the unsuspecting mortal a pinch of snuff. This poor fellow's thoughts are all on the money. Completely off his guard, he takes the snuff, to keep the little fellow in good humor, but does not take his eyes off his captive while taking it. But when he has drawn it up into his nostrils, he sneezes and the little fellow vanishes. If the thick-witted mortal could only have sneezed without blinking, he could have held on to his prey and come into the possession of millions. But he misses his opportunity and realizes that he was dealing with no fool.

If anybody asked our opinion as to which we considered the more profitable pursuit, the chase of leprecawns or the chase of skunks, we would unhesitatingly decide in favor of the latter. As a matter of fact, the accumulation of enormous wealth has been, perhaps in more cases than one, started in this way. Besides, the leprecawn is not an American product, and, even in Ireland the quest of him has always proven to be a very unpromising industry.

It is said that when you get near enough to

him, you will notice that his face bears all the evidence of his extreme old age. But, of course, he has the power to give it the appearance of all the bloom of youth when he wishes to do so.

Modern writers have told stories about him, which he has not taken the pains to contradict. They have made insinuations of intemperance and open charges of impertinence against him. He has been known, according to them, to show a predilection for loitering around houses which were possessed of well-stocked wine cellars.

Oliver Cromwell, with a party of his officers, came upon such a house somewhere near Drogheda. They were delighted to discover that there were several casks of excellent wine in the cellar. But that cellar had been the haunt for centuries of a certain leprecawn, who had made himself quite at home with that ancient family. He knew what Cromwell and his officers would first make for; and so he contrived to remove the wine from the casks and replace it with salt water.

Cromwell looked at the casks. They were fair to behold, and the saliva flowed from his molars. Soon, in rage and disappointment, he swore, as only Cromwell could swear. He had tasted salt water instead of wine.

"Oh, is that yourself, you wonderful saint?" said a thin little voice. "I am ashamed to hear your saint-ship swearing."

The great man looked around and saw the diminutive figure sitting on a cask, his chin resting on his clenched fists and his little eyes glaring defiance.

"Fire at him and defy Satan," shouted Cromwell.

"Fire away, Flanagan," said the little fellow, "but even if you put your own red nose to the touch-hole, you'd miss fire, and now, you old depredator, if it isn't a rude question, might a body make bold to ask how much the painting of your nose cost? I have been a thousand years in the world and so fine a nose as that I have never looked at before. I didn't think you'd have the face to show such a nose in this country."

Cromwell turned his eyes toward heaven and prayed, but the leprecawn had no fear of him or his prayers, but told him to get out or that he would make an honest and merciful man out of him, and thus put an end to his power.*

* This scene is adapted from Hall's Picturesque Ireland.

CHAPTER XXV

The Pooka. Gives his name to places. Some of his tricks.

NO apparition of the night inspired more terror than the pooka. He is capricious; and some say he is malignant; but we have never heard that his malignity ever went any further than giving a scare his victim never forgot. And most of the time one would imagine, from the nature of his pranks, that he indulged in them for his own amusement simply. We have not seen him referred to as a god particularly, but as he is certainly not quite human, being able to make himself visible or invisible at will, he seems to have conquered a place for himself in the Irish pagan pantheon.

He is supposed to have been imported by the Danes. Whether this be so or not his name is associated with so many places in Ireland that it would seem as if the Irish, from time immemorial, had a pooka of their own.

We do not know, and it is probable that we never can find out, when those places got those names. One of the best known of them is Pollaphooka, or the pooka's Hole in County Wicklow. It is a wild chasm where the Liffey falls over a ledge of rock into a deep pool or cavern. Then there is a Puckstown near Artaine in County Dublin; and Boheraphooka, or the pooka's road, not far from Roscrea, in the County Tipperary. This road has such a bad name that if one is passing over it at night he is sure to be seized with a violent fit of piety and devotion, even if, in times when no danger threatens, he never says his prayers at all.

If people dreaded the arch-enemy of man's salvation half as much as they dread the pooka they would fare much better in many ways.

Then there is Carrigaphooka, or the pooka's rock, near Macroom. On the top of this rock stands the ruin of the ancient castle of a great family of the MacCarthys. The place is distinguished also as the scene of the first attempt at aviation, although the fact does not seem to be known to our modern birdmen.

It was from this spot that Daniel O'Rourke started out on his voyage to the moon on the back of an eagle.

All over the country there are such names as these, and such names also as Ahaphooka, or the pooka's ford, and Lissaphooka and rath-pooka or the pooka's fort. All this goes to show how clearly and extensively the pooka has left his footprints on the sands of time in Ireland.

Shakespeare has immortalized him in England and has indicated his habits and powers when he makes him describe himself as "a merry wanderer of the night," who "can put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes," and Charles Lamb, whom we quoted in a former chapter, describes his tricks more minutely.

It would be impossible to give a full account of all the tricks of the Irish pooka. His villanous versatility and resourcefulness are marvellous. We shall be content with giving a translation of an account of him we find in "Siomsa an Geimre," a little book giving stories and games that beguile the long winter nights in West Connaught.

"There are few townlands in Ireland," this book tells us, "that have not a hill, a valley or a cliff which takes its name from the pooka; but what kind of being or animal he is, few, very few indeed, know. Some poet has said that

the pooka has existed from the time of the Flood and that he changes his form many times and in many ways; that he is a cat or a dog at night, and that he is no sooner in that form than in the shape of an old white horse.

"It is the habit of the pooka to give a ride to any one he catches out late at night. He has two ways of doing this. When he is in human shape, he contrives to lift the traveller on to his back by a wrestling trick, known only to himself. The unfortunate wayfarer begins his ride with his head down, his face to the pooka's back, his legs doubled over the pooka's shoulders and his shins held tight one in each hand of the goblin; and in this way he is carried with awful speed over hills and valleys, lakes and lakelets, up and down hills, and when he is exhausted and thoroughly frightened, he is set down and let go on his way again.

"The other way is when he makes a horse of himself. He comes up behind the unsuspecting wayfarer, thrusts his head between the latter's legs, throws him up on his back, and suddenly assuming unusual height, leaves his human butt the alternative of holding on like a bold rider or sliding down and taking a chance of breaking his bones. As a general thing the

rider holds on with a death-grip and off goes the pooka whithersoever he pleases, and the greater his speed, the tighter the grip of the rider on his mane.

"The pooka does not always have it his own way, though. Once in a while, a man comes along to whom this free ride is a joy ride indeed.

"There was once a merchant who came to Connemara before roads were built there, and he came on horse-back. He found a lodging, as there were one and twenty welcomes for the traveller, and the princely hospitality of the people of West Connaught was known far and near. He let his horse out through the fields and went to sleep. When he had slept enough, he got up, ate his breakfast and dressed himself for travel. He knew by the stars that it was earlier than he had at first supposed, and he thought it would be better to be getting the journey over him. He went looking for his horse; but whom should he meet but the pooka! This fellow lifted him up on his back, and started out at a brisk trot, which he soon increased to a gallop. He went like the wind through bogs, swamps and fields, over hills and glens and across rivers, and was about to let the rider down, when all of a sudden he changed

his mind and made a sudden dash for the bank of a great river and was about to leap across it, when it dawned on the rider for the first time that he had his spurs on. With a powerful effort he drove these to the quick in his mysterious steed. The latter trembled, seemingly paralyzed by the unexpected shock. When he got himself together he begged of the rider to pull the spikes out of his sides and that he would let him down. The latter complied, and in a twinkle the pooka was on the other side of the river.

"The merchant was sorry he let him go so easy. He tried to coax him back, hoping to break him of some of his tricks. He called to him aloud, saying he had something nice to tell him.

"'Have you got those spikes on yet?' returned the pooka. 'I have, indeed,' said the man. 'If you have,' said the pooka, 'stay where you are. I will not go near you till you take them off. I am through with you now, but if I catch you another time when you haven't got the spikes on, you will learn a few things or I'll lose a fall by it.'"

This goblin's name is indifferently spelled pooka or pooca, but always puca in the Irish language, and puck in Shakespeare.

CHAPTER XXVI

The pooka not always to blame. St. Patrick's diplomatic tact. Greek, Latin and Irish "humanities."

THE Irish pooka is bad enough, but he is not to blame for half the things laid to his charge. A case in point is the air trip of Daniel O'Rourke.

An excellent description or report of it was written by William Maginn. Daniel, after certain experiences, found himself alone on a "dissolute" island. How to get out of there and get home was the problem that confronted him. An eagle appeared, and, to Daniel's astonishment, talked to him "like a Christian," and offered to fly him home.

Dan had some misgivings, but he accepted the offer. Instead of bringing him home, the eagle carried him up to the moon and left him there, saying she was glad to get even with him as he had robbed her nest a few months before.

Dan was mystified, chagrined and disappointed. He did not want to betray his feelings fully; and so he cursed the eagle vigorously in

Irish, thinking that she would not understand him.

He knew well that he had robbed the nest, but how the eagle found out that it was he that did it, he could not understand. But there he was, left alone hanging on to the moon.

Soon a door opened; and it creaked and grated as if it had not been opened before for a thousand years. The "Man in the Moon" appeared and looked at Dan. He evidently resented the intrusion. He was not accustomed to visitors, and felt he did not know how to take them. He had, all his life, been monarch of all he surveyed, and did not know but that this Irishman might have some designs on his sovereignty. He thought to himself that an Irishman who would fly to the moon would be enterprising and adventurous enough to attempt anything. So he kicked Dan out, or rather off, and the latter proceeded towards the earth in a series of somersaults, reminding one somewhat of chained lightning. The poor fellow was about to despair of ever reaching Ireland in safety, when he met a flock of wild geese, flying along under the generalship of a gander from his own bog. He knew that gander well, and the gander knew him and spoke to him, and

asked him to hang on to his leg, and that he would take him to the earth safe and sound.

Dan said something to himself in Irish, but the gander did not understand. On account of his experience with the eagle, he distrusted that gander very much. "But there was no help," says Dan, "so I caught the gander by the leg and away I and the other geese flew after him as fast as hops."

Soon, however, he discovered that the geese were flying to Arabia; and so he prevailed on the gander to drop him some place where he could reach the earth without breaking his bones.

If we remember rightly he fell into the sea. After some more adventures he woke up at the foot of Carrigaphooca, dreaming that he had been tossed about on the crest of a great wave.

As a matter of fact, his poor, disgusted, but devoted wife had been soussing him with cold water during the whole course of his trip.

Why he went to sleep at the base of this haunted rock anyone may conjecture; and although there were reasons enough to account for his wild and hazardous trip, it would not do to let the pooka go without his share of the blame.

The poor pooka! Even though he is thoroughly unpopular, it is good to have him to blame things on. The Irish made a mistake in not bringing him with them to this country. He could have had lots of fun here, and made the acquaintance of more people than he ever knew in Denmark, England and Ireland.

Besides the pooka there is a great number of apparitions recorded, not so much in Irish books, or even in Irish folk stories, as in Irish place names. Tell the traveller in Ireland the names of certain places, and if, by any chance, he sees through the etymology of these names, he will be apt to tell you that he "would rather not" stay in any of them that night, as he remembers he has some business to transact elsewhere. These apparitions are called by different names. The Latin word "effigies" was found by Zeuss glossed by the word "delb," the ancient form of the modern "dealb," a shape, a form, a phantom, something evanescent. Cillin na n-dealb, or the little church of the phantoms, in Tipperary, is named after an old churchyard which was particularly haunted.

Fua is another name for phantom, and it is found incorporated in the name of Glennawoo in Fermanagh, and in many other such names.

Tais, pronounced thash, is also often used for spectre, and is found in such names as Tobar a' Taise or "The well of the ghost."

A most hideous class of spectre is the Dullaghan. He haunts cemeteries, but does not dishonor the dead. He may be seen carrying his head in his hands or under his arm. In fact, one may meet whole troops of them, walking along in irregular formation, tossing their heads from one to another, as if in playfulness.*

Tom Moore, somewhere in "Lalla Rookh," introduces us to a somewhat similar belief in the East, where souls are said to watch in loving vigilance at the graves of the bodies from which they have been released.

Taken altogether it is hard to find a country where ancient paganism or mythology has left a more indelible impression than in Ireland. The very face of the country seems to be one great voice, speaking of its remote past; and all this, notwithstanding its grand, indestructible and pure Christianity.

With the well-known reservation that every comparison limps, we may say that as the Apostles "buried the synagogue with honor,"

* Dr. P. W. Joyce: "Irish Names of Places."

St. Patrick buried the ancient Irish paganism with honor also.

The change he brought about was not a violence to the feelings of the people. They saw its reasonable and heaven-sent nature, as they went along; and hence, humanly speaking, the stability and lasting character of the structure our glorious apostle built. The more one thinks of him, and of the work he did, and how he went about that work, the more one is impressed not only with his ability and forcefulness as a missionary, but also with his perfect tact and Christian prudence.

The great diplomat, in the best sense of the word, speaks in every paragraph, and in every line of his "Confessions." He was truly another St. Paul in personality as in achievement. He was the very man to face a great and difficult problem.

He approached the people with preconceived respect, and although he destroyed their ancient beliefs and pagan practices he made no effort to obliterate these things forever as historic traditions.

He allowed these "humanities" to live on; and as a matter of fact, is not Europe indebted to the "humanities" of Greece and Rome for

its education, and very largely for the language in its mouth?

The literature in which ancient Ireland still lives is indeed literature of the purest kind, if literature be what Brother Azarias defines it to be. "What, then, constitutes literature?" says he. "Two things: first, the subject treated of must be such as appeals to our common humanity; second, the subject must be treated in such a style that the reading of it gives general pleasure."

CHAPTER XXVII

Threefold classification of Irish gods. The Irish Divi. Aed Ruad and Donn. Instances in Roman and Greek mythology. Aquatic monsters. Snake story about St. Patrick

IRISH mythology did not begin with the disappearance of the Tuatha De Danaan. The "shees," into which these retired, are represented as previously existing, and not as residences built up or excavated for their special accommodation. Besides, we are told, they conversed with "shees," that is, with the inhabitants of the shees, under the ground. Some of the Milesians were also adopted into the Pantheon, as we see in the case of Aed Ruad, the father of Macha, the foundress of Emania. He was drowned in the waterfall at Ballyshannon, which was on that account called "Eas-Aeda Ruaid," or "Aed Ruad's waterfall," now shortened to "Assaroe." He was buried in the mound over the cataract, now called Mullaghshee; but this was a burial in appearance only. He has reigned over that

district as fairy king for the past two thousand years.

And then we have the conspicuous example of Donn, who was drowned in the magic storm raised by the Tuatha De Danaan to prevent the Milesians from landing. But this drowning was simply his passage to Olympus. From the top of Knock-fierna he rules as king over the fairies of the great Limerick plain. Andrew Mac Curtin, a poet of Munster, addresses a poem to him, begging for admission to his shee; and his great anxiety to be heard is evident from the lines in which he says:

"Munar bodar tu o trom gut na
taoide,
No mur bh-fuarais bas mar cach a
Doinn ghill."

"Unless thou art deaf from the heavy
voice of the tide,
Or unless you died like every one
else, O fair Donn."

There was another poet, Doncad Ruad Mac Conmara (Red Denis MacNamara), who, however, saw Donn down in the infernal regions. Red Denis was born in Clare about the beginning of the eighteenth century. In a serio-comic, heroic poem on his own adventures he tells us

how Eevill, the North Munster banshee, brought him down to Hades, where they found Conan of the ancient Fenians, and not Charon, in charge of the ferry-boat across the Styx. Conan made no attempt to disguise himself. Such an attempt would have been useless.

Denis recognized him at once from the circumstance that he wore "an ewe's black fleece around his back for clothing." This was an article of clothing that Conan, for some reason that we now forget, had been unable to separate himself from in this life, and it seems he carried it with him to the infernal regions. He was not glad to see Eevill. He hurled a volley of abusive language at her for her impudence in bringing that poor mortal gawk down to that fearful place. She, however, appeased him and he ferried them across.

Red Denis saw Cerberus and has since put himself on record to show that Virgil was right in what he had said about that dog. It was Cerberus himself that was there, sure enough, and no other dog. Denis, and even the banshee, were frightened at the appearance of this canine. There was no need of a sign for them to look out for the dog. But how were they to get by? Conan, who was showing them

around, solved this problem. He seized the dog by the throat and held him up in the air — such air as there was in that place — while they ran by and in through the gate.

The poet was much interested in the splendid representation the "Clann Gadelus," or "children of the original Gael," and even the Tuatha De Danaan, had down there. When he came to Donn, of the sons of Miled, he exclaimed to his fair companion:

An "bh-feicirse Donn, sa lann ar
faobhar,
Ag teilgeann Ceann a n-gabal a
ceile;"

"Do you see Donn and his blade,
keen-edged,
Tossing heads in a heap together?"

Besides Aed Ruad and Donn, there can be no doubt but that many other names of deified Milesians would have reached us, if the euhemerists had not done their work so well in depleting the Pantheon. Aed Ruad and Donn belong to the class of gods that ancient Rome called "Divi." Every classical scholar knows that there was in Greece and Rome a sharp line of demarcation drawn between those who

had been always gods and those that were adopted as such after their death.

Horace tells us that Romulus was admitted to the skies in spite of the opposition of Juno, who hated the race of Aeneas to which he belonged. She only relented after receiving a promise that neither god nor man should ever attempt the rebuilding of Troy.

The apotheosis of the Emperor Augustus in the odes of Horace, is well known, and from the poetical view-point must be admitted to be very beautiful. "Augustus purpureo bibit ore nectar," says the poet, placing his idol among the gods, drinking the nectar of immortality with empurpled lips; and before that he had said, "Praesens Divus habebitur Augustus," "Soon Augustus shall be considered a divus," or adopted god.

It is well known that the later Roman Emperors thought themselves gods. No more flagrant expression of pride, or, perhaps, of more or less responsible blasphemy, ever proceeded from the mouth of man than the phrase preserved by the poet: — "quid times, Caesarem vehis?" "What do you fear, or why do you fear, you have Caesar on board."

There were two classes of gods then, recog-

nized by Greece and Rome, the "Dei" and the "Divi." There were really three classes in Ireland, including the aboriginal deities; the Tuatha De Danaan who were associated with these, and the adopted Milesian gods. The two original classes have almost come to be regarded as one. So profoundly impressed was Amergin with the Divine character of the Tuatha De Danaan, even before their retirement, that he invoked the elements and all the powers of the one great god, or, pan-theos, as he saw it, against them.

Before leaving the peopled Pantheon, to consider other things to which the ancient Irish gave religious veneration, we may here bring attention to a class of monsters or demons that harassed them. These were huge creeping things that St. Patrick is said to have cast to the deepest depths of some of the lakes and lakelets of Ireland. They have to remain there, it is said, bound in chains, till the Day of Judgment.

Every seven years, however, they were allowed to come to the surface, and then a clanking of chains and other strange noises were heard in the vicinity. These reptiles were not poisonous. They were voracious, and their favorite morsel was a princess or chieftain's daughter.

Some such luckless girl was picked out by lot, and bound to a tree or post near the spot where the monster was to emerge from the water. The sacrifice had to be made to avert a greater calamity, such as the "drowning" of the whole island of Erin. Rescue, however, was possible, and also the avoidance of the national calamity, if a champion would, by any accident, appear, who would have the courage and the physical strength to fight the monster.

Needless to say, no maiden was ever devoured. The champion was always there. While he is talking to the maiden and learning of her strange predicament, the "sea" becomes agitated; soon there is a roaring of the waves; they are tossed mountain-high, and in their midst a path is opened for the approaching reptile. With open jaws it lands its head and a part of its huge neck and body on the shore. The champion gets in a terrific blow and the beast drops back into the sea or lake, and the waters become all over red with its blood. It returns for two consecutive days, but has been gradually growing weaker, and on the third day, by strategy of the champion, is allowed to land its whole length, so that its retreat is cut off; and it thus falls an easy victim

to his lance and is finally cut in small bits. The maiden is rescued; and, of course the expected happens. She marries the hero and they live in royal state.

This may be taken as a fair sample of this class of stories. The monster is called a "piast," in modern Irish "peist," and sometimes "oll" is suffixed (ollpheist) to bring attention to its extraordinary size. The first meaning of piast is "worm." Cormac's Glossary, the ninth-century dictionary that has reached us, identifies "piast" with the Latin "bestia." Multitudes of these demons are said in old stories to have attempted at times to block the progress of St. Patrick in some of his journeyings. And as for the tradition that he banished all venomous reptiles from Ireland, and that that is the reason why there are no snakes there, all this is due to the credulity of Jocelyn, a monk of Furness who wrote a life of St. Patrick in the twelfth century. There were never any snakes in Ireland. Cajus Julius Solinus, a geographer who flourished about the middle of the third century, mentions this as an extraordinary thing, and ascribes it to certain qualities in the air and in the soil.

The Venerable Bede mentions the same thing.

If, indeed, there is anything supernatural in Ireland's exemption from snakes; or if the fact is due to any special dispensation of God's providence, we can never be quite sure about it.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The god Terminus. Irish pillar stones. Speaking stones. The Lia Fail. Veneration of fire and water

THERE was a god in the Roman pantheon whose name was Terminus. This name suggested his occupation; and his occupation required that he should be singularly and strangely multiplied; or, in other words, that he should be present, at one and the same time, in a great many places. He was simply a pillar stone set to mark boundaries and frontiers. Numa Pompilius, the second King of Rome, ordered that these stones be consecrated to Jupiter and receive religious veneration. Festivals called Terminalia were instituted in their honor, and, at these festivals, sacrifices were offered to them. The Irish also had their termini or stone boundary gods. Whether they were numerous enough, as in ancient Rome, to mark adjacent estates or farms we do not quite know; but they were certainly numerous enough to mark large divi-

sions of the country. In Ireland as in Rome they were calculated to make people respect each other's property. In fact, this was the idea Numa Pompilius had in mind. A Terminus guarded his worshipper's farm from other men just as a scare-crow guards the sown grain from the crows. In Ireland they were called *clocha adrada*, or stones of adoration; that is, stones that were the object of adoration or of religious veneration of some kind. They sometimes served as oracles and were in consequence called clocha lowrish (labrais) or speaking stones. Dr. Joyce tells us that there is a famous cloc lowrish still standing at Stradbally, a village distant about two miles from Waterford. This stone has been silent for over a thousand years. A woman once appealed to it to support her in a lie she was telling. The stone split in two and never spoke again. No wonder the Irish have such a horror of lies and liars. Similar stones existed in Wales; and we have Giraldus Cambrensis for authority that they were called 'lec lawar' or speaking stones. Cloc is a stone of any kind; lec, common to Irish and Welsh, is a flat stone.

The Lia Fail, or stone of Destiny, brought into Ireland by the Tuatha De Danaan, was

the most remarkable of all these stones. When a King of pure Milesian blood sat on it, it invariably roared. Keating tells us that when the Irishman, Fergus, was about to be made King of Scotland or rather of the Irish Colony in Scotland, in A.D. 503 he sent to Ireland for this stone that he might be crowned on it. Although there is no doubt of the Scotic purity of the blood of Fergus, we find no record that the Lia Fail gave its accustomed roar or cheer when he sat on it. Keating, the words of whose "Gaelic History of Ireland" we follow closely, goes on to tell us that that stone "is now in the chair in which the King of England is inaugurated, it having been forcibly brought from Scotland out of the Abbey of Scone; and the First Edward, King of England, brought it with him so that the prophecy of that stone has been verified in the king we have now, namely, The First King Charles, and in his father, the King James who came from the Scotic race." Keating quotes Hector Boetius, the historian of Scotland and other authorities as saying that in whatever country that stone happened to be, there also "a man of the Scotic nation, that is, of the seed of Miled of Spain, would be in the sovereignty." There seems to

be an implication that as this 'prophetic' stone was in England the ruler of the whole Gaelic world should have his throne in England too. It was called by Latin writers the Saxum Fatale. O'Curry points out how some of the early Norman occupants of Ireland appealed so much to the Irish 'prophecies' in the endeavor to make the Irish submit with resignation to the foreign yoke. If any particular condition was 'in fate' for them, there was no use in kicking against the goad. We have no hesitation in expressing our belief that many of these prophecies were coined by the English themselves or at their suggestion. And we have no doubt that this "Lia Fail" story, at least as far as its presence in England is concerned, is a case in point. Ireland derives its poetic name of Inisfail from this stone. This, in a general way, is a beautiful coincidence. That Ireland is an Island of Destiny in a Christian sense is clear to any unbiassed mind.

Pillar stones received a sort of religious veneration in many places in Continental Europe even down to the tenth century, and so did wells of spring water. In Ireland at the present day we have our "Holy Wells." They are holy to us still, because St. Patrick or some of his

disciples baptized people in them or consecrated their waters for baptismal purposes. From being sacred to the pagan gods they became sacred to the God of the Christians. Some of them were even regarded as deities. St. Patrick found a deity-well in Connaught. It was called "Slan" * because its waters imparted health and safety. It was a veritable healing fountain in pagan Ireland. Fire also received divine honors; but, by some, it was regarded as a demon. A druid had himself buried in a stone coffin under the waters of the well "Slan." His idea was that the waters would keep his bones cool and make it impossible for fire to get at them; for he had always "adored water and hated fire as an evil thing."

* "*Slan*", akin to Latin, *sanus* = sound, safe and healthy, etc.

CHAPTER XXIX

Worship of fire. The God Baal. The bonfire. The elements. Elemental oath. Weapon-worship. The Irish elysium. Immortality. Metempsychosis. Metamorphosis

MUIRCHIU, in his life of St. Patrick, tells us that on one occasion the Saint challenged the druids to throw their sacred books into the water and that he would also throw his into the same pool at the same time to see which set would come out uninjured. But they had seen him baptizing and therefore declined the challenge on the ground that he was a water-worshipper. He then wanted both sets of books thrown into the fire but they declined this also, because there was some evidence that he worshipped fire. In fact he had been accused of this by one of King Leary's druids; and the charge was probably founded on the propensity the Saint showed for lighting fires at times when pagan festivities forbade such conduct. At certain times in the year, the druids, with great in-

cantations, lighted fires and while these fires were burning all other fires had to be covered or extinguished. These fires were lighted generally at Tara, Uisneach, or Tlachtga. They received divine honors, and were also made the occasion and the means of honoring the Sun-god, Baal. Sacrifices were offered to him while they were burning, but these sacrifices consisted merely in "assigning," or making sacred to him the firstlings of all flocks and herds. Baal, promiscuously written Bel, Bial and Beal, and supposed to be the "Beel" in the Hebrew word Beelzebub, is a semitic word that would give the idea of a supreme god or a supreme demon. Beal, the god, was worshipped by the Assyrians, Arabians, Mesopotamians; and, among many others, by the Phoenicians. The Irish notions of him are so like the Phoenician, that even writers who deplore the amount of nonsense that is written about the connection between the ancient Irish and the Phoenicians, are constrained to admit that the Irish Baal is an immigrant from Phoenicia. That the Irish worshipped the sun under its Irish name, Grian, is well known; and it is not improbable that they confusedly identified Grian with Baal. Something like this had happened to

Baal before in his eastern home, where he was at times identified with Saturn and Jupiter. On the first day of May when the summer was beginning in ancient Erin, the druids, with great incantations, lighted great fires and drove the cattle between them to cure them from disease and protect them from the maladies of the coming year. The month of May is called in Irish Beltaine, and the first day of May is called in Irish-speaking districts "La 'l Beltaine" or "the day of the feast of the fire of Baal." When the sun was in his glory in the heavens, in mid-summer, fires were also lighted, with incantations and sacrifices; and again at Samain or Hallowe'en, when he was about to withdraw much of his genial warmth for a while from the earth, sacrificial fires burned on the Irish hills. It is not a matter of wonderment that our pagan forefathers ascribed a sort of supremacy to the Sun-god; for they also worshipped the moon and everything they conceived to be sublime and grand in the heavens. In the east, Baal was supposed to represent the male principle in nature. The festivals held in his honor would put to shame the Saturnalia of pagan Rome. We read nowhere of low or immoral rites entering into the

ritual of the pagan Irish. They expected, and prayed for, real benefits from their gods. The Mid-summer fire festival happened on the 24th of June, which coincides with the feast of St. John; and the custom still flourishes in many parts of Ireland. A bonfire is built on that night with "turf" contributed by the whole village. When the night has darkened sufficiently, the fire is lighted, and the people gather around it and engage in pleasant conversation, poking fun at each other, the practical jokers looking for a chance to throw, or rather pretend to throw each other's caps or "cawbeens" into it. As a matter of fact no *gossoon* places implicit confidence in any of his fellows, as far as this prank is concerned, but holds on carefully to his head-dress. The people attach no religious significance whatever to the bonfire. If they give the matter any thought at all, they wonder how it is that St. John happens to be honored in this way. In the present age of enlightenment regarding Gaelic matters, many of the people have learned, no doubt, that all this is a survival of the ancient pagan rite. But they will not abandon it, because it gives a chance for a brief village reunion; and boys are delighted with it because they may be

allowed to remain out later than usual and have a good time.

The custom of carrying burning sods of turf away and throwing them into the fields for "luck" is fast dying away; and probably has not been taken seriously for centuries. The bonfire is to the Irish to-day what it is to most other peoples, merely a way of expressing joy.

All the elements, or, to be more precise, all the divinities supposed to reside in the elements, were given religious veneration. All did not unite in worship of any one element, but all felt that an oath taken "on the elements," that is, an oath in which the elements were given as a guarantee of good faith, was inviolable and that the one who broke such an oath was sure to meet with some dreadful misfortune.

King Leary had made an unsuccessful attempt to levy the Borromean tribute. He fell into the hands of the Leinster men. To secure his ransom, he swore by the "Sun and Moon, Water and Air, Day and Night, Sea and Land," that he would never again seek to recover that tribute from the Leinster men. But in spite of all this he again invaded their province for the self-same purpose, and the result was that "the elements passed a doom of death on him,"

"to wit, the earth to swallow him up, the sun to burn him and the wind to depart from him, so that the sun and wind killed him, because he had violated them"; and we are solemnly told that "no one durst violate them in those days."

The ancient Irish worshipped their weapons, and swore by them; and it may go without saying that such an oath was strictly executed. It was no uncommon thing to hear a sword talk in those days and tell what had been achieved by it. It was demons that spoke in those weapons; and we are told in a manuscript, published by Dr. Whitley Stokes in the *Revue Celtique*, that "the reason why demons used to speak from weapons was because weapons were then worshipped by human beings."

A most remarkable thing about ancient Ireland is that, while it had such a tremendous pantheon, there seem to have been no distinct ideas regarding heaven. What is left of our literature tells of no heaven to which all might aspire. Such heaven as there was, is represented as being a kind of monopoly of the fairies. No one dared enter it, or could enter it, unless they carried him off; willingly or unwillingly, on his part. And if he did not get

into a fairy heaven there was no other for him, and, consequently, no assured immortality. And as we saw in the case of Ossian, people, thus carried off, were allowed to revisit the land of Erin to see their friends again, but if they set foot on its soil, all hope of returning to Elysium was gone. Connla, the son of "Conn of the hundred battles," was carried away in a crystal boat by a fairy maiden, in the presence of his friends and relatives, and he has not come back yet. Bran, the son of Febal, sailed among the happy islands of the blest for hundreds of years and it seemed to him as if it was only a few hours, so pleasantly did the time pass. Approaching the coast of Kerry, however, one of his companions foolishly leaped ashore and at once became a heap of ashes. In the eleventh book of the Odyssey, the shade of Achilles tells the wandering Ulysses that he would sooner be the servant of a landless man on earth than the chief, that he was, among the ghosts of the dead. In the Irish Elysium not everybody was happy either. Dian, after countless ages, comes out of the fairy rath of Mullaghshee at Assaroe and says regretfully that he would rather be a servant to a servant of the Fenians than be the prince that he was among the fairies.

The fairy heaven is sometimes referred to as being at the bottom of the sea, or under lakes and wells, or in the fairy mounds. In fact, every fairy mound was a sort of heaven. There was a tradition, and perhaps the strongest and most beautiful of all such traditions, that there was a vast heaven situated somewhere in the western ocean. It was visible from Arran, in the evening. It was the phantom city that Gerald Griffin saw "in turreted majesty riding." Poets are the only people who ever see it any more. It seemed to ride or dance on the waves; and if one got near enough to throw fire into it he would thereby "fix" it. This has been accomplished, but the Aerial City did not remain fixed as long as might be desirable. In keeping with many of our hopes and aspirations, it is very elusive.

The Irish heaven is known by very many beautiful names, such as Tir Na N-Og, or Land of the Young; Tir Na M-Beo, Land of the Living; Hy Brazil, or I Bresal, Land of Bresal; Magh Meala, Plain of Honey; Magh Mon, Plain of Sports, in other words, Happy Hunting Grounds; Tir Na Sorcha, Land of Lights, and Tir Tairngire, or Land of Prophecy or Promise, a name evidently suggested by the old Testa-

ment and found by Zeuss in eighth-century glosses.

A belief in the imperfect sort of immortality that may be found in Metempsychosis was not general, either. This sort of rebirth was supposed to have been the privilege of certain heroes only. Cucullain was a reincarnation of "Lugh of the long arms," the De Danaan hero-god; and Mungan, King of Dalriada, in the seventh century, was a rebirth of the great Finn MacCool.

A species of metamorphosis is known to have been practiced in Ossory. It is not in any way related to metempsychosis, strictly so called; but it is taken so seriously and described so graphically and put forward as such a great wonder by Geraldus Cambrensis that one would think he believed every word of it. A certain class of people changed themselves at will into wolves and devoured their neighbor's flocks. When sated, they resumed their proper human forms. This change was effected by "draoide-act" or magic, and was very convenient at times, especially if the price of mutton were high and one did not mind eating it raw.

CHAPTER XXX

Turning Deisiol. Odd numbers. Geasa. The evil eye. The ordeal.

THE Irish also attached a superstitious importance to certain movements, to certain numbers, and to certain injunctions called geasa. Deas is the Irish word for right; and hence turning from left to right, or right-hand-wise was called "deisiol," and as it was the same as turning in the direction in which the sun goes, it was considered the lucky thing to do. It was a move in the right direction. We are told that when St. Patrick was given the land on which he built his church at Armagh he walked around it three times right-hand-wise to consecrate it. It would be absurd to think that he would yield to the superstition associated with the act, but as there was nothing bad in the movement itself, he may have shown respect for the ancient custom. We are told also in ancient writings, that when a horde of British pirates landed on the eastern coast, St. Findchua, a born soldier, who was then at Tara, advised the national forces to

make a right-hand-wise circuit in marching against them. This proved to be an excellent strategical move, as it brought them right down on the enemy's flank. We are told the Lady Boand went left-hand-wise around the well which became the source of the Boyne, and the sinister movement, done in contempt, resulted disastrously for her.*

The odd numbers, three and seven, had a certain religious significance; but this was particularly true of the number nine. The Tuatha De Danaan persuaded the Milesians to retire nine waves from the shore, believing that this would give themselves the advantage over their invaders. And during the prevalence of the yellow plague in Ireland, Colman O'Clausaige (O'Cloosy or O'Clohissy), a professor in St. Finbar's school in Cork, fled with his pupils to an island, nine waves from the shore, believing that pestilence could not reach him at that sacred distance.

* "The well burst up round her, and broke her thigh bone and one hand and one eye. She fled in terror eastward, but the water pursued her till she arrived at the seashore and was drowned. Even after that the water continued to flow so as to form the river Boand or Boyne which took its name from her." — Dr. P. W. Joyce, "Social History of Ireland."

A remarkable practice among the Irish was the imposing of injunctions or prohibitions called geasa. The geis (gesh), which is the singular of geasa, tied a man, hands and feet. As a matter of fact we seldom find geis in the ancient literature; it is almost always geasa. They went in bunches; and there was little or no protection against them. They had a kind of preternatural sanction that made their tyranny inexorable; and the one who violated his geasa was sure to meet with a great misfortune of some kind. Men were often placed under geasa by people asking for some favor and appealing to them in some such phrase as this: "I place you under heavy geasa which no true champion would break"; and then would follow a list of things which the champion must, or must not, do till he grants the request. If the request was in any way just or reasonable it was considered highly dishonorable to refuse it, irrespective altogether of the consequences that might follow the breaking of the geasa. Sometimes these geasa were very sensible restrictions. The King of Emania was forbidden ever, when alone, to attack a wild boar in his den. Most men would refrain from this kind of sport, even without being under geasa,

unless indeed they were armed with the high-power, rapid-firing rifles that could not be had in those ancient times. Some of the geasa were penal and oppressive laws. It was forbidden to the King of Ireland to let the sun-rise catch him lying in his bed at Tara. No reasons can be assigned for some geasa. We do not understand them. Some of them are clear enough as statutory prohibitions of the strictest obligation. On the day of the celebration of King Leary's festival at Tara, no one in the vicinity dared light a fire till Leary's fire was burning. The dread of sitting at table with thirteen, at the present day, is of the same nature as the terror inspired by the geish or geasa. One superstition is no more foolish than the other. The etymology of the word " geish " is unknown; but it is used so abundantly in our ancient literature that it is impossible not to know precisely from the context what it means.

Another object of terror in ancient Ireland was the evil eye; and even to this day it is supposed, in remote parts of the country, that certain people have a strange power to blight or injure a person or thing by a glance of the eye. This would make a wonderful psychological study. Of course, some definite attitude of

mind must go with the baleful glance; and yet it does not seem that the person with the "evil eye" can always prevent the evil that comes from its glance, or is ever a willing party to it. The eye seems to act independently of the volition of its owner. This superstition is common to the Irish with many other peoples. In fact, it is now a tradition rather than a superstition. It dates probably from "Balor of the Evil Eye," the Tuatha De Danaan hero-god. Through a chink in the door he had surreptitiously watched his father's druids while they were engaged, like Shakespeare's witches, in concocting sorcery. A whiff of the poisonous steam from the cauldron struck him in the eye. He never again opened that eye by his own exertions. He never could. It took four men, two on each side of him and using powerful hooks, to raise the lid. But when the eye was open, the poor wretch on whom one ray of its light rested was doomed. A glance from it enfeebled an army drawn up in battle array and made its defeat inevitable. But Balor had its lid raised once too often. At the second battle of Moytura, Lug of the long arms, his grandson, watched for its opening, and before its evil influence could reach him, he let fly a hard ball

from his sling and it went through eye, brain and all, and Balor's "Evil Eye" was forever closed and himself counted among the hosts of Erin's dead.

How did they find out in ancient Erin whether a man was lying, or whether, or not, he was guilty of any crime that he was accused of? It was by the ordeal. There were many kinds of ordeals; and they were common to most ancient nations. Ireland had some ordeals of her own, and she had some others that she borrowed from other nations. Altogether the ordeal was practised in twelve different ways in Ireland. We are told that Cormac Art, in his parliament at Tara, arranged and promulgated twelve. It would be a waste of time to describe them all. One or two will do. If a man had to prove his innocence one of the ways of doing it was to pass his tongue over a piece of red hot iron. If he were guilty it would burn him. If he were innocent, the fire would not produce its natural effect, nor even dry up the saliva in his mouth. Another way was to put on "Morann's Collar." If the witness told a lie, it pressed on his throat, and would choke him if he lost any time in taking back what he had said and coming right out with the truth.

What a pity that collar was lost. Guilt or innocence, truth or falsehood were also determined by "Crannchur," which, as the name implies, was a casting of lots. The "Coirefir" or "Cauldron of truth" was another test. This, as Windisch tells us in his "Irische Texte," was filled with boiling water, and the person accused plunged his hand into it. If he were innocent it did not burn him.

CHAPTER XXXI

Multiplicity of Irish gods. Julius Caesar's Gaulish and Irish druids. Irish druids and their practices. Magical arts. Divination. King Dathi. The Druid Dubbtach.

THE old Romans did not surpass the Irish in the number and variety of their gods, and it is safe enough to say that they had no god which was not represented in the Irish pantheon. The Roman gods fitted well in Rome; but they were foreigners there. They were simply naturalized. They were borrowed principally from Greece. The Irish gods fitted so well in Ireland that one would think they had grown on the soil. There is no doubt that a vast number of them were brought in by the earliest colonists; but we may say, without fear of exaggeration, that this must have happened not only before the dawn of history, but even before the dawn of fable. These imported gods, like the Angle-Normans of later days, became "more Irish than the Irish themselves."

The sacred people of the ancient Irish were the Druids. These stood between them and the gods. They could influence the fairies for good or evil and had the power to protect people from any deity or demon that was evil-disposed.

The Irish gave the name of druids to the sacred men of all other nations. Julius Caesar tells us distinctly that the Germanic peoples had no druids; but he describes at length, in the sixth book of his Gallic War, the great druidic system he found in Gaul. He tells us the druids and knights were the people of highest rank in that country; that the druids were thoroughly organized, having one of their number presiding over all the others; that they had all to do with the sacrifices or public functions of religion; and that to be interdicted by them from these functions was the worst form of ostracism. They were teachers and tutors. They were counsellors to the great, settlers of disputes for all, and administrators of justice. They offered human sacrifices; sometimes in whole hecatombs. He concludes by stating that the system came from Britain, and that people who wanted to study it thoroughly went to that country to do so. He says nothing

about the Irish druids. He probably knew nothing about them; but writers have been accustomed to take his description and apply it to the Irish druids. Unlike the ancient Gauls and the ancient British, the Irish have their native records from which our knowledge of the Irish druids is drawn. Unfortunately these records are very imperfect; and it is impossible to get a clear-cut idea of the Irish druid. But we do know for certain that the Irish druids were not organized; that they had not all to do with the sacrifices; that they did not pronounce all the spells or prepare all the charms; that they offered no human sacrifices and did not teach general metempsychosis as their Gaulish brothers did. With these exceptions, Caesar's description would fit them very well. There was a popular belief that the word "druid" was derived from the Greek "drys," meaning an oak, and that therefore the druids worshipped the oak and performed their religious functions within the recesses of beautiful oak groves. But there is no foundation for this. It is certain that the Irish druids did not worship the oak tree; but they had a kind of veneration for the yew, the hazel and the quicken tree. They used wands of yew in their

incantations and scared away the fairies by the quicken tree.

The druid was not tied down to any particular god or gods, or to any particular form of worship or sacrifice; neither was any other Irishman. Although all revered the druidical character, everyone selected his own particular kind of paganism, and hence the religion of the ancient Irish is better expressed by the word paganism than by druidism, as it is often incorrectly called.

The Irish druid was a wizard and a learned man rather than anything else. He combined in his own person the office of historian, poet, prophet, brehon and even physician; but in the course of time these offices were filled by as many distinct men. The druids were the sole men of learning. They were also great magicians. The Irish word for magic is still "druideact," which literally means druidism, showing that druidism and magic were regarded by our fathers as identical things. The druids could direct the course of the wind. They could raise a storm on land or at sea, but they could not always quell it. They could bring down showers of fire or blood from the clouds. They could drive a person insane by flinging

a "magic wisp" in his face. It is a remarkable thing that St. Patrick, in his famous "lorica," sung on his way to Tara, asks for the divine protection against "the spells of women, of smiths and of druids." These women were the pythonesses, or druidesses, whom St. Patrick later on mentions in one of his canons, where he warns Christian Kings against consulting them. Certain princes had continued far into Christian times to be influenced by the druids; so much so that we find one chief asking a druid to put a "protecting fence" around his army when he was marching to battle. This fence, of course, had to be invisible and self-moving. It was merely a spell pronounced by the druid while walking or running around the army. The druids pronounced malign incantations that enervated whole bodies of fighting men. They administered draughts that made people forget grief or joy. When Cucullain fell in love with the fairy Fand, and his wife Emer naturally got jealous, they gave drinks to the hero and to his wife that made him forget his infatuation and her her jealousy. The druid was also a "fait" (Latin Vates) or prophet. He foretold things by observation of the stars and clouds, by artificial rites and by studying

the operation of natural causes, which can hardly be called prophecy. But natural causes that were quite clear to the druid were occult to others. In the Irish translation of Nennius we are told that the Irish druids "taught druidism, sorcery, idolatry, how to write bright poems, and how to forecast the future from the way people sneezed, from the voices of birds and other omens, and how to find out when there would be good or bad weather, or lucky days for entering on any enterprises." The croaking of the raven and the chirping of the wren were considered very ominous. The little wren was considered very wise; and for that reason was called "draoi na-n ean," or, "the druid of the birds." We read nowhere of divination by the blood or the entrails of victims offered in sacrifice, such as was practised in ancient Rome. There are very few references to astrology proper, or divination by the stars; but there are very many references to reading of the clouds. When Dathi, the high king of Ireland, asked his druid to find out what was in "fate" for him as a king, the druid betook himself to the top of a hill and remained there all night reading "the clouds of the men of Erin." Approaching Dathi next morning he

saluted him as king of Erin and Alban, or Scotland. "Whence the addition to my title?" said the king; "Why Alban?" "Because thou art destined to make a conquering expedition into Albain, Britain and Gaul," said the druid. Dathi started out forthwith to fulfill the prophecy.

There was also a "roth ramach" or "rowing wheel" which was used for purposes of divination. There is a passage in the "Coir Anman" which says that "Mogh Ruith" signifies Magus Rotarum or wizard of the wheels, for it is by wheels he (the wizard) used to make his "taisceladh druidecta," or magical observation. Very little is known about this wheel.

The future was read frequently in the palms of the hands and tips of the fingers; and this was done generally after some absurd rites had been gone through and sacrifices offered. These are the superstitious practices that survive in the modern "pishogue" which is as well known in England and Scotland as in Ireland. Spells and pishogues are as widely spread, in fact, as humanity itself. One of the most curious spells mentioned in the ancient Irish writings was the "glam dichenn" or curse, pronounced by one "standing on one leg, with one eye

closed and one arm extended." Glam is interpreted in Cormac's Glossary as "Clamour" or "outcry." The words of malediction were pronounced in a loud voice. The Fomorians coming into Ireland to oust or conquer the Parthelonians, presented themselves in this way, for some malign purpose; and certain historians, unable to interpret the words in which the posture is described, have represented them as monsters possessed only of one leg, one arm and one eye. A party of druids tried the "Glam dichenn" on St. Caillin. The posture they assumed seemed entirely unworthy of their august character. They proceeded towards him on all fours. He, however, straightened them out and changed them into standing stone pillars.

Before leaving the druids we may mention the respect in which they were held and the influence they wielded in the halls of Kings. The latter undertook no great enterprise without consulting them; and were careful to see that their children were educated by them. Fedelma and Eithne, the daughters of King Leary, boarded at Cruachan, in Connaught, with the druid who taught them; and St. Columbkille himself began his education under a druidic

teacher. The Mesca Ulad informs us that it was geish, prohibition, for any of the Ultonians at their assemblies to speak before their King, Concobar, had spoken, and that it was geish for him to speak before his druid. And on one occasion when Concobar had stood up to speak, it occurred to him that his druid had not yet spoken, so he remained standing in silence till the druid uttered something which he interpreted as a sign that he could go on and speak.

As Christianity approached the druids conceived a terror of the Christians and of the Christians' God; and, as a feeble means of offsetting the influence of the Christian priests, they affected the wearing of a tonsure and the administration of a gentile baptism. By this latter they had hoped to dedicate the rising generation more effectively to the pagan gods. We read that when Conall Cearnach was born "the druids came to baptize the child and they sang the heathen baptism (Baithis Geintlide) over the child." It is impossible to account for the presence of a baptism of any kind among them except on the theory that they borrowed the idea from Christians and wanted to use it in opposition to Christianity.

Nine druids, dressed in robes of immaculate

white, which was the color of their ordinary outer garment, tried at one time to waylay St. Patrick and kill him. The astounding thing is that these men did not succeed in hampering his progress more than they did. They must have seen their power departing forever as the light of Christianity spread. Many, very many of them, embraced the new faith; and it is a significant thing that the first convert made by St. Patrick at Leary's Court was Dubbtach, the king's Arch-druid.*

* See Dr. P. W. Joyce's Social History of Ireland, chapter on Paganism.