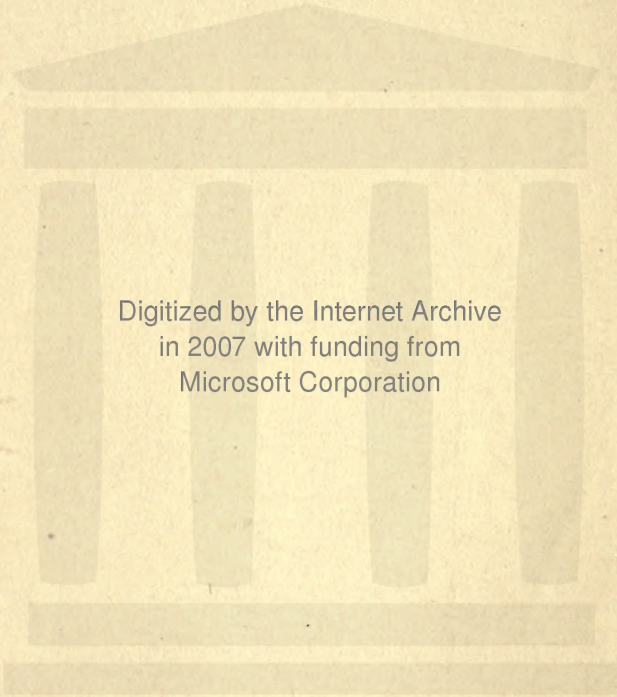

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An Irish Precursor of Dante

A Study on the Vision of Heaven and Hell ascribed to the Eighth-century Irish Saint Adamnán, with Translation of the Irish Text

By
C. S. Boswell

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TO

H. M. H. B.

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AN IRISH PRECURSOR OF DANTE

PART I

1. Introductory

Few, if any, of the great masterpieces of literature, even of those which bear the most unmistakable imprint of an original mind, are 'original' in the vulgar sense of being invented 'all out of the head' of the author. Most frequently they are the development and the sublimation of forms and subjects already current; for, as Dumas *père* truly said, it is mankind, and not the individual man, that *invents*. The wagon of Thespis preceded the stage of Æschylus, while Thespis himself had predecessors who did not even adopt the wagon. The great dramatic schools of all periods took the greater and better part of their themes from the myth, history, or fiction current in their day. So it has been with most other kinds of literature, and to this rule the *Commedia* of Dante, though one of the most truly original creations of the human mind, forms no exception. The main subject of the poem, the visit of a living man, in person or in vision, to the world of the dead, and his report of what he had seen and heard there, belongs to a class of world-myths than which few are more widely distributed in place or time, and none have been more

fortunate in the place won for them by the masters of literature. After occupying an important place in several of the antique religions it afforded subjects to the genius of Homer, Plato, and Virgil; it was then adopted into the early Christian Church, and afterwards constituted one of the favourite subjects in the popular literature of the Middle Ages, until, finally, Dante exhausted the great potentialities of the theme, and precluded all further developments.

The *Commedia* is like a mighty river formed by the confluence of several great tributaries, each of which is fed by innumerable springs and streamlets, which have their rise in regions remote and most diverse from each other, and are all tinged by the soil of the lands through which they flow. It is with one of these tributary streams that the following pages deal, and that not the least important among them, for to it the Vision of the Otherworld, as current in the later Middle Ages, owed much both of its popularity and its contents, not, indeed, by way of direct derivation or suggestion—a view which several circumstances forbid us to entertain—but as the result of an influence which, in an earlier stage of culture, had determined the direction which the Vision legend actually followed in its later developments.

The subject would appear to have possessed a special fascination for the Irish writers at the time when Ireland was the chief intellectual centre of Western Europe, and the constant flux and reflux of Irish teachers and foreign students necessarily tended to spread abroad so much, at any rate, of the compositions of the Irish schools as was in harmony with the tastes and beliefs of Christendom at large.

By far the most important of the Apocalyptic writings

which proceeded from the Irish schools is the Vision which bears the name of St. Adamnán, of which a translation is given in the present volume. It is interesting to compare it with the later and greater work, and to mark the numerous points of resemblance which may be discerned in works so widely different. This and the like productions of a ruder, but not ignorant nor uncultured, age, deserve no less attention than that which we bestow upon the works of the primitive schools of art and letters, before Giotto and his compeers had effected the release of painting from the bonds of formalism, and had opened out the ways of Nature and imagination, and before the immediate predecessors of Dante had rendered possible his *dolce stil nuovo*.

At the same time it may be seen how the legend which received its apotheosis in Dante's immortal verse came into being upon the misty heights of primitive myth, and after forming the theme of poets and philosophers in classical antiquity, entered into the literature and teaching of the early Christian Church; how the ecclesiastical legend, as it had now become, was adopted into the Irish Church at the time of its greatest activity, and there received the impress of the national genius, and became blended with the national traditions; thence it returned again to become a part of the general literature of Europe, and received yet further elements from the newly popular romances of chivalry, and still more from the revived classical tradition, until the elixir of the great magician's genius finally transmuted the amalgam into gold to be a κτῆμα ἐς ἀεί.

To recognise these facts is not to disparage or limit the originality of Dante's genius; rather his true originality is thrown into higher relief by a comparison with all other labourers in the same field who had gone before him.

Nothing but the study of these labours will enable us to give him his due place in European literature and thought, while such a study will explain and justify certain features in his treatment of the theme which may be repugnant to modern ways of thinking, but were not only justified, but necessitated, by the beliefs and traditions universally accepted in his own day. Dante himself always loved to acknowledge his indebtedness to his literary progenitors, alike among the writers of antiquity and his own contemporaries or immediate predecessors; and it seems fitting to preserve the memory of a school of writers to whom, although he knew it not himself, are largely due the actual character and scope of the work by which he achieved immortality.

2. The Seer[1]

By the close of the seventh century the Irish Church had almost reached the period of its greatest prosperity and of its greatest influence upon the culture of Western Europe. The Three Orders of Saints had done their work, and although in Ireland, as throughout the rest of Europe, Christianity had not entirely prevailed over the heathenism of the more sequestered populations—the *pagani*—yet, through the length and breadth of the country, the National Church was established in close conjunction with the State, of which, indeed, it had come to form an integral part; and wherever the Irish clergy prevailed, studies flourished.

[1] For further particulars of the life of Adamnán, see Dr. Reeves's introduction to his *Adamnán's Life of St. Columba*, Dublin, 1857 (Irish Archæological Society); Dr. Healy's *Ireland's Ancient Schools and Scholars*; Canon John O'Hanlon's *Lives of the Irish Saints*, vol. i.

The missionary zeal of the Irish clergy had made known the Gospel to the courts of barbarian princes, and to the still pagan inhabitants of North Britain and Germany, Gaul and Burgundy, Switzerland, Styria, and Lombardy, and even carried it to the Faroe Isles and Iceland. At home, what sparks of antique learning yet lurked beneath the ashes to which the fires of civilisation had smouldered down were gathered into a focus in schools where crowds of students from the surrounding nations found hospitality and instruction; while abroad, the foundations of Iona, Lindisfarne, and Malmesbury, Luxeuil, St. Gall, and Bobbio, with many more of lesser fame, stood out like citadels erected to maintain a peaceful conquest. And from the schools of Ireland were to issue the men who were destined, during the next two centuries, not merely to leave their mark upon the Church as theologians and founders of monasteries, but, further, to play an important part in moulding the new civilisation of the Frankish Empire, to lay the foundations of modern philosophy, and to promote the study of natural science and literature by lucubrations, crude, indeed, as compared with the productions of more favoured ages, but standing out conspicuous above the level of their own time.[1]

[1] Mr. Alfred Nutt has suggested that the above passage appears to claim for the Irish scholars and clerics a monopoly of the educational and missionary work of the age to the exclusion of the eminent Anglo-Saxons who were labouring with success and distinction in the same field. I had no intention to disparage either the original genius nor the learning of Bede and Aldhelm, Caedmon and Cynewulf, Winifred and Alcuin, nor their missionary and scholastic work, both at home and in the Frankish Empire; only to point out that the position acquired by the Irish scholars and clerics enabled them speedily to disseminate through Western Europe the works of their

Meanwhile, though the Three Orders of the Irish Saints had come to an end about the middle of the seventh century, they were succeeded by many great Churchmen, who combined with their ecclesiastical duties a lively interest in secular politics, in which they were wont to intervene, most commonly, no doubt, with beneficial effect, though occasionally with results nothing less than disastrous.

One of the foremost, if not the very foremost, among the

compatriots. By recalling the names of a few of the most eminent Irishmen who enjoyed a Continental fame during the Middle Ages, we may perceive how wide was the area, and how long the duration, of their influence.

Clement was the chief of a group of Irish scholars who took a leading part in the educational reforms promoted by Charlemagne. Alcuin, Clement's great English rival at the Frankish Court, had been educated at Clonmacnois. Joannes Scotus Erigena, in the reign of Charles the Bald, founded the scholastic philosophy, and by his translation of the pseudo-Areopagite, and his studies of the neo-Platonists, bridged over the chasm between ancient and modern thought. Dungal, in the first half of the ninth century, was the first astronomer of his age; at the mandate of Lothair, King of Lombardy, he founded a school which afterwards developed into the University of Pavia, with branches in several other cities, and laboured with success at the task of civilising the Lombards. Add to these Dicuil, a geographer of the same date, the most accurate topographer of the early Middle Ages; Firghil, or Virgilius, Archbishop of Salzburg, who taught the rotundity of the earth and the existence of antipodes; Sedulius, the ninth-century grammarian; St. Donatus, Bishop of Fiesole (fl. *c.* 840), traveller, topographer, and Scripture commentator; Marianus Scotus, one of the leading chroniclers of the eleventh century; and many others, who laboured with distinction in France, Italy, Germany, England, and Flanders, down to the thirteenth century, when Frederick II., Emperor, summoned Petrus Hibernicus to the University of Naples, where he counted among his theological pupils no less a personage than Thomas Aquinas.

Irish clerics of this period was St. Adamnán, the reputed seer of the Vision which bears his name. This great prelate is a striking figure both in the ecclesiastical and secular history of his times; but the information we possess concerning him, though not altogether scanty, is not all of equal value. It consists partly of the evidences furnished by his own writings and contemporary records, partly of the further particulars which have been preserved in the annals compiled from the tenth to the twelfth centuries, though these, no doubt, are derived in great measure from earlier records.

Adamnán was of high birth, as were many of the leading Irish Churchmen, the constitution of the National Church being thoroughly aristocratic, in accordance with the civil society upon which it was moulded. His father was Ronán, son of Tinne, a man of chiefly rank in the territory of Sereth, or Tír Aedha, now the barony of Tirhugh, in south-west Donegal, and the descendant of Conall Gulbán, the founder of a famous house, various branches of which ruled Tír Conaill from the fifth century until the fall of the O'Donnells at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Adamnán's mother, Ronat by name, was of the Cinel Enda, a sept of West Meath.[1] The date of his birth is variously stated, but he appears to have been born between the years 624 and 627 at Drumhome, in Tír Aedha.[2] The name Adamnán is a diminutive of Adam, but through

[1] There was also a Tír Enda, between L. Foyle and L. Swilly.

[2] Tigernach gives the date as 624, which Dr. Reeves is inclined to accept, *op. cit.* Introduction, xl-xli. Lanigan is in favour of 627, which agrees with the reputed age of Adamnán, 77, at the time of his death. Possibly the latter date is correct, the difference being explicable by the different system of chronology adopted by Tigernach.

the tendency of Irish phonetics to elide the *d* and *m* in certain positions, it came to be written sometimes in the confusing forms Eunan and Onan, and has even been travestied into Theunan and Dennan.

Adamnán entered the great monastery of Iona as a novice, probably about the year 650, as Segine (*ob.* 652) was then abbot. There he was distinguished for his devotion and learning, and in the year 679, soon after the death of Abbot Failbhe, was elected to succeed him, being ninth in descent from St. Colm Cille, the founder, to whom he was akin. Indeed, all Adamnán's predecessors, and his successors for several generations, were members of the same great family. In the government of his house and of the ecclesiastical establishments in the neighbouring islands, he displayed the qualities of an able administrator, as well as those of saint and scholar; nor did he confine his activities to matters ecclesiastical, but, like most of the Irish saints, took an active part in public events.

About the year 684, King Ecgfrid of Northumbria made a descent upon the Irish coast, between Magh Breg, the plain north of the Liffey, and Belach Dúinn, now Castlekieran, north-west of Kells, and carried away many captives. In the following year he invaded the Picts of Scotland, and was slain at Dun Nechtan. His successor, Aldfrid (the son, according to some accounts, of an Irish mother), had been driven into exile in early youth, and taking refuge in Ireland was educated in the schools of that country, to which he paid a grateful tribute in after-life. He had sojourned for a while at Iona, and there became acquainted with Adamnán, who now took advantage of this intimacy, and came to Aldfrid's court to plead the cause of the captives. He was successful in this, and had the happiness

to redeem from slavery sixty of his countrymen, whom he brought back with him on his return. This visit produced results of great importance to the Irish Church. During his stay in Northumbria, Adamnán contracted a close intimacy with the Venerable Bede—who strongly censured Ecgfrid's unprovoked, aggression (*Hist. Eccl.* iv. 26)—upon whom he made a strong and favourable impression, as being *vir bonus, et sapiens, et scientia scripturarum nobilissime instructus.* Their frequent colloquies during this, and, apparently, a second mission of Adamnán to Northumbria, about two years later, turned upon the two main points wherein the Irish usage differed from that of Rome: *i.e.* the form of the tonsure, which, in Ireland, was made crescent-wise across the head, and the time of keeping Easter. In the latter respect, Ireland retained the older computation, founded upon the Jewish method of calculating the Passover, which had been adopted by Rome during the disputes on the subject with the East and with Alexandria, and was in force at the conversion of Ireland. In 463 Pope Hilarius introduced an improved system of calculation, which ultimately was generally adopted throughout the West, though not without a struggle in those many parts of the Continent where Irish influence was powerful. As a matter of course, the reformed system was brought into England by Augustine, and contributed to widen the gulf between the English and British Churches. The south of Ireland, or part of it, appears to have accepted the change in the year 633, but it took nearly another century to win over the rest of the country. Bede urged upon Adamnán the propriety of conforming to the general rule of the Church, and his arguments wrought such conviction in his hearer that Adamnán devoted much of the

latter portion of his life to the task of inducing his countrymen to accept the Roman usage.

Indeed, the remainder of Adamnán's life appears to have been divided between his abbatial duties and long and frequent visits to Ireland, in the course of which he is said to have taken that part in secular politics to which we shall have to recur. The greater part of this time, however, he appears to have spent in travelling about Ireland, occupied with his favourite scheme for bringing the time of the Easter celebration into conformity with the general practice of the Western Church. His efforts were generally successful; Bede, in fact (*Hist. Eccl.* v. 15), asserts that he succeeded in winning over to the Catholic observance 'almost all those who were not subject to the rule of Iona.' In the year 700, or shortly after, he returned to Iona, and attempted to introduce his reform into his own monastery, but in spite of his abbatial authority and of his great personal influence, he found the conservatism of that great stronghold of the Irish Church too much for him, and his monks refused to admit any innovation upon the national practice. He died on the 23rd September 704, and was buried at Iona. His relics were brought to Ireland in 727, but are said to have been restored to his monastery in 730.

Adamnán earned well the epithet 'High Scholar of the Western World,' which is conferred upon him at the opening of his Vision. His most celebrated work was the *Life of St. Colm Cille*, written in a Latin which is generally admitted to be far superior to that commonly in use at his day. The work suffers from the form in which it is cast; it does not relate the events of the Saint's life in chronological sequence, but is divided into three books,

the first being devoted to Colm's prophetical revelations, the second to his miracles, and the third to his angelical visions. Nevertheless, it gives much information of great interest, relating as well to the life and acts of St. Colm as to the internal life of the Irish Church, while the prefaces contain important biographical matter. The prominence given to the miracles, visions, and the like, associated with Colm's name, is merely what we find in a large proportion of the hagiology of all periods of the Church's history, while the narrative possesses a character of its own, and a human interest, which preserve it from the monotony and conventionality often prevailing in writings of this class, and establish a certain kinship with the *Fioretti* of St. Francis. Altogether, the *Life* is commonly accepted as the most important extant monument of the Celtic Church, and also one of the most notable pieces of biography, ecclesiastical or lay, produced by the early Middle Ages.

Another work proceeding from his pen was a treatise upon the Holy Places of Palestine. This, too, was written in Latin, and is considered by Dr. Reeves to be superior, in point of style, to the *Life of Colm Cille.* He was instigated to undertake this task by Arculf, a bishop of Gaul, who had travelled in Palestine, Syria, Constantinople, Alexandria, and other parts of the East, and on his return had been blown out of his course, and wrecked on some coast near to Iona. Here he was hospitably entertained by Adamnán, and in the course of a prolonged sojourn through the stormy winter months held much learned converse with his host, to their mutual edification. Arculf had studied the topography and history of the places he visited with a thoroughness almost unique at that day, and

had even preserved accurate measurements and descriptions of buildings, etc. He freely imparted the results of his investigations to Adamnán, who was himself possessed of the learning which could be acquired from such books as were accessible to him.

Several ecclesiastical works—a Rule, eight Canons, etc.—are attributed to Adamnán; there have also been preserved a poem and several devout *opuscula* in Irish which have been ascribed to him, without foundation.

It would appear that he had some knowledge of Greek, and even possessed a certain acquaintance with, at any rate, the Hebrew vocabulary, whether at first or second hand.

It now remains to be seen what further light is cast upon Adamnán's character by the later annals; and here we find a mixture of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, and no criterion whereby we may distinguish with any certainty between the two. The additional particulars derived from this source, if we except a few legends of miracles and visions of the usual type, relate for the most part to Adamnán's political activity during the last decade of the seventh century. One episode, however, of Adamnán's schooldays gives the earliest recorded fact, if a fact, of his career. It is a mere anecdote, unsupported by evidence, yet it contains no inherent improbability, and is worth repeating, if only as an authentic picture of one aspect of scholastic life in ancient Ireland, and also as affording the first glimpse, probably, of the 'beggar-student' who figured so conspicuously in the later Middle Ages, and in Ireland survived as the 'poor scholar' almost to our own day. The students at the Irish centres of learning—Universities, as they have been called, not without reason—used

to dwell about their teachers in huts of wattle, provision for their maintenance, education, and books being made by the chiefs and ecclesiastical foundations. So great, however, were the throngs of students, native and foreign, who flocked to these schools, that many were compelled to eke out the public allowance by having recourse to the charity of neighbours. Among these was Adamnán, who was one of a company, or mess, of five students and their tutor, the younger students taking it in turn to provide for all. One day this task procured Adamnán an adventure, which introduced him to the future monarch, Finnachta Fledach, his future relations with whom, if truly related by the annals, were destined to be fraught with momentous consequences to them both and to the whole of Ireland. Finnachta, though of royal race, had once been so poor that his whole worldly possessions consisted of a house, a wife, an ox, and a cow. At the time of which we speak, he possessed a following, and one day, as he and his retinue were travelling at full gallop, they came across a young student laden with a pitcher of milk, who, in his haste to avoid the horses, upset the pitcher and spilt the milk. This boy was Adamnán, bringing home the day's provision for himself and his messmates. He set out to run by the side of the horsemen, and kept up with them until they reached their destination. Finnachta took notice of the boy, and, entering into conversation with him, was so well pleased, that he not only made good the loss, but provided the five youths and their tutor with a house and maintenance, receiving in return from the tutor a prophecy that he, Finnachta, should one day become monarch of Ireland, with Adamnán for his *anamchara*, or confessor. It does not appear that this interview was immediately

productive of any further consequences to Adamnán, who, in due course, entered the monastic life, as before mentioned.

The next incident of importance, not already mentioned, which the annalists relate concerning Adamnán, is at once one of the most momentous and most obscure portions of his career—namely, his action in connection with the Boruma tribute. This was a heavy fine, in cattle and various precious articles, which Tuathal Techtmar, Árd-Rí of Ireland about the end of the first century A.D., had laid upon Leinster in perpetuity (or, according to some authorities, for forty years) to punish a grave crime committed by the king of that province. The intermittent exaction of this tribute was not the least among the many causes of discord which prevented the ideal polity of Ireland, viz. a confederation of kingdoms and principalities—an Empire we might call it—under the overlordship of the Árd-Rí, from ever becoming realised in a permanently efficient form. This grievance St. Moling, with the support of several other leading prelates, determined to remove, and, it is said, induced Finnachta (who had become Árd-Rí in 673-4, having defeated and slain in battle his predecessor Cennfaelad) to issue a decree for its abolition. This event is commonly dated in the year 693, but Canon O'Hanlon, on the authority of O'Flaherty's *Ogygia*, thinks it must be earlier, and is inclined to place it in 692, the year of Adamnán's visit to Ireland.[1] It is recorded in a treatise on the Boruma, printed and translated by Mr. Standish Hayes O'Grady in his *Silva Gadelica*; it is there told in narrative form, with dialogues in the *oratio recta*, and intermingled with many fictitious

[1] *Lives of the Irish Saints*, vi. 708; and see *Ibid.*, ix. 505.

circumstances so as to make up a story; however, the main incidents accord with a fragment of Irish annals given by Mr. O'Grady in the same work, and with the Irish poem formerly ascribed to Adamnán. The means by which St. Moling induced the king to grant his request show all the symptoms of a folk-tale. By the promise of eternal life immediately after death, he procured Finnachta's promise to remit the tribute until *Luan*, which in Irish properly means Monday, but was also and still is a frequent term for the Day of Judgment—'Black Monday.' The monarch, understanding the word in its literal sense, thought the terms easy, and gave his promise; the saint, however, insisted upon putting his own interpretation on it, and Finnachta had to consent to the perpetual remission of the tribute. The measure itself was most wise and statesmanlike; nevertheless, pernicious as the tribute was, the abolition of it touched the pride of the Ui Néill, the ruling race of Ireland. The organisation of the Church was based upon the clan system which prevailed in the State; religious communities were often composed of fellow-tribesmen, ecclesiastical dignities passed from one generation to another of the same chiefly family, and the head of an order was practically a clerical chieftain, sharing with the lay princes that fatal tendency to prefer local to national interests which has been fraught with consequences to Ireland more dire than the Boruma itself. Adamnán is represented as possessing his full share of this family or racial pride, and joined with the clergy of his race in offering a bitter opposition to the new measure. The narrative of his dealings with Finnachta is more graphic than authentic. With an authority, to say the least of it, worthy of a Hildebrand or Innocent III., he sent a clerk to

Finnachta to summon him to instant conference. The king was then playing at chess, and declined to budge until his game was ended. Adamnán, informed of this, sent back word that he would chant fifty psalms while waiting, the effect of which would be to deprive the king's whole race of the kingdom for ever. This was announced to the king, but he had begun a second game, and declined to stir until it was over. Adamnán then sent word that he would chant another fifty psalms, which should bring on the king shortness of life; but Finnachta, now engaged in a third game, sent the same answer as before. Then Adamnán sent word that he would chant yet another fifty psalms, which should deprive Finnachta of the Lord's peace. Then Finnachta hastily arose, quitted his chess, and repaired to Adamnán's presence. On being asked why he came, after ignoring all previous messages, he explained that the exclusion of his posterity from his kingdom troubled him but little, neither did he care for a speedy death, seeing that Moling had promised him eternal life, but he could not bear to be excluded from the Lord's peace. However, though Finnachta then made personal submission to Adamnán, the decree remained, and God would not suffer Adamnán to deprive the king of the reward which Moling had promised him.

It is obvious that this narrative, in point of form, is fiction pure and simple; as fictitious as the speeches in Thucydides, or the dialogues in Herodotus or Plutarch. For this reason, and because of the discrepancy of dates, and the uncertainty attending the whole question of the remission of the Boruma, some authorities are inclined to call in question the entire story of Adamnán's relations with Finnachta, and to relegate it to the domain of fiction.

This summary method of cutting the knot appears to be somewhat arbitrary: if a liberal admixture of fiction be sufficient absolutely to discredit the chronicles into which it enters, we may be called upon to disbelieve that there is any historic basis for Livy's *History*, or the records of Charlemagne, for instance. In the present case it seems most doubtful whether any means exist for determining what, if any, basis of fact underlies the narrative, but having regard to the attention paid by the Irish writers to the record of past and contemporary events—which by no means implies the strict accuracy of the record—it seems improbable that the recorded acts, in matters of great public interest, of such notable characters as Árd-Rí Finnachta and St. Adamnán should not represent, in substance, the parts which they actually played in the public life of their time.

About this time another cause of discord is said to have put a further strain upon the relations subsisting between the Saint and the Árd-Rí. Finnachta having excluded the lands belonging to the Order of St. Colm Cille from the privileges accorded to the foundations of SS. Patrick, Finian, and Ciaran, Adamnán again provoked, and this time apparently with better reason, by this fresh infringement of the dignity of Ulad, put a curse upon the king, and foretold that his life should be short, that he should fall by a fratricidal stroke, and that the kingdom should pass from his race for ever; which triple prophecy was fulfilled when Finnachta and his son Bresal were slain by a cousin in the year 693-4.

A few years after these events, according to the annals, Adamnán acquired a more honourable distinction by means of the ecclesiastical legislation embodied in his

'Canons,' and by the more famous law, or code of laws, known as the *Cáin Adamnáin*. Each of these was promulgated at a *Mórdáil*—'Great Assembly'—the Diet or States-General of Ireland. According to the more general account, both were passed at a Mórdáil held in 697 at Tara, or, according to others, at Ballyshannon, Derry, or Raphoe. Probably Tara was assumed inadvertently to have been the place of meeting by some chronicler who, bearing in mind the ancient custom, had forgotten that Tara had been abandoned since the cursing of it by St. Ruadán. According to the Four Masters and Tigernach, the last Feis of Tara was held in the year 554 A.D. Or, possibly, there is a confusion between the general Mórdáil of Éire and an ecclesiastical Synod which appears to have been held at Tara about the time in question. In this uncertainty as to which of the several Synods and Mórdála, held towards the close of the seventh century, was the scene of Adamnán's legislation, Canon O'Hanlon suggests that the Synod of 694-5 would be the most likely occasion of the enactment of the Canons, if it were certain that Adamnán was present (*op. cit.* ix. 508 and 512), and that the *Cáin* was passed at the Mórdáil of 696-7, in the reign of Árd-Rí Loingseach mac Oengusa, according to the general account; this likewise agrees with the treatise about to be mentioned, which, however, gives Birr as the place of assembly. The most important article of the *Cáin* was the renewal of a law passed by St. Colm Cille at the Mórdáil of Druimceatt in 590, but since fallen into desuetude, whereby women were exempted from military service. The *Cáin Adamnáin* is an Old Irish treatise, probably of the tenth century, according to Professor Kuno Meyer, who has published an edition of it,

with notes, in *Anecdota Oxoniensia* (*Mediæval and Modern Series*, pt. viii.). It is not the work of Adamnán himself, but merely purports to give an account of the laws which he passed, and the circumstances of his doing so. It is clearly compounded of various elements, and it is worked up into a complete story by dint of the employment of a number of fictitious details. It opens with a melancholy picture of the status of women in Ireland in Adamnán's day, their home life being depicted as a state of abject slavery, while they were further liable to military service. These descriptions can only be accepted with very great limitations, for the laws, the Church literature, and the romances of Ireland contain abundant evidence to prove that the state of things here depicted, if it existed at all, was not generally prevalent, the picture drawn in the *Cáin* being greatly exaggerated for the greater honour and glory of Adamnán. At the same time there is no need to go to the opposite extreme, and assume that the position accorded to women in ancient Ireland realised in practice the theories of chivalry. It does not follow that the author of the *Cáin* invented the circumstances he describes; indeed, there is evidence that a similar state of things existed in Ireland so late as Tudor times at least, while parallels might be found in the great cities of a much more recent date. But it is the wont of those who treat of social and moral evils, whether as reformers or satirists, or in a less worthy capacity—from Juvenal to Zola, and from Salvian to Father Bernard Vaughan—to represent the sporadic and occasional evils of society as its habitual condition. As regards the military service of women, it appears certain that women did, and probably were required to, serve in the wars to some extent. Nevertheless, neither the annals

nor the romances warrant the conclusion that great troops of women swelled the Irish armies. It seems probable that in the varied and complicated system of the Irish land tenure, female tenants may have been obliged to render military service *ratione tenurae*, instances of which practice occur in other parts of Europe.

Whatever the nature or extent of the evil, it was greatly taken to heart by Adamnán's mother Ronat, and dutiful as her son was to her, she counted his service as nought until he should effect the emancipation of women. One day, as they were on a journey—Adamnán, after his usual custom, carrying his mother on his back—they came to a battlefield, where so great had been the slaughter that the women lay, the soles of one touching the neck of another; but the most piteous sight of all was a woman with her head in one place and her body in another, and her baby lying on the breast of the corpse, with a stream of milk on one cheek, and a stream of blood on the other. At his mother's bidding, Adamnán set the woman's head upon the trunk, made the sign of the cross with his staff, and she arose and related her experiences in the next world between her death and resuscitation. Ronat, still further confirmed in her purpose, imposed incredible austerities upon Adamnán in order to coerce him into compliance. At the end of four years an angel came to him and bade him rise, but he refused to do so until he received a promise that women should be emancipated. He then came forward with his proposals of reform, which offended several of the lay princes, so that they combined to put Adamnán to death. At length terms were agreed upon, and all parties pledged themselves that in future women should be exempted from military service, and that no

women should be slain by men without full legal penalties being exacted. This compact was solemnly sworn to by the contracting parties; the formula of the oath was founded upon that whereby the kings in pagan times had been wont to bind themselves in matters of great moment, and which survived, with necessary modifications, for some centuries after the introduction of Christianity. They took to witness the sun and moon, and all the other elements of God; the Apostles, Gregory, the two Patricks, and other Irish saints. The terms of the oath explain the form of St. Patrick's famous hymn.

The construction of the treatise is extremely loose; the form, in many places, is that of the ecclesiastical legend, and the present redaction was evidently made in the clerical interest. As a further instance of its composite character, in c. 33 it makes a fresh start with the words *Incipit sententia angeli Adamnano*, and relates how the angel, after two previous punishments inflicted, came to Adamnán and smote him on the side, bidding him go to Ireland and enact a law that no woman should be slain with impunity. It also states that Adamnán's law was extended to clerical students and children, and further gives sundry amendments of the laws relating to cases of assault, rape, slander of chastity, etc. Women, in turn, were made liable for the crimes they might commit; in particular, they were rendered punishable for poison, arson, or undermining a church by the old Irish penalty of being set adrift in a boat with a single paddle, and one vessel of meal and one of water.

The accuracy of this treatise in point of detail hardly calls for discussion. It is a specimen of the form in which we have received much of our information concerning

ancient Ireland; a form combining fact and fiction in a manner which often renders it impossible to distinguish between the two without extraneous evidence, which is seldom to be had. Here we have as the substratum an account of Adamnán's actual legislation, set off with an abundance of fictitious detail, in which a redactor has attempted to combine two different accounts of the circumstances which brought about Adamnán's action, while he has added a quantity of other legislative reforms, more or less connected with the subject, but only a part of which, if any, can be due to Adamnán himself. Here, as in the case of the Boruma, it is left for the most part to our subjective views of probability to determine what amount of reliance is to be placed upon the historical facts which form the main subject of the treatise. Despite the crudity of the work, perhaps the evidence in favour is rather stronger in this case, for not only is it natural to assume that the statements of a legal nature would be tolerably in accordance with the facts, which must have been known to many of the readers, but the ascription of the reform to Adamnán—under the alternative name of the *lex innocentium*—appears to have been accepted without hesitation by several independent authorities, including the *Annals of Ulster* and the *Fis Adamnáin*.

The last action of Adamnán recorded by the annals, and one that seems fairly well authenticated, is a sentence of excommunication pronounced by him at Tara upon one Irgalach for murder. One of the annalistic fragments preserves a report that Adamnán, at the close of his life, was expelled from Iona by his own monks on account of his action in the Easter controversy; this, however, appears to be without foundation, for the fact of his death and

burial at Iona seems certain. Another rumour was that grief at the recalcitrance of his monks, for the same reason, had brought about his death, for which no other explanation seems needed than his seventy-seven years, mostly spent in strenuous toil, though, of course, any vexation or distress of mind might well be the immediate cause of death.

Our available information concerning Adamnán does not set a very vivid picture of him before us. His own writings are of a somewhat impersonal character, while the Irish annalists seldom bring to their portrayal of historical persons that power of characterisation and description constantly apparent in the romances. We have already seen Bede's testimony to Adamnán's learning and high character; the Four Masters, in their notice of Adamnán's death (which they place in 703) refer to that passage, and add that he was 'tearful, penitent, given to prayer, diligent, ascetic, temperate; for he never used to eat excepting on Sunday and Thursday only; he made a slave of himself to these virtues; and, moreover, he was wise and learned in the clear understanding of the Holy Scriptures of God.' And a few scattered notices of the kind appear to comprise all that we have in the way of direct description. Nevertheless, the authentic record of his actions, combined with the more doubtful evidence of later annalists—which, at the very least, serve to show what notion of him survived, and was transmitted to posterity—may enable us to trace with tolerable accuracy the more salient outlines of his character. That his was a striking and commanding personality there is no doubt: he appears to have been fashioned after the same type as so many of the leading Churchmen of the Middle Ages,

from Ambrose down; a type which combined a great proficiency in learning, and a devotion to the virtues of the cloister, with a strenuous activity which asserted itself alike in the diligent administration of their ecclesiastical office, and in the exercise of their influence upon secular affairs. In these last, their intervention commonly made for righteousness, and aimed at putting a conscience into politics, never a superfluous task. They often stood forward as the champions of the wronged and oppressed, and in this cause, and, even more, in defence of the claims and immunities of the Church, never feared to encounter the temporal power; rather otherwise, in fact. This side of Adamnán's character appears in his mission to Northumbria on behalf of the kidnapped Irishmen, and his alleged defence against Finnachta of the privileges of his own order; above all, in his amelioration of the lot of women —possibly, too, of students and children—the records whereof, whatever the amount of historical fact which they contain, reveal the estimation in which Adamnán was held. At the same time, if the incident of the Boruma be either true in fact, or true to his character, it is evident that he was as liable as any of his great compeers, foreign or Irish —Colm Cille and Ruadán, for instance—to allow his zeal to be enlisted in the cause of party interest or personal sympathies, to the great public detriment. He enjoyed a traditional reputation for filial piety, and, at least, tribal patriotism. His recorded asceticism, however severe, does not appear, save in some of the least credible passages of the *Cáin*, to have been carried by him to the same lengths of self-torture, worthy of a solitary of the Thebaid, or an Indian *yogi*, as it was by many of the Irish saints. Indeed, his was mainly a life of action, and even

the learning for which he was famous is more apparent in the quality of his work than in the quantity of it. The part of his career which left the most enduring mark upon his Church and his country was the mainly successful struggle which he carried on as the leading Irish champion of Catholicism in the long contest, begun before his time, and only finished by Malachi and Gelasius in the middle of the twelfth century, between the respective partisans of national and of general usages in the ritual of the Irish Church. That portion of his work which he left unfinished, the submission of his own order, was completed within a quarter of a century after his death, and the ties between the Churches of Ireland and other countries of the West were drawn tighter by the removal of the chief cause of separation.

The Vision which has come down to us under the name of Adamnán is not to be included among his own works. The language and style, which belong to a much later period, are conclusive as to this; while several allusions in it, as that to the donation of Constantine, also point to a later date. Dr. Whitley Stokes, indeed, considers that 'it is not older than the eleventh century,' but Professor Windisch, in the preface to his edition, demurs to this conclusion, and holds that it was written in the tenth century, possibly even in the ninth (*Irische Texte*, i. 167 *sqq.*). Nevertheless, it is not to be classed among the literary forgeries with which the Middle Ages teem, composed sometimes *animo fraudandi*, sometimes, in the loose views then prevailing as to literary property and literary fame, in order to secure the prestige of a great name. The present work, however, never professes to be Adamnán's own composition. It invariably speaks of him in the third person, terming him

the 'High Scholar of the Western World,' and refers to his legislation at the Mórdáil, where he is said to have first received his Vision, and to his subsequent preaching as matters of past history. It remains, then, to be considered how this Vision came to be associated with his name. We have seen that he had become the hero of a saga-cycle, into which fiction had made an entrance: whether we must class the doubtful episodes as historical romance merely, or as facts set off by the aid of fiction. This, however, brings us little further, for it is certain that this popular reputation was earned by his actual achievements: again, therefore, we are faced with the question how to distinguish fact from fiction. It may be that the true author sought for his own teaching the authority of so famous a saint; or he may have had before him an anonymous work, and inserted the name of Adamnán from a like motive, or from a belief in the fact; or, again, the work may be what it professes to be, and may have for its basis a more or less accurate tradition of Adamnán's own teaching. A tradition, I venture to think, should be allowed a certain weight where it is in conflict neither with ascertained fact nor with probability; and here the probabilities appear to be rather favourable than otherwise, which, perhaps, in the absence of further evidence, is the nearest approach to a conclusion we can hope to make. It is not a forgery; it is not a polemical work, where the author might wish to shoot forth his darts from under the shield of some Ajax of controversy. Neither is it a mere floating legend, ready to be tacked on to any name indifferently; on the contrary, it is written with great care, and with a literary and constructive skill rare at that day. It makes no profession, and betrays no purpose, save to give the substance of the Vision which Adamnán related to the

Mórdáil, and of his subsequent preaching. The fashion of the day renders it highly probable that Adamnán's teaching or preaching may have assumed this form. Then his fame and authority, at the most active period of Irish letters, might avail to preserve a work, thus widely published, for a longer time than the 150 or 250 years which intervened between his death and the composition of the Vision, even in its present form, while if the reasons adduced in a later place (Part II. Sec. 5, *post*) for supposing it to be of a composite character be correct, it follows that the latest author must have had before him—as in any case he probably had—materials of an earlier date.

Thus the *Fis* and the *Cáin* appear to institute an exact parallel. We have as the basis of the extant work, in the one case, a law enacted, in the other, a Vision recited, by the saint, which a later writer has worked up into literary form, while other details relating to the same subject-matter, but entirely irrelevant, have been added later.

Two versions of the *Fis Adamnáin* exist, in two mediæval MSS., now in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy. Of these, the *Lebor na h-Udri*, or 'Book of the Dun' (*sc.* 'Cow'), is the oldest extant Irish MS. which contains a collection of secular literature, being copied about 1103 from another MS., probably about fifty years older, which was itself compiled from various earlier writings. The other MS., the *Lebor Brec*, 'Speckled Book,' was written towards the end of the fourteenth century. Both versions have been edited and printed by Professor Windisch in *Irische Texte*, vol. i. I believe that no complete translation of either version has been published in a form generally accessible, though O'Donovan made and translated extracts from it, and Dr. Whitley Stokes has edited and translated it, with notes, but

printed fifty copies only for private distribution (Simla, 1870). I have had the advantage of referring to this edition, thanks to the courtesy of Mr. Alfred Nutt, to whom I am indebted for several valuable suggestions and corrections.

The following translation has been made from the L.U. version. There is little difference in substance between the two versions, but the L.U. is more attractive from a literary point of view, the L.B. being somewhat overloaded in places with Latin quotations, while it wants the concluding chapter, which the L.U. possesses.

3. Translation of the Fis Adamnáin

1. Noble and wonderful is the Lord of the Elements, and great and marvellous are His might and His power. For He calleth to Himself in Heaven the charitable and merciful, the meek and considerate; but He consigns and casts down to Hell the impious and unprofitable host of the children of the curse. For upon the blessed He bestows the hidden treasures and the manifold wages of Heaven, while He inflicts a diversity of torments, in many kinds, upon the sons of death.

2. Now there are multitudes of the saints and righteous ones of the Lord of Creation, and of the apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ, unto whom have been revealed the secrets and the mysteries of the Heavenly Kingdom, and the golden wages of the righteous; likewise the divers pains of Hell, with them that are set in the midst thereof. For unto the Apostle Peter was shown the four-cornered

vessel, let down from Heaven,[1] with four cords to it, and they with sound as sweet as any music. Also, the Apostle Paul was caught up to Heaven,[2] and heard the ineffable words of the angels, and the speech of them that dwell in Heaven. Moreover, on the day of Mary's death, all the apostles were brought to look upon the pains and miserable punishments of the unblest; for the Lord commanded the angels of the West[3] to open up the earth before the face of the apostles, that they might see and consider Hell with all its torments, even as Himself had told them, long time before His Passion.

3. Finally, to Adamnán ua Thinne, the High Scholar of the Western World, were revealed the things which are here recorded; for his soul departed from out his body on the feast of John Baptist, and was conveyed to the celestial realm, where the heavenly angels are, and to Hell, with its rabble rout. For no sooner had the soul issued from out the body, than there appeared to it the angel that had been its guardian while in the flesh, and bore it away with him to view, firstly, the Kingdom of Heaven.

4. Now the first land to which they come is the Land of Saints. A bright land of fair weather is that country. In

[1] Acts x. 11.

[2] 2 Cor. xii. 2-4. Cp. also Galat. i. 12, 16; Ephes. i. 3; and the *Apocryphal Acts of Paul*, Ante-Nicene Library, vol. xvi.

[3] With the ancient Irish, the abode of the departed was beyond the Atlantic, towards the setting sun; so, in the Hindu mythology, Yama, King of the Dead, crossed the stream towards the sunset, first showing the way by which all men were to follow him. This natural idea has been shared by many barbarous races.

it are diverse and wondrous companies, clad in cassocks of white linen, with hoods of radiant white upon their heads. The saints of the Eastern world form a company apart in the East of the Land of Saints; the saints of the Western world are to the West of the same land; the saints of the Northern world and of the South, in their great concourse, are to the South and North. For every one that is in the Land of Saints may freely listen to the music, and may contemplate the vault,[1] wherein are the nine classes of Heaven, after their rank and order.

5. For one spell, then, the saints keep singing marvellous music in praise of God; for another, they are listening to the music of the heavenly host; for the saints have no other need than to listen to the music that they hear, and to contemplate the radiance that they see, and to sate themselves with the fragrance that there is in that land. The wonderful Lord is face to face with them, in the South-east,[2] and a crystal veil between; to the South is a golden portico, and through it they discern the form and adumbration of the people of Heaven. No veil, however, nor cloud is between the Host of Heaven and the Host of the Saints, but those are ever manifest and present unto these, in a place that is over against them. A circle of fire surrounds this place, yet do they all pass in and out, and it does scathe to none.

[1] Vault; inna tuinge, genitive of tong, =ship. *Qy.* here='nave'?

[2] South-east, possibly because that is the direction of Jerusalem, the Holy City.

6. Now, the Twelve Apostles and Mary the pure Virgin form a band apart, about the mighty Lord. Next to the Apostles are the Patriarchs and Prophets, and the disciples of Jesus. On the other side are holy Virgins, at Mary's right hand, and with no great space between. Babes and striplings are about them on every side, and the bird-choirs of the heavenly folk, making their minstrelsy. And amid these companies, bands of angels, guardians of the souls, do perpetual suit and service in the Royal presence. No man is there in this present life who may describe those assemblies, or who may tell of the very manner of them. And the bands and companies which are in the land of saints abide continually in even such great glory as aforesaid, until the great Parliament[1] of Doom, when the righteous Judge, on the Day of Judgment, shall dispose them in their stations and abiding places, where they shall contemplate God's countenance, with no veil nor shadow between, through ages everlasting.

7. But great and vast as are the splendour and the radiance in the Land of Saints, even as hath been said, more vast, a thousand times, the splendour which is in the region of the Heavenly Host, about the Lord's own throne. This throne is fashioned like unto a canopied chair,[2] and beneath it are four columns of precious stone. Though one should have no minstrelsy at all, save the harmonious

[1] The word used is mórṫoáil, the name of the Irish National Assembly, or States-General. See *ante*, Sec. 2.

[2] Or, 'a chair highly wrought,' inna cáiṫair cumṫaiġṫa.

music of those four columns, yet would he have his fill of melody and delight. Three stately birds are perched upon that chair, in front of the King, their minds intent upon the Creator throughout all ages, for that is their vocation. They celebrate the eight [canonical] hours, praising and adoring the Lord, and the Archangels accompany them. For the birds and the Archangels lead the music, and then the Heavenly Host, with the Saints and Virgins, make response.

8. Over the head of the Glorious One that sitteth upon the royal throne is a great arch, like unto a wrought helmet, or a regal diadem:[1] and the eye which should behold it would forthwith melt away. Three circles are round about it, separating it from the host, and by no explanation may the nature of them be known. Six thousand thousands, in guise of horses and of birds, surround the fiery chair, which still burns on, without end or term.

9. Now to describe the mighty Lord that is upon that throne is not for any, unless Himself should do so, or should so direct the heavenly dignitaries. For none could tell of his vehemence and might, His glow[2] and splendour,

[1] The comparison of the arch above the head of the Heavenly King to a wrought helmet or a regal diadem, may have been suggested by the picturesque and chivalrous custom of the Irish kings recorded in the ancient Irish poem upon the Fair of Carman, whence it appears that their head-dress on ordinary state occasions was a wrought helmet, the royal crown being reserved for the day of battle.

[2] 'Glow,' ꝺeꞇ͛ge, lit. 'redness,' which, Mr. Whitley Stokes suggests, 'symbolises divine love, creative power, royalty.' If so, cp. Dante's description of a 'goodly crimson' as 'questo nobilissimo colore.'

His brightness and loveliness, His liberality and steadfastness, nor of the multitude of His Angels and Archangels, which chant their songs to Him. His messengers keep going to and from Him, ever and anon, with brief messages to each assemblage, telling to the one host of His mildness and mercy, and to the other of His sternness and harshness.

10. Whoso should stand facing about him, East and West, South and North, would behold on each side of him a majestic countenance, seven times as radiant as the sun. No human form thereto, with head or foot, may be discerned, but a fiery mass, burning on for ever, while one and all are filled with awe and trembling before Him. Heaven and earth are filled full with the light of Him, and a radiance as of a royal star encircles Him.[1] Three thousand different songs are chanted by each several choir about Him, and sweeter than all the varied music of the world is each individual song of them.

11. Furthermore, in this wise is the fashion of that city, wherein that throne is set. Seven crystal walls of various hue surround it, each wall higher than the wall that is before it.[2] The floor, moreover, and the lowest base of that city, is of fair crystal, with the sun's countenance upon it (?), shot with blue, and purple, and green, and every hue beside.

[1] Or, *qy.* 'comet'?

[2] Compare the description of the seven walls of Ecbatana, of different hue, in Herodotus, Book I.

12. A gentle folk, most mild, most kindly, lacking in no goodly quality, are they that dwell within that city; for none come there, and none abide there ever, save holy youths, and pilgrims zealous for God. But as for their array and ordinance, hard is it to understand how it is contrived, for none turns back nor side to other, but the unspeakable power of God has set, and keeps, them face to face, in ranks and lofty coronels, all round the throne, circling it in brightness and bliss, their faces all towards God.

13. There is a chancel rail[1] of silver between each two choirs, cunningly wrought upon with red gold and silver, and choice rows of precious stones, variegated with diverse gems, and against that lattice are seats and canopies[2] of carbuncle. Between every two chief companies are three precious stones, softly vocal with sweet melody, and the upper halves of them are lighted lamps. Seven thousand angels, as it were great candles, shine and illumine that city round about; seven thousand others in the midst thereof are aflame for ever, throughout the royal city. The men of all the world, if gathered into one place, many as they are, would derive sustenance enough from the sweet savour of any one of those candles.

14. Now, such of the world's inhabitants as attain not to that city after their life is spent, and to whom a dwelling-place therein is allotted after the Words of Doom shall

[1] So Windisch trans. Cłann caingit, =*cancelli*.

[2] 'Seats,' or *qy.* stalls; the author appears to have in mind the construction of a Christian church. Cp. note to ch. 31 *post*. 'Canopies,' lit. 'crowns.'

have been spoken, find a restless and unstable habitation, until the coming of Judgment, on heights and hilltops, and in marshy places. Even so fare those hordes and companies, with the guardian angel of every soul in their midst, serving and tending them. In the main doorway of the city they are confronted by a veil of fire and a veil of ice, smiting perpetually one against the other. The noise and din of these veils, as they clash together, are heard throughout the world, and the seed of Adam, should they hear that din, would be seized thereat with trembling and intolerable dismay. Faint and dazed are the wicked at that din; howbeit, on the side of the Heavenly Host, nought is heard of that rude discord, save a very little only, and that sweeter than any music.

15. Awful is that city, and wonderful to describe; for a little out of much is that which we have told concerning its various orders, and the wonders of it. Seldom indeed may a spirit, after its converse and co-habitation with the body, in slumber and repose, in freedom and luxury, win its way to the throne of the Creator, unguided of the angels; for hard of essay are the seven Heavens, nor is any one of them easier than the rest. Six guarded doors confront all those of mortal race who reach the Kingdom. There sits a porter and warder of the Heavenly Host, keeping guard over each door. At the door of that Heaven which is nearest on the hither side sits the Archangel Michael, and with him two youths,[1] with iron rods

[1] Or 'virgins,' W. S.

in their laps to scourge and smite the sinners as they pass through this the first grief and torment of the path they have to tread.

16. At the door of the next Heaven, the Archangel Ariel is warder, and with him two youths,[1] with fiery scourges in their hands, wherewith they scourge the wicked across the face and eyes. A river of fire, its surface an ever-burning flame, lies before that door. Abersetus is the angel's name who keeps watch over that river, and purges the souls of the righteous, and washes them in the stream, according to the amount of guilt that cleaves to them, until they become pure and shining as is the radiance of the stars. Hard by is a pleasant spring, flowery and fragrant, to cleanse and solace the souls of the righteous, though it annoys and scalds the souls of the guilty, and does away nought from them, but it is increase of pain and torment that comes upon them there. Sinners arise from out of it in grief and immeasurable sadness, but the righteous proceed with joy and great delight to the door of the third Heaven.

17. Above this, a fiery furnace keeps ever burning, its flames reaching a height of twelve thousand cubits; through it the righteous pass in the twinkling of an eye, but the souls of sinners are baked and scorched therein for twelve years, and then their guardian angel conveys them to the fourth door. About the entrance door of the fourth Heaven is a fiery stream, like the foregoing. It is sur-

[1] See last note.

rounded by a wall of fire, in breadth twelve thousand measured cubits, through which the souls of the righteous pass as though it were not there, while the souls of the sinful tarry therein, amid pain and tribulation, for another twelve years, until their guardian angel bears them to the door of the fifth Heaven.

18. In that place is a fiery river, which is unlike all other rivers, for in the midst of it is a strange kind of whirlpool, wherein the souls of the wicked keep turning round and round, and there they abide for the space of sixteen years; the righteous, however, win through it straightway, without any hindrance. So soon as the due time cometh for the sinners to be released thereout, the angel strikes the water with a rod, hard as though it were of stone, and uplifts the spirits with the end of that rod. Then Michael bears them up to the door of the sixth Heaven; but no pain nor torment is meted out to the spirits at that door, but there they are illumined with the lustre and the brilliancy of precious stones. Then Michael cometh to the Angel of the Trinity, and one on either side they usher the soul into the presence of God.

19. Infinite and beyond all telling is the welcome wherewith the Lord and the Heavenly Host then receive the soul, if he be a pure and righteous soul; if, however, he be an unrighteous and unprofitable soul, harsh and ungentle is the reception of him by the Mighty Lord. For He saith to the Heavenly Angels, 'Take, O Heavenly

Angels, this unprofitable soul, and deliver him into the hand of Lucifer, that he may plunge him and utterly extinguish him in Hell's profound, through ages everlasting.'

20. Thereupon that wretched soul is parted, fearfully, sternly, awfully, from sight of the Heavenly Kingdom, and of God's countenance. Then utters he a groan, heavier than any groan, as he comes into the Devil's presence, after beholding the bliss of the Kingdom of Heaven. He is then deprived of the guidance of the Archangels, in whose company he had come unto Heaven. Twelve fiery dragons swallow up every spirit, one after the other, until the lowest dragon lands him in the Devil's maw. There doth he experience the consummation of all evil, in the Devil's own presence, throughout all ages.

21. After that his guardian angel had revealed to Adamnán's spirit these visions of the Heavenly Kingdom, and of the first progress of every soul after parting from its body, he brought him to visit the nethermost Hell, with all its pains, and its crosses, and its torments. Now, the first region whereunto he came was a land burnt black, waste and scorched, but with no punishment at all therein. A glen, filled with fire, was on the further side of it; huge the flame of it, extending beyond the margin on either hand. Black its base, red the middle, and the upper part thereof. Eight serpents were in it, with eyes like coals of fire.

22. An enormous bridge spans the glen, reaching

from one bank to the other; high the middle of it, but lower its two extremities. Three companies seek to pass over it, but not all succeed. One company find the bridge to be of ample width, from beginning to end, until they win across the fiery glen, safe and sound, fearless and undismayed. The second company, when entering upon it, find it narrow at first, but broad afterwards, until they, in like manner, fare across that same glen, after great peril. But for the last company the bridge is broad at first, but strait and narrow thereafter, until they fall from the midst of it into that same perilous glen, into the throats of those eight red-hot serpents, that have their dwelling-place in the glen.

23. Now the folk to whom that path was easy were the chaste, the penitent, the diligent, they who had zealously borne a bloody testimony to God. The band who found the path narrow at first, but afterwards broad, were they who had hardly been constrained to do God's will, but had afterwards converted their constraint into the willing service of God. They, however, to whom this way was broad at first, but strait thereafter, were sinners who had listened to the precepts in God's word, and after having heard, fulfilled them not.

24. Furthermore, vast multitudes abide beyond, feeble and powerless, upon the shore of perpetual pain, in the land of utter darkness. Every other hour the pain ebbs away from them, and the next hour it returns upon them again. Now these are they in whom good and evil were equally

balanced, and on the Day of Doom, judgment shall be passed between them, and their good shall quench their evil on that day; and then shall they be brought to the Haven of Life, in God's own presence, through ages everlasting.

25. Another great company is there, near to the last-named group, and monstrous their torment. And this is their plight: they are fettered to fiery columns, a sea of fire about them up to their chins, and about their middle fiery chains, in the shape of vipers. Their faces are aflame with agony. They who are tormented thus are sinners, fratricides,[1] ravagers of God's Church, and merciless Erenachs,[2] who, in presence of the relics of the Saints, had been set over the Church's tithes and oblations,[3] and had alienated these riches to their private store, away from the Lord's guests and needy ones.

26. Great multitudes there are, standing in blackest mire up to their girdles. Short cowls of ice are on them. Without rest or intermission, through all time, their girdles are perpetually scorching them with alternate cold and heat. Demon hosts surround them, with fiery clubs[4] in their hands, striking them over the head, though they struggle against them continually. These wretches all

[1] Or 'parricides,' ꝑıngalaċ, which O'Donovan translates both as 'a fratricide, one who has killed a tribesman,' and 'parricidal' (Supplement to O'Reilly's Dictionary).

[2] The Erenach, or aıꝑcınnoeċ, was the official guardian of Church temporalities.

[3] Ꝺánaıb, which signifies 'gifts,' 'arts,' etc.

[4] ꝑluıc, which W. S. trans. 'maces,' or 'clubs.'

have their foreheads to the North, and a rough, sharp wind blowing full upon their foreheads, in addition to every other woe. Red showers of fire are raining on them, every night and every day, and they cannot ward them off, but must needs endure them throughout all ages, wailing and making moan.

27. Some of them have streams of fire in the hollows of their visages; some, fiery nails through their tongues; others, through their heads, from side to side. They who are so punished are thieves and liars, and they who have practised treachery, reviling robbery and rapine; judges of false judgment and contentious persons; women who have dealt in poison and spells, reivers,[1] and learned men who have practised heresy. Another great throng is set upon islands, in the midst of the fiery sea. About them is a silver wall [built] of the raiment and the alms [which they had bestowed]. These are they who have practised mercy without zeal,[2] and have remained in loose living, and in the bonds of their sin, until the hour of their death; but their alms are a bulwark unto them, amid the fiery sea, until the Judgment, and after Judgment they shall be brought into the Haven of Life.

28. Another great multitude is there, clad in red and fiery mantles down to their middle.[3] Their trembling and their

[1] 'Reivers,' aitdibeṁgaig, which W. S. trans. 'men who mark themselves to the Devil,' but expresses doubt on the subject, and cites authorities which seem to imply the sense of rapine or plunder.

[2] Or 'without remission, but they,' etc.

[3] co lár, which W. S. trans. 'down to the ground.'

outcries make themselves heard, even unto the firmament. An unspeakable throng of demons is throttling them, holding in leash the while raw-hided, stinking hounds, which they incite to devour and consume them. Red glowing chains[1] are constantly ablaze about their necks. Every alternate hour they are borne up to the firmament, and the next hour they are dashed down into Hell's profound. Now they that are punished in this wise are the regulars who have transgressed their rule,[2] and become loathers of piety; also, impostors who have deceived and seduced the multitude, and have undertaken miracles and wonders which they are not able to perform. Moreover, the children that are tearing the men in orders, are they who were committed to them for amendment, but they amended them not, neither reproved them for their sins.

29. Thereafter, is another vast company; East and West they go, unresting, across the fiery flagstones, at war with demon hosts. Innumerable showers of red-hot arrows are rained upon them by the demons. Running, they go on without stop or stay, making for a black lake and a black river, that they may quench those arrows therein. A weeping and wailing, truly miserable and piteous, do the sinners make in those waters, for in them they only meet with augmentation of their pain. Now they that are punished thus are cheating artificers, weavers, and merchants; judges that judged falsely, both Jews, and

[1] ꝛoċa, so Windisch from ꝛuċ; W. S. trans. 'wheels' from ꝛoċ.
[2] Or, 'the ordained who have broken their vows.'

others likewise; impious kings, Erenachs of lewd and crooked ways, adulterous women, and the panders that destroyed them by their evil practices.

Beyond the land of torment is a fiery wall; seven times more horrible and cruel is it than the land of pain itself. Howbeit, no soul dwells therein till Judgment, but it is the province of the demons only, until the Day of Judgment.

30. At that time, woe unto him that shall dwell amid those pains, in company with the Devil's own tribe! Woe unto him that is not ware of that tribe! Woe unto him over whom a vile and savage demon is set in dominion! Woe unto him that shall be hearkening unto the spirits, making moan and complaining unto the Lord, for the speedy coming of the Day of Judgment, that they may know whether they shall find any remission of their doom; for they get no respite ever, save only for three hours on every Sunday. Woe unto him unto whom that land shall be for a lasting inheritance, even for ever and ever! For this is the nature of it: Mountains, caverns, and thorny brakes; plains, bare and parched, with stagnant, serpent-haunted lochs. The soil is rough and sandy, very rugged, icebound. Broad fiery flagstones bestrew the plain. Great seas are there, with horrible abysses, wherein is the Devil's constant habitation and abiding-place. Four mighty rivers cross the middle of it: a river of fire, a river of snow, a river of poison, a river of black, murky water. In these wallow eager hosts of demons, after making their holiday and their delight in tormenting the souls.

31. What time the holy companies of the Heavenly Host are singing the eight hours with harmonious melody, praising the Lord with cheerfulness and great gladness, then do the souls of the wicked utter piteous and weary wailings, as they are buffeted unceasingly by the demon hordes.

Such then are the pains and torments which his guardian angel revealed to the spirit of Adamnán, after his journey towards the Heavenly Kingdom. After which he was borne in the twinkling of an eye through the golden forecourt,[1] and through the crystal veil, to the Land of Saints, whereunto he had been brought at first, after his departure from the body. But when he bethought him to rest and tarry in that land, he heard, through the veil, the angel's voice enjoining him to return again into that body whence he had departed, and to rehearse in courts and assemblies, and in the great congregations of laymen and of clerics, the rewards of Heaven and the pains of Hell, even as his guardian angel had revealed them unto him.

32. This, then, was the doctrine that Adamnán continually taught to the congregations, from that time forth, so long as he remained in life. This, too, is what he preached in the great assemblies of the men of Éire,[2] wherein the Constitution of Adamnán was imposed upon

[1] ɇɼɒᴅm, which, Mr. Whitley Stokes says, was the name used by the Irish ecclesiastical writers as equivalent to the Greek *pronaos* or *narthex*. See notes 1 and 2 to Ch. 13, *ante*.

[2] Cp. *ante*, Sec. 2.

the Gaels, and the women were emancipated by Adamnán and by Finnachta Fledach,[1] King of Éire, and the princes of Éire, of one accord. Such, too, were the tidings which Patrick, son of Calpurnius, at the Gospel-dawn, was ever wont to proclaim—to wit, the rewards of Heaven and the pains of Hell—to all them that would believe in the Lord, through his teaching, and would accept his guidance of their souls.[2] That, too, is the doctrine most constantly taught by Peter and Paul, and the [other] apostles likewise, to wit, the enumeration of the rewards and pains which had been revealed to them in like manner. And so did Silvester, Abbot of Rome, teach Constantine, son of Helen, High King of the World, in the General Synod when he offered Rome to Paul and to Peter.[3] Even so did Fabian, successor to Peter, teach Philip, son of Gordian, the King

[1] The Mórdáil at which these laws were passed was apparently held in the year 697, while Finnachta Fledach had been assassinated in 695. This anachronism affords yet further evidence of the comparatively late composition of our version of the Vision.

[2] Anmċairdiu, 'soul-friendship'; anmċara, 'soul-friend,' is the Irish name for a father-confessor.

[3] Professor Bryce considers that the first extant mention of the Donation of Constantine is contained in the letter of Pope Hadrian I. to Charlemagne, dated A.D. 777 (*Holy Roman Empire*, ch. vii. p. 112 note, 4th ed.). If so, the allusion is couched in very general and obscure terms. Döllinger, who dates the letter in question 775, holds that it refers not to what is commonly understood by the Donation of Constantine, but to gifts of land in various parts of Italy, afterwards seized by the Lombards. The forgery of the Donation would appear to be later than 750, but prior to 774, as it refers to the state of things existing before the first Frankish settlement in Italy, which took place in 774. In any case, it is later than the time of Adamnán.

of Rome, whereby he believed in the Lord, and many thousands beside believed in that hour.[1] For he was the first King of Rome that believed in the Saviour, Jesus Christ.

33. And these are the tidings which Elias declares continually unto the souls of the righteous, under the Tree of Life, which is in Paradise. So soon as Elias opens his book in order to instruct the spirits, the souls of the righteous, in form of bright white birds, repair to him from every side. Then he tells them, first, of the wages of the righteous, the joys and delights of the Heavenly Realm, and right glad thereat are all the throng. After that he tells them of the pains and torments of Hell, and the woes of Doomsday; and easy it is to mark the look of sorrow that is upon his face, and upon the face of Enoch; and these are the two sorrows of the Heavenly Kingdom. Then Elias shuts his book, and thereupon the birds make exceeding great lamentation, straining their wings against their bodies till streams of blood issue from them, in dismay of the woes of Hell and of the Day of Doom.

34. Now, seeing that they who make this moan are the Saints to whom have been allotted everlasting mansions in the Heavenly Realm, how much more fitting were it for the men that are yet on earth to ponder, even with tears of blood, upon the Judgment Day, and upon the pains of Hell. For

[1] Philip succeeded to Gordian III. in 224, but was not his son, being an Arab. He favoured the Christians, and corresponded with Origen, whence arose a report, countenanced by Eusebius, that he had embraced Christianity, but for this there is no authority.

at that time will the Lord render due recompense to every one on earth; that is to say, rewards to the righteous, and punishments to the guilty. And at that very time shall the guilty be set in the abyss of everlasting pain, and the book of the Word of God shall then be closed, under the curse of the Judge of Doom, for ever. But the saints and the righteous, the charitable and the merciful, shall be borne to the right hand of God, to a lasting habitation in the Kingdom of Heaven, there to abide without age or death, end or term, for ever and ever.

35. This, then, is the manner of that City: A Kingdom without pride, or vanity, or falsehood, or outrage, or deceit, or pretence,[1] or blushing, or shame, or reproach, or insult, or envy, or arrogance, or pestilence, or disease, or poverty, or nakedness, or death, or extinction, or hail, or snow, or wind, or rain, or din, or thunder, or darkness, or cold,—a noble, admirable, ethereal realm, endowed with the wisdom,[2] and radiance, and fragrance of a plenteous land, wherein is the enjoyment of every excellence.

FINIT—AMEN—FINIT.

[1] Tairtleċ, so W. S.

[2] Suċi. So Windisch, though W. S. trans. 'fruitfulness (?).'

PART II

I. The Classical Tradition

The legend which forms the ground-plan of the Vision of Adamnán and of the *Commedia* of Dante, can claim a pedigree of great antiquity that may be traced back along several widely divergent lines. The principal of these may be grouped roughly under the heads of the Classical Tradition, the Eastern Tradition, the Ecclesiastical Tradition, resulting from the fusion in the early Christian Church of Hellenic and Oriental schools of thought; and the Irish Tradition, which last does not so much represent an entirely independent growth of the legend, as a new departure, whereby the Ecclesiastical Tradition, transplanted to Ireland, and there coming into contact with certain cognate ideas which were prominent in the native mythology and romantic literature, acquired a fresh development, and reappeared in several forms which became the most popular exponents of the mediæval theories of the Otherworld, until the revival of classical learning, in the twelfth and following centuries, enabled Dante to carry the leading idea, common to all forms alike, to its culmination.

The Classical Tradition was preserved in the Middle Ages chiefly through the sixth book of Virgil's *Æneid*, which relates the visit of Æneas to Hades; but this episode

was itself suggested by the similar adventure of Odysseus, told in the eleventh book of the *Odyssey*. The fundamental conception, a visit paid to the Otherworld by a living man, appears in many of the Greek myths: *e.g.* in the journey to Hades of Demeter, in the course of her search after her daughter Persephone, stolen away by Pluto; of Orpheus in quest of Eurydice; of Theseus and Peirithoos in their attempt to abduct Persephone; of Herakles, Castor and Pollux, and others. Like most of the myths that have contrived to 'make their fortune' by virtue of their strong appeal to the human imagination, these legends, when the myth-making age had long departed from the Hellenic peoples, and the age of creative imagination had given place to one of literary culture, passed into the domain of literature pure and simple. As such they entered upon a new life in the writings of the Latin authors; for even in Virgil the literary aspect of the legend predominates, though not to the exclusion of its more serious elements. This merely literary character is yet more apparent in the treatment of the legend by the tragic poets, and by Lucan and Claudian, while Apuleius, the Perrault of antiquity, found in it a theme for the play of his graceful fancy.

The early descriptions of the Otherworld, being originally myths of spontaneous growth, and not composed to be the vehicles of instruction or edification, contain little of eschatological or ethical significance,[1] the few stock examples which they give of the penalties attached to guilt being

[1] Mr. Alfred Nutt, in his *Essay on the Irish Vision of the Happy Otherworld and the Celtic Doctrine of Rebirth*, appended to Prof. Kuno Meyer's *Voyage of Bran, Son of Febal*, 1895-7, points out that in Greece and Ireland alone of Aryan nations the Elysium legend existed devoid of any eschatological belief (i. 329).

rather instances of the private vengeance of Zeus upon those who had rebelled against him, or had outraged the dignity of some member of the divine family of which he was the head. In these accounts the abode of the departed appears as a dreary region, wherein they lead a shadowy and undesirable existence;[1] and although, side by side with this conception, another theory subsisted, assigning to the happy dead a serene existence in the Elysian plain, or in the enchanted isle of Leuke, this belief did not go beyond the notion, vaguely, however beautifully, expressed, of a bright and happy region of perpetual calm, where death or decay or care was unknown, and the departed spirits dwelt in flowery and fragrant meadows, beneath blossoming trees, beside calm seas or smoothly flowing streams, while soft breezes were perpetually blowing. The Greek poets, from Homer downwards, contain innumerable references to this Elysium,[2] but although we sometimes find a hint, as in Pindar and some of the tragic poets, that these joys are reserved for those who have deserved them by a righteous life on earth, the later instances show scarcely any advance upon the earlier in the direction of a systematic eschatology, and consequently brought the Vision legend little, if any, further on its way.[3]

[1] See *Odyssey*, xi. 36 *sqq.*; 222, 391 *sqq.*; 488 *sqq.* This gloomy impression is little mitigated by mention of the 'Asphodelian meadow' in which the dead reside (*Od.* xi. 539; xxiv. 13).

[2] See, in particular, Homer, *Odyssey*, iv. 563; Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 110, 166; Pindar, *Olympiad*, ii. 68, 120, which last, perhaps, contains the most finished picture of the Elysium drawn by the earlier poets.

[3] It would be possible to cull from the Greek writers a great wealth of allusions to the Otherworld; not only, however, do exigencies of space forbid this, but they are hardly pertinent to the present subject,

Our legend, however, received fuller development in another school of Hellenic thought. Simultaneously with the mythology of the Greeks, and on one side distinct from it, though on the other side closely connected with it, existed a tradition of a more essentially religious character; religion being distinguished from philosophical speculation on the one hand, and myth and legend on the other. Hence, apparently, proceeded the Neo-platonising tendency in Greek philosophy—to adopt the familiar and convenient name, though the thing is older than the Neo-Platonists, or than Plato himself—the tendency to regard the old myths as a repository of the 'Wisdom of the Ancients,' and to disengage from the husk of fable the moral and scientific truths which it was supposed to contain. In so doing, the philosophic schools were not merely attempting to read their own notions into the traditions of antiquity, but were also, to some extent, endeavouring to develop germs which already existed in the best and most serious thought of their own and earlier times. This side of the Hellenic religion would appear to have existed in its purest and most highly developed form in the Mysteries, especially those practised at Eleusis, and at other places in which the Eleusinian rites prevailed.

Most questions relating to the Greek mysteries, their place of origin, the date of their introduction, the relation of one school to another, the rites practised therein, and the nature of the instruction imparted to the neophytes, have given rise to many debates, and some of them can hardly yet be

for the reasons mentioned in the text. Still less need we enter into the burlesque descriptions of an Otherworld, conceived as a Land of Cockayne, several of which are preserved in fragments of the comic poets.

regarded as entirely settled. Happily, our subject does not call for discussion of these contested points, all that we are concerned with being the significance of the mysteries to the spiritual life of Greece at the time of their highest development. The general result of investigation would seem to make it probable that the Greeks, from a very early period, practised certain rites in honour of Demeter, and that these rites were connected with agriculture, and with the means whereby the unseen powers presiding over it might be rendered propitious. These rites, as in many barbarous nations, were held to confer certain privileges upon the participants, who could only obtain access thereto by a secret initiation; and when the ideas of death and renovation, which arose naturally out of the subject, proceeded by an easy transition—partly by an inherent principle of growth, and partly through the introduction of foreign elements[1]—to questionings concerning man's fate after

[1] The Greeks themselves referred to a foreign origin most of their mystical rites, and the deities worshipped therein. No doubt it is often the case that peoples who observe in foreign nations practices akin to those existing among themselves, are apt to derive these from the former; nevertheless it appears certain that while the cults which formed the basis of the mysteries existed, in a primitive form, in the indigenous Greek religion, they received a great impetus, at several distinct periods, through the importation of similar myths and rites from abroad. Thus M. Paul Foucart (*Recherches sur l'origine et la nature des Mystères d'Eleusis*, p. 75) accepts the Greek theory of the Egyptian origin of the Demeter cult and the Eleusinian rites at a date prior to the eleventh century B.C. These rites, he assumes, were purely agricultural at first, but at a later day (seventh century B.C.) became associated with the doctrine of a future life (pp. 75-9). He further holds that this doctrine was itself brought from Egypt by the philosophers, Pythagoras and others, who are reported by tradition to have travelled thither for instruction (p. 83). This latter part of

death, the same rites were regarded as efficacious in ameliorating his condition in the unseen world. At the same time, as the doctrine of the effect of conduct upon the future life gained ground, this side of the question likewise came within the purview of the mystical schools, and an ethical as well as a theurgic efficacy was ascribed to the initiation rite. This important step in advance would appear to have been taken in the sixth century B.C. at latest, when the theories of the Orphic-Pythagorean school became widely diffused. M. Foucart, as we have seen in the last note, holds that this movement was due to the Egyptian researches carried on by the early Greek philosophers in the course of their travels; Rohde, on the other hand, regards it as a strictly national movement, and denies the late adoption of any alien faith of a highly developed character. In any case, it is certain that the

M. Foucart's theory presents certain difficulties. The name of Pythagoras is commonly associated with the Orphic mysteries, to which M. Foucart denies any connection with Eleusis, while the conception of a future life which prevailed both in the Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries and in the teaching of Pythagoras, differed in important points from the Egyptian doctrine, as will be pointed out in a later place. Professor Rohde likewise holds that while the Dionysiac mysteries existed in Greece in pre-Homeric times as a minor and local cult, the Dionysos-Zagreus rites, which formed the basis of the Orphic mysteries, were imported from Thrace at an early date; probably, Mr. Nutt suggests (*op. cit.*, ii. 141), during the period of change which followed upon the Dorian invasion. Thrace, apparently, derived the Zagreus myth from Phrygia. Prof. Percy Gardner (*Contemporary Review*, March 1895) is also inclined to accept the Greek traditions as to the derivation of many of their mystical rites and cults from Asiatic sources, differing herein from Prof. Dieterich, who holds that these were native developments. For a discussion by Mr. Alfred Nutt of these various theories see *op. cit.*, I. ch. xi.

theories of which Pythagoras was the most famous exponent assumed great prominence at this time. The leading principle of these was the doctrine of the soul's rebirth on earth, in another body, after undergoing a process of purification in the Otherworld. It was one of the primary objects of the mysteries to ensure that the soul's progress through the intermediate state should be as easy, and the conditions of its rebirth as favourable, as could be effected by the due performance of the mystical rites; and while the great progress of ethics, which with the early philosophers went hand and hand with philosophical speculation, effected a fuller recognition of moral conduct in this life as one of the means most conducive to the desired end, preference was still given, even among the righteous, to those who had undergone the initiation ceremony.[1]

Professor Gardner even traces the Hades theory from the mystic rites (*loc. cit.*); probably this derivation would only apply to that theory in its more fully developed form. He holds that the Orphic cult 'occupies the background of religious life' in Greece; that it was an enthusiastic type of religion, and capable of ready association with the ideals of such moral and political revivalists as Pythagoras and Empedocles. According to this authority, there were two foci of the Orphic cult: at Eleusis, and in the rites of Dionysos. M. Foucart, it will be remembered, denies any connection between Eleusis and the Orphic mysteries; in which contention he would appear to be supported by

[1] The best authorities appear to be agreed that there are no grounds for the views once held that the mysteries contained either some esoteric creed of a religion purer than that held by the multitude, and jealously guarded from the latter, or, according to others, a system of occult philosophy or theosophy.

Plato, who speaks slightingly of the latter, while several passages in his writings testify to his respect for the mysteries of Eleusis. Certainly the two were respectively connected, originally, with the worship of two separate and widely different divinities, although, both having to do with the earth as the source and the renewer of life, they soon tended towards certain common developments. Perhaps we may not greatly err if we assume that the Orphic mysteries, in their most perfected form, were more especially concerned with the orgiastic ritual and with the doctrine of reincarnation, now reduced to a philosophical system, while in the Eleusinian school ritual became more closely connected with personal morality, thus assuming an aspect more strictly 'religious,' in the modern sense of the word.

M. Foucart, indeed, holds that the instruction imparted in the Eleusinian mysteries was *essentiellement pratique; elle avait pour objet de mettre l'homme en état de se tirer d'affaire lorsqu'il arrivait dans la demeure d'Hades* (*op. cit.*, p. 63). By 'practical' M. Foucart would appear to refer exclusively to those automatic or quasi-mechanical effects which are supposed, all the world over, to result from the due performance of certain rites. However, the testimony of the Greeks themselves, as appears from the examples about to be cited in connection with our own subject, and from other evidences that have come down to us, appears to be conclusive as to the value attributed to the Eleusinian mysteries, at any rate, as an agent of moral reformation. Sir W. M. Ramsay[1] distinguishes between the mysteries which had in view the proficiency and advancement of

[1] See his article, 'Mysteries,' in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* ed. 9, vol. xvii.

morals, and the mysteries which were of an exclusively ritual and orgiastic nature, associating the former kind with Eleusis, and places where kindred rites were celebrated. In support of this contention, he cites a number of passages occurring in Greek writers from the fourth century B.C. onwards, whence it plainly appears that the Greeks regarded a moral regeneration as a natural concomitant of initiation into the mysteries, and even as a condition of happiness in the future life.[1]

It is in connection with the mysteries, as representing the moral and spiritual side of the Greek religion, whencesoever derived, that the Vision legend becomes impressed with an epideictic character and develops those elements which had barely existed in germ in the popular mythology.

In the Dialogues of Plato, the legend already appears as a vehicle of religious instruction. Plato, indeed, merely gives literary form to theories which had existed for at least two centuries before his time, but as he is the first to employ the Vision legend in this connection, and as it is in his hands that it first assumes its final type, essentially identical with that of its successors in the Christian Church, it is convenient to make him a point of departure.

In the tenth book of his *Republic* (pp. 614 *sqq.*) Plato records the narrative of one Er, an Armenian, concerning his experiences in the world of spirits. This Er had been killed in battle, and brought away with the rest of the slain, but was restored to life. His soul, upon issuing from the body, had been conveyed to a certain spiritual

[1] Sir W. M. Ramsay further mentions a Rhodian inscription of the fifth century B.C., which required the candidates for initiation at the temple of Lindus to bring a pure heart and a conscience free from crime (*loc. cit.*).

(δαιμόνιον) place, where there were two openings leading down below the earth, and two others leading up into heaven, over against one another. Between these openings judges were stationed, who dismissed the souls of the righteous to heaven by the upper and right-hand way, having first impressed upon their foreheads the decree of absolution, and despatched the wicked downward by the left-hand path, branded behind with the record of their misdeeds. The judges commanded Er to see and hear all that passed, that he might become the messenger of it all to mankind. The souls of the departed, after a progress lasting a thousand years, returned by the second openings from the celestial and subterranean regions respectively. The return of the one company was marked by joy and gladness, by reason of the delights which they had enjoyed, and the spectacles of inconceivable beauty through which they had passed, in the course of their heavenly journey; they then entered for a while into a smiling meadow, there to hold converse with others of the just, both those whom they had known while in the body, and others whom they then met for the first time. The other company appeared all parched and dusty from their journey, weeping and dismayed at the remembrance of all they had seen and suffered during their passage beneath the earth, for there each sinner was requited tenfold for all the crimes that he had committed. Among these guilty ones, special mention is made of homicides: of those who had betrayed cities or armies, and brought them into captivity; of those who had committed impiety towards the gods, or inflicted violence upon their parents; all of whom were singled out for eximious penalties. Some indeed, such as bloody tyrants, and certain private persons who were stained with enormous

crimes, lost their return entirely; these were dragged back by wild-looking, fire-scathed men, fettered hand and foot, beaten down and flayed, carded with carding-combs, and finally cast down into Tartarus. With the exception, however, of this last and worst class of criminals, the punishments allotted to all were but of temporary duration, and the 'souls of a day' entered upon 'another period of mortal, death-fraught existence' under conditions imposed by 'the Destinies, daughters of Necessity.'

This account agrees in principle, though not in detail, with *Phædo*, p. 14. In the *Phædrus*, Plato speaks of the Eleusinian mysteries as a means of salvation, and that, apparently, by means of the reformation effected through a conscientious adherence to the instructions there imparted to the initiate, rather than by any thaumaturgic virtues inherent in the rites themselves; the true mystics, in his eyes, being those whom he terms, in the passage of the *Phædo* cited above, οἱ φιλοσοφίᾳ ἱκανῶς καθηράμενοι.

In the *Axiochos*, a dialogue once ascribed to Plato, but written since his time, Socrates is made to describe the abode of the righteous as a country of flowery meadows beside clear streams, and full of fruit-bearing trees. The light is full and radiant, the air soft and pleasant, free from extremes of heat and cold. Fit places are provided for philosophical discourse, and there are theatres where poets may recite their verses. The most honourable place is allotted to the initiated, who celebrate the sacred mysteries. This description, which exhibits a naïve adaptation of the most primitive Elysium to the intellectual requirements of a highly civilised society, is interesting merely as affording additional evidence as to the Athenian belief concerning the rewards of the righteous in a future life, and the intimate

connection between initiation into the mysteries, righteousness of life, and bliss in the life to come.

In this connection, perhaps, we ought not to pass over the Hades journey of Dionysos, as portrayed in the *Frogs* of Aristophanes, for, burlesque as it is, it repeatedly expresses views concerning the Otherworld coinciding closely, in substance, with the description contained in Plato's Vision of Er. The *Frogs* being prior in date to the *Republic*, this coincidence affords an independent testimony to the representative character of Plato's eschatological theories, the more so as Aristophanes, in his comedy, would naturally treat his subject in a form that he knew to be familiar to the audience. In this play, reference is made to a true Inferno for punishment of the graver sins. In ll. 145-151, Herakles affirms that they who had violated the laws of hospitality, beaten their mother, smitten their father on the cheek, perjured themselves, etc. etc., are condemned to wallow in a morass of mud and ordure, like the wrathful, the gloomy-minded, and the flatterers, whom Dante consigns to a similar doom in Cantos 7 and 18 of the *Inferno*.[1] On the other hand, 'happy bands of men and women' inhabit myrtle groves, 'in the midst of fairest light' (ll. 155-7), in the dingles of well-flowering meadows (347-8), and fields blooming with roses (448-9), in the enjoyment of dance and song and feast (369 *sqq.*). These are they who have been initiated into the mysteries (l. 158);

[1] This may possibly represent the conception originally prevailing in the mystic schools concerning the future life of mankind in general. (See Mr. Nutt hereon, *op. cit.*, i. 256.) If so, redemption from such a lot would be one of the most important objects to be compassed by the theurgic effects of initiation, until the growth of moral ideas in connection with the mysteries converted this 'place of filth and gloom' into a place of punishment for the wicked.

nor does this imply a merely ritual initiation, as may not only be inferred from a comparison with the passages from Plato, quoted above, and with the testimonies to the like effect cited by Sir W. M. Ramsay, but, further, appears from the words of the beatified mystics themselves: 'For us alone the sun shines, and the light is cheerful; for us, who are initiate, and have followed the way of righteousness in all our dealings, alike with strangers and with our own folk' (ll. 454-9).

Four centuries later, Plutarch takes up the tale. His treatise 'On the tardy vengeance of God' describes the vision of one Soleus, similar in character to that of Plato's Er, but, in many of its circumstances, approximating far more closely to the Christian visions. This Soleus had led a life of extreme wickedness, stained with all manner of vice and debauchery; he had been violent, unjust, and fraudulent in his dealings, and had squandered his patrimony by his extravagance. Beginning, it would seem, to realise his condition, he sent to the oracle of Amphilochus to inquire whether the remainder of his life should be better than the earlier part: the oracle replied that it should be better with him after his death. Sometime after this he fell down a precipice, and was taken up for dead; but three days later, having been carried out for burial, he came to himself just as he was being lowered into the grave, and sat up. Thenceforth he became a reformed character, and the remainder of his life was as exemplary for virtue as the earlier part had been for wickedness. He explained the reason of this conversion to his friends, by the story of his experiences during his temporary demise. His first sensation was as of a steersman swept into the sea by a sudden squall. Upon emerging,

he could discern, at first, nothing but stars of great magnitude, and very far apart, emitting radiant beams, upon which the soul rode as though in a chariot. Looking downward, he descried little fiery bubbles rising through the yielding air, which, bursting, released aerial forms of men and women, some of which mounted straight upward, with great velocity, while others whirled and span rapidly about in all directions. Among these latter he recognised several of his acquaintance, and tried to accost them, but they all avoided him. He was more successful with those spirits who mounted upright, among whom he recognised a kinsman who had died young. This spirit saluted him by the name of Thespesios, or Divine, saying that he must have come thither by order of the gods, seeing that he was manifestly alive, for the spirits of the dead neither cast shadows nor open and shut their eyelids.[1] Under his kinsman's guidance, Thespesios noted the various kinds of souls, and observed that while all were of transparent substance, some emitted a pure untroubled light, 'like the full moon in her greatest resplendence,' others being marked with long streaks, and others, again, repulsive with black splotches, like those on the skins of vipers. His guide accounted for this diversity by expounding the laws which regulate the condition of departed spirits. Adrasteia, daughter of Zeus and Necessity, was charged with a general superintendence over the punishments awarded to the guilty, and none of any rank or kind might

[1] In like manner, the spirits were amazed to see that Dante's body cast a shadow, as the souls of the dead did not (*Purg.*, iii. 88 *sq.*), and that he breathed (*ib.*, ii. 67-9). According to the old Persian belief, the souls of the beatified dead were to cast no shadows. See Sec. 2, *post*.

escape her vengeance; but guilt is of various degrees, so Adrasteia deputed the chastisement of offences, after their several kinds, to three Furies, or avenging spirits. The first of these, Poine, is the minister of temporal penalties, whereby minor sinners are purged of their guilt by their sufferings in this life. Those whose guilt is not to be purged so easily are delivered over, after death, to Dike, or avenging Justice, to be chastened in manner after described; while the absolutely incurable are abandoned to Erinnys, who, after pursuing them in their unavailing flight through countless torments, plunges them, at last, into an abyss of unspeakable horror. The souls which Dike takes in hand she first exposes naked to the gaze of their kin, in order, if these were virtuous, that the guilty soul may be stricken with the greater shame, or, if they too had been wicked, that their mutual remorse may be augmented by the sight of one another's disgrace and sufferings. She then afflicts them with sufferings 'as far surpassing in sharpness and severity all torments of the body, as reality surpasses an empty dream.' These punishments leave upon the soul stripes and scars which correspond to the gravity of the offences, and gradually disappear as the soul recovers its proper temperament; though certain souls, incapable of thorough reformation, are compelled to complete their expiation by inhabiting the bodies of brutes for a term. After this, the spirit conveyed Thespesios across a vast expanse over which he was borne upon a ray of light, as easily and swiftly as though upborne by an eagle, until he came to a yawning, unfathomable chasm. Here the force which had hitherto sustained him failed; his further course was stayed, and he, and several others in like case, were left hovering about the mouth of the

cavern, like birds that desired to enter in, but dared not. The interior of the chasm was all green with trees and grass, and adorned with flowers of every hue, which emitted a fragrance sweeter than is the fragrance of wine to them that love it, and amid all these dwelt the souls of the blest in the utmost mirth and good fellowship. Ere long, Thespesios was carried hence and brought to the place of punishment, and among the guilty he recognised certain of his own kin. Here his kindly spirit guide quitted him, and he was taken in charge by several grisly sprites, who thrust him forward and made him observe the torments that were inflicted on the wicked. In the enumeration of these, a quite Dantesque intention 'to make the punishment fit the crime' is apparent. For instance, certain who had cloaked a vicious life with fine professions were turned inside out, and compelled to wriggle onward in this guise; hypocrites were flayed and gashed, so as to reveal their inner nature; deadly enemies were twined together, and gnawed one another, as Ugolino gnawed the Archbishop of Pisa in the *Inferno*. Furthermore, there were three lakes—one of molten gold, one of lead, exceeding cold, and one of iron; demons armed with tongs, like smiths, plunged the souls of the avaricious into the lake of molten gold until they were heated through and through; then into the leaden lake until they were congealed like hail; and, finally, into the iron lake, where they were broken to pieces; after which they were reintegrated, for a repetition of their punishment. But most wretched was the case of them whose crimes had communicated a taint to their posterity; for when they deemed that the Divine justice had wrought its utmost upon them, they were met by the scarred and

distorted souls of their descendants, who, when their parents in grief and shame tried to shirk away from them, would seize and cling to them, sometimes, even in clusters like bees or bats, and would hale them back to renewed torments. Finally, the souls who were destined to return to earth in other bodies were wrought and forged like iron to fit them for their new state.

Plutarch's eschatology displays more system than is to be found in his predecessors, or even in many of the Christian visions; however, neither by Plutarch nor by Plato is the doctrine of the metempsychosis made to fit in quite perfectly with that of a state of eternal rewards and punishments which co-exists with it. Moreover, the purgatorial scheme, though highly elaborated, is conceived entirely with reference to the preparation of the soul for a renewed existence upon earth.

In following up the Greek development of the Vision legend to its completest exposition in Plutarch, we have passed by the Latin contributions to the subject, earlier than the Vision of Thespesios in point of date, though not in manner of treatment. A generation before the birth of Virgil, Cicero, in his *Somnium Scipionis*, had utilised the Vision as a vehicle of instruction; he, however, took natural philosophy for his theme, not eschatology.

Virgil, indeed, alone of Roman writers, made any contribution of real importance to the development of the Vision legend in literature, though that contribution is the flower and consummation of the legend as it appears in the purely classical tradition. For Virgil, saturated with the Hellenic culture, while remaining intensely Roman in his political views and national sentiment, remains free from any tincture of Oriental ideas. Earlier than Plutarch

by more than a century, his treatment of the subject is more modern in style and spirit, although, in his pictures of the other world, he repeats and combines the ideas which the ancients had held concerning it. His topography of the other world and of the approaches thereto agrees so closely with the humorous account in the *Frogs* of Aristophanes, which, evidently, he has no intention of copying, as to make it clear that both poets followed, in the main, a generally accepted tradition. So, too, in his descriptions of the Elysian Fields and of Tartarus, Virgil simply reproduces in substance the many similar descriptions which occur in the Greek poets and philosophers; and although he perfects these with many exquisite touches of his own, such original contributions of his belong rather to the domain of art than of eschatology. To take one instance, his enumeration of those righteous ones who are admitted to the seats of the blest, including, as it does,

> Inventas aut qui vitam excoluere per artes,
> Quique sui memores alios fecere merendo (*Aen.* vi. 663-4),

could only have been written in an age of self-conscious culture.

In his eschatology he is no less conservative than in his descriptions; witness the judgment of the dead by Minos (431 *sqq.*) and Rhadamanthus (567-9); the Fate of the Giants (580 *sqq.*), and other great offenders against the persons of the gods (601 *sqq.*), etc. etc. Like Plutarch, he inflicts heavier penalties upon those who have not expiated their guilt in this life (569). Moreover, he adopts, without being able to reconcile, the two conflicting theories held by his Grecian predecessors, and succeeds no better than Plato and his followers in fusing into a con-

sistent scheme the theory of perpetual rewards and punishments, and the collateral theory of the metempsychosis. In his treatment of the whole subject he betrays the influence of several of the later schools of Greek philosophy, and appears as a disciple of the Pythagoreans and Stoics as well as of Plato. At the same time, he displays his modernity alike in this eclectic and combining method, and in his general design, which is mainly artistic and literary; the Vision legend is not introduced with any hortatory or epideictic purpose, but, as in the earlier epic, forms merely a part of the general machinery of the poem, the several pictures and descriptive incidents of the Otherworld serving as frescoes and statues and gargoyles to adorn the main body of the edifice. An instance of this occurs in the picturesque grouping of the monsters and personified abstractions about the gates of Hades (*Aen.* vi. 273-294), which is conceived in a purely artistic spirit, no less than similar descriptions in Ariosto, Spenser, and Milton—we might almost add the Rape of the Lock. The same may be said of the City of Dis (548 *sqq.*). In such passages as these, Virgil indulges the Roman love of classification which appears in that tendency of the national religion to apportion all phases of nature and humanity among countless 'departmental deities,' ridiculed by several of the early Christian fathers, and notably by St. Augustine.[1]

In short, Virgil pressed into his service ideas, beliefs, and speculations drawn alike from the popular creeds and traditions, and from the philosophers of his own and earlier times. These he blended with consummate art into one harmonious whole, uniting antiquity of matter

[1] See Books IV. and VI. of his *De Civitate Dei.*

with modernity of treatment; and this completeness, aided by the combination of circumstances which led him to be regarded, in after times, as at once the epitome and the consummation of the Wisdom of the Ancients, and as, moreover, the divinely inspired herald of the coming transition from Paganism to Christianity, fitted him, at a time when the higher achievements of the human intellect had to be sought in classical antiquity, to become the *duce*, *maestro*, *guida*, that Dante found in him.

2. The Oriental Tradition

To Dante, Virgil appeared as the *sacer vates* in every sense of the term. As a poet, he towered above all other masters of the craft with whom Dante was acquainted; the testimony of ages had concurred in pronouncing him to be the repository and the exponent of the wisdom and learning of the ancient world, the only secular wisdom and learning to which the Middle Ages could turn for instruction and guidance. His fourth Eclogue had led the Church to acclaim him as one of those pagan seers to whom, jointly with the Sibyls, a share in the preparation for the Gospel had been committed by Divine appointment, while the sixth Aeneid directly associated him with the Sibyls themselves; finally, his great poem expressed the very spirit of that Roman Empire, of which the theory at least constituted the basis and framework of the ecclesiastical and civil polity of Christendom.

However, the task which Dante had set himself was nothing less, according to his own affirmation,[1] than to

[1] See Dante's Tenth Epistle, addressed to Can Grande della Scala, *Oxford Dante*, pp. 414 *sqq*.

expound the scheme of Divine Providence with respect to 'man, in so far as by his merit or demerit, by virtue of freewill, he is liable to remunerative or punitive Justice';[1] and by the moving picture of 'the condition of souls after death,'[2] 'to withdraw those living in the present life from the state of misery, and to conduct them unto the state of bliss.'[3] Having no desire to innovate upon the accepted beliefs, but rather to expound them in their utmost completeness, and in accordance with the fulness of knowledge, he naturally, and necessarily, availed himself of the materials preserved in Christian legend and popular tradition. These materials, in great measure, were the product of a fusion in the primitive Church of the speculations of the Hellenistic schools with an abundant heritage of analogous conceptions, which had been bequeathed to it by the earlier dispensation.

Long before the Christian era, a gradual process of accretion had been going on within the Jewish Church. In the days of their freedom, the people of Israel had addicted themselves but little to speculations concerning the Otherworld; during the captivity, however, they had come into contact with the richer mythology of the conquering nations, and after the return they fell under the influence of the various schools of philosophy, whose teaching, coloured with a theosophic tinge of continually increasing depth, permeated Syria in common with all other lands in which the Hellenistic culture prevailed. These various influences combined to produce a more spiritual type of religion, and a more elaborate eschatology, than had originally entered into the national faith of Israel.

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 416, ll. 173-5.
[2] *Ib.*, l. 169.
[3] *Ib.*, p. 417, l. 268.

The legend of a Vision of the Otherworld, in the East as in Hellas, had gradually developed from the most primitive beginnings, the first appearance of it occurring at a very early stage of popular tradition. The sacred books of Assyria, which themselves embodied much of the mythology of the earlier Accadian race, record the descent into Hades of the goddess Ishtâr, in quest of the waters of life, and of the national hero Gisdubar, who, like Odysseus and Aeneas, had gone thither seeking counsel from the shades of his ancestors. The abodes of the dead are approached through seven successive gates, guarded by monsters, and at each sits a porter who strips the souls that enter of some part of their raiment, until, after passing the last gate, they enter the world of shades as naked as when they came into the world they have just left. Gisdubar, who had been conveyed to the regions of the dead by a ferry, wherein we see the prototype of Charon's boat, was met on his arrival by monsters, between man and scorpion in shape, who directed him to the abode of the blest, situate 'at the mouth of the rivers.' He accordingly reached a grove by the seashore, at the estuary of a river, which was the Waters of Death. The trees in this grove were laden with precious stones, and guarded by two maidens, who shut the door against Gisdubar, because he bore the marks of the Divine wrath upon him. The Chaldean Elysium is described as a mountain lying beneath a sky of silver, and bearing crops without need of tillage. Here the souls of heroes and great men dwell for ever, reclining on couches, and drinking the waters of life.[1] These waters are represented in

[1] Lenormant, *Origines de l'Histoire*, vol. ii., cited by Ragozin, *Chaldæa*, p. 276, which work gives a compendious account of the

the story of the descent of Ishtâr as proceeding from under a golden throne, set in the midst of Hades, whereon sat the Spirits of Earth. In the grove of Eridu stood a Tree of Life, which appears to have been a World Tree, like Yggdrasil, and at the same time to have possessed the property of restoring life and strength to the individual. This tree was guarded by cherubim, whose heads were like the heads of hawks or eagles. From this Elysium a way led to Arali, the abode of the dead in general.

That abode is described as 'a gloomy realm beneath the earth, wherein the spirits of the dead flit about in darkness, with dust and mud for their food and drink.'[1] No hint is there of reward or punishment; the same dreary lot awaits the evil and the good alike so soon as they have quitted the light of day. The only attempt at a differential treatment is found in that aristocratic conception of Elysium which provides a place there for heroes and great men alone; a conception which the ancient inhabitants of Chaldæa shared with many races of very different type and origin, including several of the peoples of Central America and Polynesia, and, apparently, the early Aryans of Europe. In fact, the whole Chaldæan theory of the future life is very rudimentary, notwithstanding the great proficiency in several departments of culture to which the Accadian and Assyrian races had attained.

The Median conquest of Assyria and Babylon introduced the Hebrew exiles to the Zoroastrian religion, with its mythology richer than any which the Semitic or Pre-

subject. For fuller particulars see Sayce, *Hibbert Lectures*, 1887, Lectures iv. and v., and his article 'Chaldæa' in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, ed. 9, vol. iii.

[1] Sayce, *Hibbert Lectures*, 1887, p. 364.

Semitic races had evolved, and taught them an eschatology more elaborate than their own. The Avesta inculcated an ethic of high morality, and taught a very systematic theory of rewards and punishments in the future life. The experiences of the soul after death are described with great minuteness and copiousness of detail.

For three nights after death the soul sits by the head of the body, and all this time, if a righteous soul, experiences the consciousness of a delight as great as any that the whole living world together are capable of enjoying. At the end of this time it becomes aware of a sweet-scented wind blowing from the south, and feels a pleasant sense of being borne into a place of fragrant trees and verdure. The evil soul, on the contrary, experiences a corresponding amount of misery during its vigil, at the close of which it is assailed by a foul wind from the north. Its vigil ended, every soul, good or bad, had to cross the narrow Chinvat Bridge (*cinvata peretush*, the 'Accountant's Bridge'), where good and evil spirits struggled for possession of it, as did the angels and devils for the soul of Goethe's Faust, and as Michael and Satan contended for Moses, according to the tradition referred to in the Book of Jude (ver. 9). On reaching the bridge head, the soul of 'good thoughts, good deeds, good words, and good religion' was met by a lovely maiden, who was his own conscience. By her he was conducted to the place of Judgment,[1] and there a book was opened wherein had been kept a record of all the good and evil he had

[1] 'She makes the soul of the righteous one go up above the Hara-berezaiti (Mount Elborz), above the Kinvad bridge she places it, in the presence of the heavenly gods themselves.'—*Vendîdâd*, xix. 30; in Darmesteter's translation, *Sacred Books of the East*, iv. 219; and see Ragozin, *Media*, c. iv.

wrought in life. Upon his righteousness being admitted, he was received with acclamation by the celestial powers, and a place was allotted to him among their golden seats.[1] The Avestan Elysium is described as a holy mountain, its summit clothed with everlasting light, whither 'come neither night nor darkness, no cold wind and no hot wind, no deathful sickness, no uncleanness made by the Daêvas [demons], and the clouds cannot reach up to it.' At the foot of the mountain was a vast sea, a *mar del essere*, in the midst of which grew the White Haôma (Indian *Soma*), the Tree of Life. 'The waters stand there boiling, boiling up in the heart of the sea Pûitika, and when cleansed therein they run back from the sea Pûitika to the tree *boura-kasha*, towards the well-watered tree, whereon grow the seeds of my plants of every kind.'[2] A godlike bird sits on that tree; when he flies off a thousand branches grow out of it, and when he alights upon it he breaks off a thousand branches.[3] Of this mystical bird, the Bundehesh, one of the later of the sacred books, says, 'The bird Karshipta dwells in the heavens; were he living on the earth, he would be the king of birds. He brought the Religion into the Var of Yima, and recites the Avesta in the language of birds.'[4] With

[1] In the Avesta we meet with an idea which is prominent in Jewish and Christian examples of the Vision legend. If, at the balance of any soul's account, when his good and evil deeds were weighed one against the other, the scales were equally poised, he was reserved for the last Judgment in a place set apart for his like.

[2] *Vendîdâd*, p. 55.

[3] *Loc. cit.*, footnote.

[4] *Vendîdâd*, p. 20, note. A similar bird occurs frequently in the Hindu mythology. The Accadian 'divine storm-bird' stole the lightning from heaven, and was thereby enabled to impart to man the knowledge of fire, and of divination by lightning flashes.—Sayce, *Hibbert*

this we may compare the angel described in Rev. xiv. 6 as an *angel di Dio*, flying 'in the midst of Heaven, bearing the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth.'

Distinct from the Elysium of the Gods, and from the abode of the dead, is Yima's Heaven of Light, a *Vara*, or *hortus conclusus*, which is a reduplication of the realm over which he presided in the Golden Age, before this world was created.[1] The Vara was constructed by 'the fair Yima, the good shepherd,' at the command of 'the Maker, Ahura Mazda,' in view of the destruction that was to come upon the material world, which had become corrupt, so that he might preserve therein the seeds of men and all other living beings, of plants, 'and of red blazing fires,' in order that the earth might be replenished. Within this Vara Yima made a reservoir, the banks of which furnished an unfailing supply of food, and were the haunt of birds. To this happy region, as we have seen, the mystical bird Karshipta brought the Avesta, and preached it to the denizens, whose life was one of perpetual mirth and gladness, exempt from heat and cold, sickness, old age, and death; 'and there [was] no hump-backed, none bulged forward, there; no impotent, no lunatic; no one malicious, no liar; no one spiteful, none jealous; no one with decayed tooth, no leprous to be pent up, nor any of the brands wherewith Angra Mainya stamps the bodies of mortals.'[2]

Lectures, 1887, 293-4. The Babylonian Semites identified this bird with their culture-god Zu, who, in form of a bird, robbed the gods of the 'tablets of destiny' (*op. cit.*, 295-7). All the world over, the part of Prometheus has been played by a supernatural bird, such as Yehl, the crane, of the Thlinkeets; Pundgel, the eagle-hawk, of Australia, etc.

[1] *Vendîdâd*, vi. 15-16. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

It is impossible not to be struck with the resemblance which this passage bears to chapter 35 of the *Fis Adamnáin*. This resemblance must be purely accidental, but it is none the less worthy to be noted; for there is reason to suspect that a careful record of the similitudes and coincidences which so frequently occur where imitation or direct derivation is impossible, might tend to discourage the arbitrary assumption that derivation must needs exist, in cases where it may be possible, but is not proved.

It will be noted that Yima's Vara is not represented in the *Vendîdâd* as the abode of the dead, or connected in any way with the Otherworld; it there appears rather as a Platonic ideal world, containing the forms, types, or ideas after which the material world is to be created, or, rather, restored. Yima, too, far from being one of the principal gods, appears only as a subordinate Demiourgos, subject to 'the Maker,' Ahura Mazda. Hence it might seem to be foreign to our subject; in reality, however, it is not so. However the legend may have been explained by later philosophic speculations—probably under Greek influences, as to which later—there is no doubt that in its original form it was meant for a picture of the world of the happy dead. Internal evidence of itself might convince us of this. The whole conception of a supernatural country, inhabited by human beings who lead a happy life amid conditions which reproduce the present world, but under a brighter and serener aspect—a country, moreover, which reproduces a traditionary golden age—is entirely in accord with the familiar Elysium of the Aryan peoples. But more than this, in the ancient Persian mythology Yima is identical with the Indian Yama, the ruler of the departed, who crossed the rivers, leading the fathers after him, and now

presides over the spirits of the dead in a land beyond the sunset. Here, in a land of soft winds and cool rains, traversed by perennial streams of milk and honey, and illumined by unfailing light, he sits under the Tree of Life, drinking the Soma (the Persian Haôma) from its branches, and surrounded by the souls of the righteous, all whose desires are there accomplished.

The Persian religion, in the stage at which it is preserved in the Avesta, spiritualised much of the primitive Aryan mythology, allegorising many of its deities into personifications of good and evil principles and qualities. This notwithstanding, many of the more primitive elements of the older religion were retained, and were reinforced with a number of animistic beliefs derived from the Turanian peoples; and when the Zoroastrian religion experienced that process of corruption which commonly affects all 'Religions of the Book,' in greater or less degree, these lower and more ancient elements asserted themselves, so that the practical side of the religion consisted in great measure of Shamanistic practices designed to propitiate an innumerable host of good and evil spirits.[1]

The question how far the eschatological conceptions of the later Judaism may have been affected by contact

[1] Speaking of the effects which the conquest of Babylon by the Persians produced upon the religion of the latter, Professor Dill remarks: 'The conquerors, as so often happens, were to some extent subdued by the vanquished. Syncretism set in; the deities of the two races were reconciled and identified. The magical arts and the astrolatry of the valley of the Euphrates imposed themselves on the purer Mazdean faith and never released their hold, although they failed to check its development as a moral system.'—*Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, 1904, p. 587, where the author cites Cumont, *Monuments relatifs aux Mystères de Mithra*, and Gasquet, *Le culte de Mithra*.

with Zoroastrianism obviously depends, in great measure, upon the date to be assigned to the first appearance in the Persian religion of the foregoing theories concerning the future life. The Avesta consists of several books of different character and of different dates. Darmesteter[1] holds that it was compiled, in its present form, during the first and second centuries of our era, although a great part of the material embodied was of much earlier date. He further considers that the Zoroastrian belief received its ultimate form under the influence of the schools of Greek philosophy, with which the Persians were in close contact in the centuries following the conquests of Alexander, and more particularly, that the final redaction of the Avesta was indebted for its more spiritual and philosophic elements to 'Neo-Platonism, that is to say, that philosophic compound inspired by the spirit of Plato, which permeated all the speculations of the centuries before Christ, and long after, and which finds its first and most influential exponent in Philo Judæus. In Philo is found, as far as I know, the first exact parallel to the Avestan doctrine,' etc. (p. lv.).

The pronouncements of such a scholar as Darmesteter upon any *matter of fact* belonging to a department of learning of which he was so weighty an authority can only be accepted by us without reserve. At the same time, it may be permissible to consider how far the above inferences are supported by the author's own arguments, or rather, the extent to which those inferences may be held to apply. It is certain that the Hellenic, or Hellenistic, philosophies exercised great influence throughout the more civilised parts of Asia during the existence of the

[1] *Vendîdâd*, Introduction, sec. v.

Alexandrian Empire, and for long after its dissolution. It will be observed, however, that Darmesteter, while assuming that the Avesta was moulded by those Platonic doctrines 'which pervaded all the speculations of the centuries before Christ,' goes on to say that this speculation 'finds its first . . . exponent in Philo Judæus.' Now, Philo Judæus flourished in the middle of the first century of our era, and the other most celebrated founders, or rather precursors, of the Neo-Platonic school were of later date; Plutarch of Chæronea belonging to the latter part of the same century, Numenius to the second century A.D. If, then, 'in Philo is found . . . the first exact parallel to the Avestan doctrine,' it might conceivably be argued with regard to those parts, at any rate, of the Avestan doctrine to which the author ascribes a Neo-Platonic origin on the strength of their resemblance to the system of Philo, that such resemblance should be explained by a quite opposite derivation theory.[1] The further question also presents itself, whether the views of Philo and his school obtained so rapid an acceptance in the East, beyond the bounds of the Roman Empire, as greatly to affect the substance of so ancient and important a creed as Zoroastrianism, as expounded in a recension of the sacred books of that religion made almost immediately after Philo's death, if not then actually in progress.

It is enough to suggest these questions, without

[1] The cult of Mithra, which, in the earlier ages of the Empire, extended not only over the Mediterranean littoral, but throughout all Europe so far as the Roman legions went, even to Yorkshire and the forests of Pannonia, was full of symbolism, the meaning and even the nomenclature of which are only to be explained by the Persian religion, in which the cult originated, although it came to receive an interpretation consonant with the Neo-Platonic theories.

attempting their solution; we are only concerned to see whether Darmesteter's theory, if correct, is incompatible with the existence in the earlier form of the Avestan religion of elements which may reasonably be presumed to have affected the development of our legend through Hebrew channels.

Darmesteter himself does not attempt to set up any hard and fast theory on the subject. In his own words: 'Without pressing conclusions too hard as to facts and dates, this much can be safely inferred . . . that Platonic doctrines had found their way to Persia in the first centuries of the Christian era' (*loc. cit.*). In particular, he traces Platonic influences in the spiritual and allegorical manner in which the creations of the old Aryan mythology are dealt with in the Avesta, and in the prevalence of a similar tone in the Avestan cosmology. The most notable instances of this mode of thought occur in the Var of Yima, which is practically a Platonic world of Ideas,[1] and in the Amesha Spentas, or Bountiful Immortals, who, we are told, first assume the character in which they now appear in the Avesta under the influence of Neo-Platonic theories.[2]

[1] He further suggests that the original notion of the Var as a place of refuge for the seeds of things from a coming destruction is borrowed from the Judaic account of Noah. This would seem to be a very strained inference from a slight analogy. The Biblical account finds much closer parallels not only in the Chaldæan traditions, but in the Vedic account of Manu and the Rishis being saved from the deluge in an ark containing the seeds of things, not to speak of deluge myths in the East and in the West, as the Thlinkeets, the Natchez, and other tribes of North America; the Muyscas and Orinoco Indians of South America; the Samoans, Tahitans, etc.

[2] He assumes that Vohu Mano (Good Thought) is the Neo-Platonic

At the same time, Darmesteter points out that the ancient Achæmenian religion already possessed the fundamental doctrine of the conflict between the powers of good and evil, and the final triumph of the good, and of those that had adhered to it. The duration of the universe is already divided into four periods of 3000 years each,[1] in the last of which Ahriman was to be subdued, and men were to 'live happily, needing no food, and casting no shadow.'[2] He further states, as we have seen, that the Avesta was compiled from various works of different dates; these would necessarily embody much matter of older date than themselves—very much older, we are warranted in believing, alike by the analogy of other religions, and by the nature of many of the beliefs preserved in the Avesta. In speaking of the books of which the Avesta is composed, Darmesteter gives it as his opinion that 'the Vendîdâd may be taken as the best specimen of the text imbued with the pre-Alexandrian spirit';[3]

Logos, and if so, that the other Amesha Spentas are of post-Alexandrian development, and he goes on to find parallels for them too in the rest of the seven emanations enumerated by Philo. However, even if the parallels are so close as to compel the conclusion that the character and functions ascribed to the Amesha Spentas in their latest form are due to Neo-Platonic influences—and even this is not shown very convincingly—it by no means follows that the very conception of the seven celestial powers is due to the same source.

[1] We have here, in Persia, an anticipation of the Neo-Platonic æons before the time of Plato himself—a conception which can hardly be referred to the earlier theory of the kind propounded by Hesiod.

[2] *Vendîdâd*, Introduction, p. liv, and see p. lxi. For the dead casting no shadow, cp. Plutarch's Vision of Thespesios.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. lxv.

and it is precisely the Vendîdâd that contains the greater part, though not all, of the doctrines concerning the Otherworld, of which an abstract has been given above.

We are thus warranted in assuming that the Persians had developed a tolerably complete theory of the Otherworld, and of the rewards and punishments there meted out in recompense for man's conduct in this life, at a date early enough to influence Hebrew thought, before either nation had come under Hellenic influences.

In some respects, Darmesteter's conclusions even favour this presumption, for if we can attribute to Neo-Platonic influences the ideal character which Yima's Vara bears in the Vendîdâd, we can understand at how recent a date the Vara came to be divested of the character of an Elysium, or abode of the happy dead, such as is the realm of Yama, of which, in other respects, it is so complete a counterpart.

In this connection, it should also be noted that the Avestan doctrine of the Otherworld gives no place to the theory of Rebirth, which is a principal article of the Platonic and Pythagorean schools, and might have been expected to occupy a prominent place in the Zoroastrian eschatology, had this been moulded to any great extent by Greek philosophy. In holding the finality of man's lot after death, the Persian doctrine agrees with that of the Jews, and, apparently, of the Chaldæans.

However much, moreover, the elaborate dæmonic system contained in the Avesta may be indebted to Neo-Platonism for its more spiritual elements, it is neither certain nor probable that the substance of it can be derived from the same source. The eschatology of the Avesta contains much that cannot be referred to Neo-

Platonic ideas, even if it must be admitted that these were widely enough accepted, in a sufficiently systematised form, at the date when the Avesta was completed, while many parts of it exhibit both Indian and Chaldæan analogies. It is enough, in this place, merely to refer to the Tree of Life and the Waters of Life, to both of which Indian, and yet closer Chaldæan, parallels exist; the mystical bird Karshipta, which is an Indian myth; the Elysium of the Gods, which is little more than an improvement on the Chaldæan Elysium; Mount Elborz, as the Persian Holy Mountain, corresponding to the Indian Mount Meru; the World Sea, which renews and purifies all created things, and is akin to the ocean out of which a new world was churned by the Hindu gods. The Var of Yima, as we have already seen, is the same as Yama's blissful realm. The divine beings which appear in the Avesta in the guise of personified abstractions, are the deities of Aryan mythology travestied presumably, according to the hypothesis, under Neo-Platonic influences. So, apparently, the Amesha Spentas, whatever tincture of philosophic culture they may have acquired through contact with Hellenistic thought, were originally identical with the 'Seven Magnificent Deities,' who were the Chaldæan Gods of the Elements. We have already seen that the Seven Spirits of Earth were said to have their seats on golden thrones in the midst of the Chaldæan Elysium, even as the Amesha Spentas in the Avestan Heaven. Indeed, it is not necessary to have recourse to Neo-Platonism to account for the vast hierarchies of good and evil spirits which are found in the Avesta, and still more in the books of the Rabbis. The Chaldæan mythology, of which both Jews and Persians had undergone the influence long before their contact with

Hellenistic culture, was abundantly supplied in this respect. Besides the seven principal deities (to whom, according to Lenormant, seven malignant deities were opposed), Professor Sayce[1] alludes to 50 great gods, 300 spirits of heaven, and 300 spirits of earth, beside countless minor spirits of many kinds; while the later Assyrian authorities, he says, raised the number of *great* gods of heaven and earth to 65,000.

Now the district occupied by the Jews during the captivity had been a focus of the religion of Chaldæa, both in the Accado-Sumerian and in the Semitic periods, and afterwards became an important part of the Persian empire. The canonical books and the Apocrypha of the Old Testament alike prove that close relations subsisted between the Jews and both their Persian and Assyrian rulers, and exhibit traces of the influence exercised by the latter upon the Jewish writers. Thus it appears no rash assumption, that it is to these sources we must ascribe the substance, at least, of those doctrines enunciated by the later Jewish writers, for which there is no authority in the earlier writings of their nation, but which correspond to ideas already existing among nations with which they lived in close and intimate contact.

We have been discoursing at somewhat tedious length upon points which may not appear to be directly relevant to our subject, seeing that the Vision legend receives no development later than the very primitive legends of Ishtâr and Gisdubar. Nevertheless, it is in the Chaldæan and Persian religions that we find many of the notions and images which furnished material to Jewish and Christian authors alike, when, under Hellenistic influences, they

[1] Article 'Chaldæa,' in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. iii.

took up the Vision legend as a vehicle of instruction. Many of these conceptions continued to subsist in all subsequent versions of the legend, even in its latest forms. It is now time to take stock of what we have gained, and to note what features of the Vision of Adamnán, though immediately derived by the author, as we shall see later on, from the tradition current in the Church from the earliest days of Christianity, or before it, correspond to similar conceptions which exist in the Oriental tradition, while they are not represented in the classical tradition, or, if in some cases they may be found there, it is in a form which presents fewer and fainter analogies to the later developments.

In the first place, the earliest Chaldæan legends already exhibit the rudiments of that sevenfold division of the Heavens which was generally adopted by Jewish and Christian writers alike, and ultimately received the sanction of the scholastic divines. The science, if it can be so called, of numbers is one of the most fertile of the many fields which a perverted ingenuity has devoted to the assiduous cultivation of tares, and hardly any number has been accredited with a greater variety of significance than the number seven, by reason, doubtless, of the primitive astronomical theory of the seven planets. Dante, indeed, raised the number of heavens to ten, in accordance with the astronomical system that had come to be adopted in his day, on the authority of the ancient cosmologists, introduced to the mediæval students through Arab channels; to the original seven planetary heavens he added three others—the Heaven of fixed stars, the crystalline Heaven, and the Empyrean. We may remark, in passing, that the Samoan cosmology agrees with Dante in this

tenfold division of the Heavens. In the Chaldæan mythology this conception of a sevenfold division occurs in germ only, but the Seven Magnificent Deities—the precursors of the seven Amesha Spentas, and the seven Archangels of the Hebrew and Christian divines—who preside over the several powers of nature, lend themselves easily to the attribution of separate territories in the celestial domain. The beginning of this phase is apparent in the seven portals, each guarded by a porter, through which Ishtâr had to pass on her way to the abode of the gods and of the dead, even as the spirit of Adamnán had to pass through seven 'Heavens,' so-called, the door of each being kept by an angelic warder; while the symbolism embodied in the gradual spoliation of Ishtâr of her earthly raiment is analogous to the gradual purgation of the soul from its earthly stains in the Christian legend.

The idea of a Tree of Life growing in the spirit world is of wide diffusion, and appears at an early date in the mythologies of the Aryans, Semites, and Turanians alike, and the Hebrews in particular needed not to have recourse for it to the mythology of either the Chaldæans or Persians. Nevertheless several of the Rabbinical legends, as, for instance, that of the journey of Seth to Paradise in the Legend of the Death of Adam, deal with the subject, associating with it the Waters of Life, in a manner less in agreement with the Scriptural account than with the Chaldæan myth, which must have been made familiar to the Jews during the captivity, not merely by oral and written tradition but through the medium of the pictorial art which would meet their eyes on every side, and in which this was a favourite subject. In Christian legend, moreover, the Tree of Life in Paradise is constantly

introduced in connection with a mystical bird, or birds, as in Adamnán's Vision. The frequency of this association may be explained in part by the great popularity in early Christian symbolism of the Phœnix legend, in connection with the palm-tree and the Tree of Life; nevertheless the birds of Christian legend differ in several conspicuous respects from the traditional notion of the Phœnix, and approach far more closely to the Karshipta, the sacred bird of the Persians, adopted by them from the old Indo-Aryan mythology. This bird, as we have seen, perched upon the sacred tree in Heaven, and he brought the Avesta to the Var of Yima and preached it there, even as the birds of Adamnán and other Christian writers sang the Hours in Paradise; where, moreover, they are constantly associated with the preaching of the Gospel by Enoch and Elias, who themselves exhibit some faint analogies to Yima.

The World Sea at the foot of the Holy Mountain in the Avestan Paradise, wherein all things defiled are cleansed and made new, reminds us of that Crystal Sea which appears in the literature of the Christian Church, and, in particular, is introduced with such magnificent effect in the Book of the Revelation.[1]

The Avestan eschatology already contains the idea, unassociated with that doctrine of rebirth by which it is accompanied in the philosophies of India and Hellas alike, of a special temporary provision for the souls of those mingled characters who are not yet fitted for an eternity of either bliss or bale—an idea in accordance with the teaching of the later Hebrew and the Christian divines, including the author of the *Fis Adamnáin*; and as in their writings, so in the Avesta, is that provisional state made to last until the

[1] Revelation xv. 2, and cf. *Fis Adamnáin*, ch. 11.

destruction of the corrupt world and the final reign of the good principle.

The guardian angel which the Jewish and Christian divines agree in assigning to each individual soul, resembles, if it does not wholly coincide with, the Fravashi of the Persians, which would seem to have been a kind of spiritual double of the man, distinct, apparently, from his own soul, yet not so entirely separate from him as if it had been a higher spirit intrusted with the charge of him.

Thus the Jewish writers of the centuries immediately preceding our era found ready to their hands a rich store of traditions relating to the lot of man in the Otherworld, formed by the combination of Oriental dogmas with the classical tradition in the forms in which this was preserved in the Hellenistic schools of Asia. Before, however, we proceed to trace the manner in which these blended traditions entered into subsequent versions of the legend, it may not be superfluous to ask what, if any, contributions were made by the remaining great centre of ancient religion and culture, Egypt.

To this question it is difficult to reply with certainty. While one of the great centres of the Neo-Judaic learning was the School of Babylon, set in the very focus of the ancient Oriental creeds, minor centres existed in every city of Syria and Asia Minor, in each one of which a thriving Jewish colony applied itself eagerly to the absorption of Hellenistic ideas and culture; but the centre, *par excellence*, of Jewish learning in the West was the flourishing and cultured Jewish community at Alexandria. However, the intellectual life of this school drew its nutriment from Greece, and the whole tone and character of its speculative

philosophy, as of its literary culture, so far as it was not Hebraic, was Hellenistic, not Egyptian, and possibly more Hellenistic than Hebraic. At one time it was customary to refer the mystical speculations of the philosophic schools, Pagan, Jewish, and Christian alike, of the centuries in question, to the 'wisdom of the Egyptians,' and to regard Alexandria as the mart, so to speak, where ideas of Egyptian growth were exchanged for others of kindred nature imported from Greece and Asia. It has now long been recognised that this theory is true to a very limited extent only, and that Alexandria was, in the main, a Grecian city, and indebted to Greece for the origins of its learning and culture, whatever new developments these assumed in the fertile soil to which they had been transplanted. During the rule of the Ptolemies, and, afterwards, of the Romans, the prevailing attitude of the Greek colonists was not altogether unlike that of the English in India; they held themselves as a class apart, and intermixed but little with the native population, for whose religion and institutions they would seem to have often manifested a contempt, in which, doubtless, ignorance had its share. At the same time, we might err in the opposite direction by concluding that Egyptian ideas wholly failed to influence those who lived and wrote in such close proximity to the chief centres of Egyptian life. Even in our own day, the philosophy of the Upanishads, and the teaching of the Buddha, in however distorted a form, have crossed the pale which divides East from West, and the pale between Egypt and Hellas was far more pervious. Both nations professed a complex polytheism, with so great a resemblance between the two pantheons, that even before the time of Herodotus certain deities in the one had come to be regarded as identical

with their counterparts in the other;[1] the traditions of the Greeks claimed an Egyptian origin for several of the national gods and heroes; a belief that the Hellenic religion was indebted for some of its more esoteric elements to the same source was expressed by Plato, and had been held by his successors, and we have seen that some of the most authoritative modern scholars accept this opinion as well founded, however much they may differ as to the amount of the debt. These circumstances would necessarily predispose the more inquiring minds among the Alexandrian Greeks and Hellenised Hebrews, in an age when speculation concerning the hidden things of life, and of the life after death, was a subject of paramount interest, to examine the theories which had been held on that subject by the nations, the orgiastic and magical side of whose religions was offering just then so powerful an attraction to the vulgar of the Hellenic world. Nor are we without direct evidence of contact between the two systems of thought. Ptolemy I. (abdicated 285 B.C.), acting partly under the inspiration of Timotheus, an authority on the Eleusinian mysteries, attempted to fuse the Greek and Egyptian cults into one eclectic system.[2] The poet Callimachus, who held the post of librarian (*c.* 260-240 B.C.) to Ptolemy Philadelphus and his son Euergetes, acquired for the Alexandrian library Egyptian as well as Greek and Hebrew books; and his successor in office, Eratosthenes, the astronomer and geometrician, was also addicted to Egyptian studies. Indeed, the Plutarchian treatise 'On Isis and Osiris' is one instance out of many of the interest felt by cultivated Greeks in Egyptian beliefs, which had long taken

[1] Herodotus, *Euterpe*, ii. 156.
[2] Dill, *op. cit.*, p. 561.

their place as parts of the popular cult in many places in Greece and Asia.[1] On the other hand, the initiation of even a few cultured Egyptians into Hellenic learning would suffice to further an interchange of ideas between the two races.

In any case, the Egyptian eschatology offers many points of resemblance to certain of the later Jewish beliefs, and to Christian doctrine. Among these is a belief in the judgment to be passed on every soul after death, whereby the wicked were condemned to be devoured by the 'Eater of the Dead,' while the righteous were led through a series of perilous adventures to a region of perpetual happiness, where, in a place surrounded by a wall of steel, they led an existence which is the reproduction of a happy life on earth, conceived in the usual terms of a pagan Elysium, with a due allowance of even the grosser pleasures.[2]

This resemblance extends to several points of detail. Among the trials through which the soul must pass are enumerated rivers and atmospheres of fire, and the assaults of demons and monsters; it is even affirmed, in agreement with the teaching of certain Jewish Rabbis, and of the early Christian divines, that all departed souls, good and bad alike, must undergo these trials, but the good passed

[1] Athenian colonists were settled in the Nile delta in the seventh century B.C. at latest, and at an even earlier date intercourse had been maintained between Greece and Egypt by the medium of Greek traders to the Nile, and Greek mercenaries in the Egyptian service. The cult of Isis was introduced into Attica, at the Peiraios, in the fourth century B.C. (Foucart, *Associations réligieuses*, etc., p. 83), and extended over the Grecian islands and the mainlands of Greece and Ionia.

[2] Budge, *Book of the Dead*, 1901, I. lxv., and *Ib.* lxvii. *sqq.* Le Page Renouf, *Hibbert Lectures*, 1879, pp. 180-1.

through them speedily, and without pain. This, we have seen, is the teaching of the *Fis Adamnáin*, and occurs, as we shall see, in other of the Christian Visions.

Indeed, the Rabbinical schools developed the Purgatorial theory to a considerable extent. Thus, we find mention of seven lodges of Hell, one below another, through which the soul had to pass successively, being tormented on its way by fire, scourging, showers of hail, exposure to alternate heat and cold, etc., until all its guilt was purged away. This process finds its exact counterpart in the *Fis Adamnáin*, save that the Rabbis called the seven stages or lodges Hells, instead of Heavens, with at least equal propriety. The fundamental conception, and also the nature of the sufferings endured by the dead in the course of their purgation, are capable of being referred either to an Egyptian or a Hellenic origin, though probably the latter assumption would be correct; the seven successive lodges are evidently the amplification of a Rabbinical tradition borrowed from the Chaldæan mythology.

As to the ultimate fate of the wicked, opinions were divided; some of the Rabbis taught the final redemption of all, after undergoing the necessary Purgatorial discipline; the school of Shammai held that at the Judgment mankind would be divided into three categories—the good, the bad, and those of mixed character, and that the last would be cleansed by Purgatorial sufferings.[1] The germs of this threefold division are contained both in the Avestan and the Platonic doctrines. The Kabbalists even had an inkling of the Treasury of Merits of the Saints, to whom they

[1] According to one Rabbi Leo, the wicked are tortured by fire and otherwise, some without hope of remission, others for a time only. —E. Cowper, *Apocryphal Gospels*, Introduction, lxviii.

accorded the privilege of covering with their garments, and bringing up to Heaven with themselves, those sinners who had repented before death, but too late to make expiation. Here, too, we have a conception which recurs in the *Fís Adamnáin* and elsewhere, namely, the special provision for tardy penitents, though in the Christian Visions the mode of their redemption is different.

It is thus difficult to assign with certainty to the Egyptian religion any specific article of the eschatology of the later Jewish and early Christian writers; nevertheless, it does not follow that their contact with that religion was without effect in determining the shape which their eschatology actually assumed. It must be remembered that speculations of the kind which characterised the Orphic, Platonic, Pythagorean, and Neo-Platonic schools were not the only forms in which Greek thought entered into the intellectual evolution of that age. In the prevailing welter of Eastern creeds and Western philosophies, all the principal philosophic schools of Greece were represented, and, in particular, the Stoics and Epicureans exercised an influence both wide and deep.[1] If, then, the class of ideas to which it is convenient to give the general name, Neo-Platonic, obtained so complete an ascendency in the evolution of Judaic and Christian eschatology, the presumption is that this result was largely owing to the affinity of Neo-Platonism with the Oriental creeds with whose doctrines and mythology

[1] At a somewhat later date, the doctrine of the end of the world by fire, held by many of the Stoics who, in the first century of the Empire, represented the best and most serious side of Pagan thought, would appear to have encouraged the bent of Christian teaching in that direction rather by familiarising the subject to men's minds than by the contribution of any new matter.

Neo-Judaic speculation was so deeply imbued; and if, moreover, this speculation differed from Neo-Platonism in certain fundamental points wherein it agreed with the Oriental doctrines, the presumption is no less strong that it owed its original trend in this direction to the forces by which it was moulded in pre-Hellenistic times, and that such trend would be confirmed by subsequent contact with any school of thought in which similar views were prevalent.[1] The most important point wherein the eschatology of the orthodox Rabbinical schools differed from that of the Greek mythical philosophies was the rejection by the

[1] The speculative writings of the Rabbis belong to a time when the Jewish schools of learning had fallen under the spell of Hellenism. So preponderating was the influence of the latter that Professor Percy Gardner appears inclined to trace the entire Hades theory to the Orphic rites, and suggests a 'great probability that the Christian doctrine of the Descent into Hades, together with the imagery in which the future world was presented to the early Christian imagination, was derived neither from a Christian nor a Jewish, nor even a Hellenic source, but from the mystical lore of Dionysos and Orpheus.' —*Contemporary Review*, March 1895. So Mr. Alfred Nutt, speaking of the Elysium of the Christian apocryphal writers, considers that the 'source must be sought for not in Jewish but in Greek conceptions,' and that the Christian Heaven derives immediately from the Hellenic one.—*Voyage of Bran*, i. 256, and see ch. xi. generally. With all respect to these eminent authorities, I would submit that it would be going too far absolutely to exclude from those parts of late Jewish and early Christian eschatology which deal with the theory of Hades, including the Descent thither, and with the description of Elysium, all indebtedness to the Oriental creeds which have contributed so much to that eschatology in other respects. With this reservation, we may readily agree with Mr. Nutt that 'Christian eschatology, as so much else of Christian doctrine, is emphatically a product of the fertilising influence of Hellenic philosophy and religion upon Eastern thought and fancy' (*op. cit.*, p. 281); only contending that Eastern thought and fancy contributed much of the raw material.

former of the doctrine of rebirth, which predominated, though not to the absolute exclusion of the doctrine of finality, in the teaching of the mystical schools from the seventh century B.C. at latest.

In this respect, as we have seen, the philosophy no less than the religion of the Jews was mainly in accord with the views held by the Chaldæans, both Accadian and Semitic, and taught by the Avesta. In this view they would be further confirmed if, in the Alexandrian period, they fell under the influence of the native Egyptian religion, as distinguished from the later syncretism wherein that religion had become blended with allegories and orgiastic rites pertaining to Asiatic myths and Greek theosophy. Egypt, indeed, was formerly regarded as the very home of the doctrine of rebirth; it would appear, however, that the doctrine of the ancient Egyptian religion was of a directly contrary import. The idea of transformation, indeed, was familiar to it, but this is a different thing from transmigration, and Mr. Le Page Renouf states most emphatically that although the beatified spirit received powers which enabled him to visit any part of the universe in any form, the sentence pronounced at the judgment was final, and the soul was neither purged nor punished by a renewed life on earth.[1] This contradiction between the doctrine of rebirth which prevailed in the Greek mysteries, and the Egyptian dogma of the eternity of man's lot after judgment, lends support to the contention, referred to in the previous section, that the ethical and eschatological sides of Greek religion were in great part of native development, however much the mystical schools may have been indebted to foreign influences in their origin.

[1] Le Page Renouf, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

Having thus got rid of a discussion which, however tedious, appeared necessary in order to make us understand whence and of what kind were the non-Hellenic and non-Scriptural elements which entered into subsequent developments of the Vision Legend, we now come to the concrete forms which that legend assumed in the Jewish and the early Christian Churches. In tracing the progress of the legend in these two Churches, it seems convenient to deal with the whole subject together in the following section, for not only do the principal Jewish examples which have reached us contain additions made to them in Christian times, but the versions belonging respectively to the two eras are practically homogeneous, alike in their fundamental doctrines, and, for the most part, in their method of treatment.

3. The Ecclesiastical Tradition

A Vision of the Otherworld was a favourite subject with the writers of the apocryphal books of the Jews. In the oldest of these, the so-called Book of Enoch, which is also the oldest non-pagan book of this class that has come down to us, the subject is treated at greater length and with more elaborate detail than in any other contribution to the Vision legend prior to the *Commedia*. The last quarter of the second century B.C. has been assigned as the most probable date of the greater part of it, though in its present form it evidently contains post-Christian additions. Quoted in the Epistle of St. Jude (vv. 14-15), and known to the early Christians, it was long believed to have disappeared at a subsequent date, and was only recovered in

recent times in an Ethiopian version, from which it has been repeatedly translated with commentaries.[1]

It relates, with copious detail, how the seer was caught up by a vehement wind and upraised to Heaven, where he was taken in charge by the Archangel Michael, who revealed to him Hell and Paradise, the mysteries of nature and of revelation, and the life to come. In the general scope of his work the author anticipates Dante in several particulars which are not common to the Vision writers in general. He pays much attention to topographical detail in his descriptions of Hell, for which he takes the Valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, as his model; but although the accuracy of his description has been attested by several travellers who have surveyed the valley, he is far from manifesting the precision and visualising power of the Florentine. Like Dante, moreover, he discusses various points of theology, and delivers long dissertations upon natural philosophy and the physical scheme of the universe. Here, too, he is vague and indistinct, as also in his description of the future state of the lost, wherein he displays none of Dante's symmetry and orderly arrangement. We may note several points of detail wherein the *Vision of Enoch* resembles the *Fis Adamnáin* or other of the Christian Visions. The Archangel Michael already appears as the guide to the other world (c. 71); the infernal regions are swept by whirlwinds and traversed by rivers of fire, in one of which the fallen spirits are immersed until the carnal lusts of all such as are capable of redemption are burnt away (c. 67), though there is also a place wherein the

[1] *The Book of Enoch*, translated from Dillman's text, with notes, by Charles. Oxford, 1893. See also *The Book of Enoch*, trans. Lawrence. Oxford, 1821.

wicked are bound and punished eternally (c. 22). Heaven is described as a city of crystal surrounded by a crystal wall, a river of vibrating fire flowing round about it (c. 13).

Upon entering in, Enoch came to a spacious mansion, built of crystal and with a crystal floor, surrounded by a flame as hot as fire and as cold as ice.[1] After this, he came to another mansion, resembling the first, but surpassing it in all respects. Rivers of fire issued from out of it; in the midst of it a throne was set, whereon One sat in glory, clad in a robe brighter than the sun, and whiter than the snow (c. 14). Further, Enoch was instructed at length by his guide as to the significance of many parts of the Old Testament record, and was taken to view the several heavens, the heavenly bodies, and the universe in general, the nature and motions of which were explained to him by the Archangel. He was conducted to Sheol, the temporary abode of departed souls until Judgment, which is situated in the West (c. 17), and was shown a mountain which was reserved for the life that shall be after God's coming. Hereon stood the Tree of Life, which was to afford sustenance to the righteous of its fruit and fragrance (cc. 24-5). In a second vision, the last things and other divine mysteries were revealed to him by means of parables. In his Vision of Judgment he beheld, first, the spirits of the guilty stars condemned; after them, the unfaithful shepherds that misled the sheep, and then the wicked sheep themselves; after which he beheld a mansion greater than the former, supported on ivory pillars, wherein were assembled the sheep that were saved (c. 89).

Here we find the Vision legend brought to a high stage

[1] Cp. the veil of fire and veil of ice in the doorway of Adamnán's celestial city.—*F. A.* 14.

of development, and containing many features which recur throughout the whole course of the Vision literature. In several of these traces of an Oriental origin are apparent. Similar creations of the Rabbinical imagination occur in various writings belonging to the earlier centuries of our era, which, though composed in Christian times, and in some cases claiming a place among the sacred books of the Christian Church, embody Jewish traditions. Of such was the tradition current in those centuries, and quoted in the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus (Part II. c. 19), relating how Adam, when at the point of death, despatched Seth to the gate of Paradise in quest of the oil of the Tree of Life, or 'Tree of Mercy,' wherein, as before noted, we have a variant of Ishtâr's visit to Hades in quest of the Waters of Life.

The Fourth Book of Esdras, as it is numbered in the Vulgate, the Second in the Authorised Version, though included in the Biblical Old Testament Apocrypha, was nevertheless composed in Christian times and to some extent under Christian influences, being written probably in the third quarter of the first century A.D., though by some it is dated so late as the first quarter of the third century. The Vision of Esdras therein contained is apocalyptic in character, being a prophecy of the end of the world, the speedy coming of which was generally looked for. It is therefore not properly an instance of our legend, but it calls for mention in this place, as it contains certain conceptions derived through Hebrew tradition from Chaldæan or Persian sources, and transmitted to the eschatological literature of the Christian Church. The angel Uriel[1] showed to Esdras a great

[1] 2 Esdras iv.

multitude assembled on Mount Sion, and told him that these were 'they that have put off the mortal clothing and have put on the immortal, and have confessed the name of God; now are they crowned, and receive palms.' Several earlier passages furnish good examples of Persian or Babylonian myths converted, so to speak, and since adopted into the conventional imagery of Christian eschatology. 'They shall have the Tree of Life for an ointment of sweet savour'; 'I have sanctified and prepared for them twelve trees laden with divers fruits, and as many fountains flowing with milk and honey, and seven mighty mountains whereon there grow roses and lilies.'[1]

The name of Esdras is also attached to one of the apocryphal books of the early Christian Church, the *Vision of Esdras*, which relates how Esdras was led by Michael, Gabriel, and thirty-four other angels through the realms of darkness, wherein the punishments meted out to the wicked are revealed to him, and then to Paradise, where he sees Enoch and Elias, Peter, Paul, Moses, the Evangelists and Patriarchs, and all the righteous, assembled beneath the Tree of Life.

Another vision of Christian composition, but likewise fathered upon an Old Testament prophet, is the *Vision of Isaiah*, the second part of which, written in the third century A.D., relates a visit of that prophet to the seven Heavens.

However, at an earlier date than that of the works just named, the subject had already formed the theme of writings professedly Christian in aim and origin. The spread of Christianity, which, of its very nature, kept men's thoughts bent upon the contemplation of the future life,

[1] *L.c.* ii. 12, 18-19; and cp. Isaiah xxv. 6; Revelation xxii. 2.

was naturally attended by an increased production of works descriptive of the other world and of man's lot therein. No very great contributions to the subject are made by the Canonical Scriptures, which vouchsafe us but little direct information concerning the future life. St. Paul, indeed, relates how he was caught up to the third Heaven, and there 'heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter';[1] but no intimation concerning his experiences there are given us, and although the passage quoted doubtless accounted for his subsequent inclusion among those to whom the next world had been revealed, all details of his vision are due to the legendary narratives referred to hereafter. St. Jude (Ep. v. 6) refers to the rebellious angels who are kept 'in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day'; and St. Peter (II. iii. 7-12), speaks of a general purification by fire, but neither reveals anything concerning the state of man in the life to come. Even the Revelation of St. John, while standing far above the level of all other apocalyptic writings, as in other respects, so in the grandeur of conception and beauty of execution wherewith the author describes the celestial kingdom, would appear to have made but slight impression, save by an added richness of imagery, upon the subsequent course of the Vision legend. This, possibly, may be because the author treats his subject from the millennary point of view, taking for his theme rather the tribulations which were coming upon the world, and the establishment of a new heaven and a new earth in place of the old, than the condition of individual souls after death, or the places of their eternal abode. At the same time, he makes use of some of that Oriental imagery which

[1] 2 Cor. xii. 2-4; and cp. Galatians i. 12, 16; Ephesians i. 3.

had already obtained a place in the Hebrew writings, canonical and apocryphal alike, and thereby contributed to its naturalisation in the eschatological writings of the Church.[1]

The earlier centuries of our era were for the Græco-Roman world a period not merely of a general feeling of unrest, consequent upon the collapse of the older religions, and the social changes resulting from a long series of revolutions, but also of vigorous attempts at reconstruction, in which both the ends aimed at, and the methods adopted for their attainment—preaching, teaching, asceticism, mystic symbolism, etc.—were closely akin to those of the Christian propaganda; indeed, it was no uncommon thing for a seeker in religion, drifting about from one sect or cult to another, to take Christianity in his way, thus keeping open an additional channel by which Pagan and Christian ideas were brought to bear upon one another. Throughout all these ages speculations were rife, for which was claimed the authority of Orpheus, Pythagoras, Empedocles, Heraclitus, or some other of the ancient mystics or philosophers, and all of these, conjoined with the similar beliefs held by the later Stoics in many varying forms, tended to foster the Church's expectation of the approaching end of the world. This theory derived further support from the great authority ascribed to the so-called

[1] *E.g.* in Revelation ii. 7, 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in Paradise'; and xxii. 2, 'In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the Tree of Life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations'; also the Throne and One seated thereon in ch. iv., xx. 11; the sea of glass mingled with fire in ch. xv.; the city built of precious stones, etc.

Sibylline books, a long series of forgeries extending, probably, from the end of the second century B.C. to the fourth century of our era, if not later, containing a chaotic mass of prophecies and oracles, to which Judaism, Christianity, and Hellenic mysticism had all added their quota, and in which the proximate destruction of the world by fire, and the renewal of things, is a constantly recurring idea.

Another of the many causes which kept men's minds directed towards the Otherworld was the legend, current in the Church from the earliest times, and surviving far into the Middle Ages,[1] of the 'Harrowing of Hell' by Our Lord in the interval between the Burial and the Resurrection. One of the earliest versions of this legend occurs in Part II. of the so-called *Gospel of Nicodemus*, Greek text, which relates how He 'raised many of the dead, who appeared unto many in Jerusalem,' and then described Christ's descent into Hades, which had been preceded by a visit of St. John Baptist, who came to the Old Testament prophets, among whom Enoch and Elijah are especially mentioned, and expounded to them the Christian Revelation.

From the contemplation of the end of the world to speculation concerning the world to come, and the state of the departed spirits there, was but a step. Accordingly, as is but natural, many of the teeming crop of apocryphal Gospels, Acts, and Revelations which sprang up during the earlier ages of the Church are composed with a distinctly eschatological purpose.

Midway between these apocryphal writings and the canonical books of the New Testament stands the *Shepherd of Hermas*, which is commonly placed among

[1] *Vide* Dante, *Inferno*, canto iv.

the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, and was formerly ascribed to that Hermas to whom St. Paul sends greeting in his Epistle to the Romans (xvi. 14), but is now regarded as a production of the latter part of the second century, being the work, possibly, of Hermas, brother of Pius, who occupied the see of Rome from 140 to 155 A.D.[1] From an early date this work enjoyed a high repute in the Eastern Church, being admitted by some writers, including the author of the Canon of Muratori, to a place among the canonical books. Whether we regard its general plan, or the machinery by which it is carried out, it occupies a place by itself among the Christian Visions of the Other-world, and is peculiarly interesting to the Dante student as affording a remarkably early instance, possibly an unique instance in ecclesiastical literature, of that idea, perceived by Plato, and lying at the root of the *Commedia* —to wit, the elevation of the human spirit, through the highest form of human love, to the perception of Divine truth.

In the opening of his narrative, Hermas tells how he had been acquainted, in his earliest life, with a young slave girl, the property of one by whom he himself had been brought up. Subsequently, this girl was sold by her master in Rome, but Hermas met her again in after-life, and conceived for her a fraternal affection, which ultimately, as one day he saw her bathing in the Tiber, ripened into love, and he desired her for his wife, 'both for her beauty and for her disposition.' Some time after,

[1] The fact that the work was most in repute in the Eastern Church, and that several of the leading Western fathers wrote of it in disparaging terms, may possibly be held to militate to some extent against this ascription.

as he was walking in a lonely place, 'musing on these thoughts, he began to honour this creature of God, thinking with himself how noble and beautiful she was.'[1] While musing thus, he was caught up by the spirit, and borne beyond a rocky place impassable to man. Falling upon his knees he began to confess his sins, when he saw the heavens open, and the object of his desire appear therein and greet him. In reply to his questioning, she explained that she had been brought thither that she might accuse him before the Lord on account of the thoughts he had entertained concerning her, though these would scarcely appear to have been such as to merit the reproaches she bestowed on Hermas by reason of them. So Hermas thought, and maybe the damsel thought so too, for after hearing his reply she smiled upon him as she vanished. Thereupon the heavens closed, but, after a while, Hermas saw before him a chair of whitest wool, in which an old woman took her seat, having a book in her hand. She accosted Hermas, and imparted to him certain moral admonitions, but these were mostly confined in their application to himself and to the government of his family.

Other visions were subsequently vouchsafed to Hermas, making four in all; the third of these contained a revelation of the building up of the Church Triumphant, and the fourth announced the tribulations which were to come upon the Church, and the final salvation of those who

[1] This passage, so thoroughly Dantesque, reminds us curiously of chapters 9 and 12 of the *Vita Nuova*. Indeed, the little episode might almost be termed a painting of Dante and Beatrice executed by one of the primitives. In like manner, the passage that ensues recalls the reproaches which Beatrice addressed to Dante on meeting him in the Earthly Paradise at the close of the *Purgatorio*.

should endure unto the end. The second part of the work consists of 'Commands,'[1] and the third of 'Similitudes,' all imparted to Hermas by Divine revelation. Certain of the similitudes contain visions wherein Hermas was shown the *corrective* punishment of sinners, the edification of the Church Triumphant, and the various classes into which the guilty and the righteous are divided, together with the diverse manner in which these fare respectively. All this, however, is intended rather for an allegory of the soul's progress through this world, than for a picture of its state in the world to come; in fine, the vision is more closely akin to the *Pilgrim's Progress* than to the *Commedia*, though it deserves a place in our series, alike as containing a curious anticipation of the most highly developed form to which the legend afterwards attained, and as connecting the legend with the familiar notion of the later Jewish and the early Christian Churches, that when the other oracles of paganism were silenced, the Sibyls were left to proclaim the advent of the Messiah, and the trials and triumph of His Church. For it is impossible not to recognise in the old woman with a book in her hand, in the first vision of Hermas, the traits of an ancient Sibyl; and for such, indeed, Hermas took her, until she told him that she was a personification of the Church. The simple affection, not wanting in elevation, which the hero of the opening story felt for the heroine—one at least being of the servile class—is interesting as affording a glimpse of that kindly social life of which there are many evidences during the first centuries of the Empire, in all grades of society, from the aristocratic circles of Pliny and

[1] Herein the plan of the work accords to some extent with that of the *Book of Enoch*.

Thrasea down to the slave community itself, however much it is apt to be thrown into the background by the tyranny and crime, vulgar ostentation and base lusts, that occupied the front of the scene during that period.

Several of the apocryphal books show a great advance in the theory of retributive justice in the future life. The so-called *Apocalypse of St. Peter* is known to have existed in Syria and Egypt before the middle of the second century, and to have been admitted by several of the Fathers into the Canon, side by side with the Book of Revelation. Paradise is here described in much the same manner as the Greek Elysium—as a radiant place, full of flowers, fruit, and sweet odours, etc. The pains of Hell are set out with a more than common minuteness, and with a greater attention to a kind of *lex talionis*, so to speak, whereby the nature of the punishment is analogous to that of the crime, than is found in most of the Christian descriptions prior to Dante. Hell is represented as a place full of lakes of fire and burning mud, over which those who had blasphemed 'the way of righteousness' are suspended by their tongues, and adulterers by the hair, while in them wallow the perverters of righteousness. Blasphemers gnawed their lips, and had red-hot iron over their eyes; false witnesses had tongues of fire in their mouths, which they kept on chewing; rich misers, in filthy rags, rolled upon red-hot pebbles, sharper than sword or spit; usurers stood up to their knees in pitch, blood, and boiling mire; those guilty of unnatural crimes were hurled from a cliff and driven up again, to be again cast down.

A similar vision of the Otherworld, though differing in plan and in many details, is contained in the *Revelation of*

St. Paul, written about the year 380 A.D. Apparently the author of the *Fis Adamnáin* had this work in his mind when referring in ch. 2 to the Revelation that had been vouchsafed to St. Paul, for the Apostle's own mention of his Vision of the Third Heaven contains no description of the Otherworld. Moreover, it is impossible not to be struck by the resemblance between the Irish author's description of the manner in which the souls were received upon their arrival at the seventh Heaven (ch. 19), and the corresponding account in the *Apocalypse of St. Paul*: 'And the good angels who had received the soul of the righteous man saluted it, as being well known to them,' etc.[1] And so of the judgments passed upon the sinners in like manner. There are also several details given by the apocryphal writer concerning the pains of Hell, which are repeated in a closely similar form in the *Fis Adamnáin*: *e.g.* the immersion of some of the wicked in a murky river, the imprisonment of others in a brazen wall wrapt in flames, etc.

The theme was treated, with more or less fulness, by several writers of the Eastern Church, but our task does not involve the enumeration of all the forms in which it appeared, and the versions already quoted would seem to be those which treated it most elaborately, and exercised the greatest influence upon later developments. Indeed the two Visions last mentioned, being specially referred to by the author of the *Fis Adamnáin* among the instances of revelations formerly vouchsafed to holy men, may be regarded as landmarks showing the course of the tradition. For the same reason, some mention should be made here of another of those instances, alluded to by the author in

[1] *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, vol. xvi. p. 480.

the same place, though it really belongs rather to the apocalyptic than to the Otherworld class of writings, namely, the group of apocryphal books dealing with what is known as the *Transitus Mariæ*. The oldest of these, the *Falling Asleep of Mary*, by John, Archbishop of Thessalonica at the end of the seventh century, was formerly ascribed to St. John the Evangelist, and Tischendorf thinks that it was really derived from a treatise bearing the name of St. John, and written in the fourth century at latest, which enjoyed a wide popularity in both East and West, and was translated into several languages. The several versions differ much in matters of detail, but the substance is practically the same.[1]

It relates how it was the Virgin's practice to frequent the Holy Sepulchre, there to pray alone, until at length it was announced to her in a vision that the time of her earthly life was accomplished. Thereupon the apostles were all caught up from the most remote parts of the earth, where they then were, even those who were dead being raised from their graves and brought to Bethlehem, whence they proceeded to the Virgin's house in Jerusalem in time to be present at her death, and to receive her benediction. They laid her in a new tomb in Gethsemane, and witnessed her assumption, at which time the Heavenly Host appeared to them, and the Holy Spirit prophesied to them concerning the last things.

In the descriptions of the Otherworld contained in the foregoing visions, the imagery employed evinces a blending of Hebraic traditions with materials obtained from Hellenic sources. The elements attributable to the latter

[1] Two Latin versions, together with the account of the pseudo-John, are translated in vol. xvi. of the *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*.

source pertain rather to the popular faith and to the doctrines taught in the ancient mysteries—which, most likely, were fundamentally identical—than to the speculations of the Neo-Platonic schools, or to the cults which had been adopted from the East. This, indeed, is what might have been looked for, from the fact that Christianity received its earliest and most numerous recruits from the people at large,[1] among whom the old beliefs continued to exist. The moral teaching which, as mentioned in an earlier section, was an important feature of the Eleusinian mysteries, retained its importance long after Greece had ceased to be the centre of Hellenic thought throughout the countries which had come under the sway of Hellenic civilisation. In the last century of the Roman Republic Cicero lauds the mysteries, which, by their refining influences, had civilised minds previously rustical and savage, had imparted the true principles of life, and had taught the way, not only to live with joy, but to die with better hope.[2] In the first century of the Empire, Plutarch reminds his wife of the instruction they had shared at their initiation into the mysteries.[3] Indeed, at that period, it would seem to have been looked upon as an impiety to withhold oneself from initiation, that might even be visited with a criminal prosecution. The experiences of Demonax, as related by Lucian, furnish a case in point.

Equally great, at least, was the vitality retained by the

[1] Using the word 'people' in its wider sense, not as equivalent to the *popolaccio*, for there were persons of rank and culture among the early converts, but as distinguished from those who were in high station, or were remarkable for learning.

[2] *De Legibus*, II. xiv. 36.

[3] See Plutarch's Consolatory Epistle to his Wife.

popular belief in the Stygian river, and the pains of Tartarus that awaited the wicked. There is evidence to show that in the classical and post-classical ages of Greece it was accepted as an article of the national creed. Its persistence at a later date is attested by the vehemence of the onslaught which Lucretius made upon it, for, with due allowance for exaggeration, he could scarcely regard it as an incubus, an ever-present terror, weighing down and darkening men's lives, an Upas-tree which it was philosophy's noblest work to uproot, unless it had met with very general and very convinced acceptance in his day. Seneca, indeed, states that in his time the belief was rejected even by children, and herein he is corroborated by other writers; we must conclude, however, that the children in question were exceptionally enlightened—the Roman prototypes of Macaulay's schoolboy—for in the same century Plutarch, and in the following century Lucian, attest the vigorous survival of the old doctrine.[1]

On the whole we may say that in the descriptions of Paradise, with the Tree of Life, the companies of Old Testament worthies, etc., Hebrew ideas generally predominated, while the Greek Tartarus furnished most of the ideas of the Christian Hell. These ideas, however, did not include the doctrine of rebirth, which was so prominent a feature in the Greek mystic cults. Indeed, the literature of the Vision of the Otherworld appears to have belonged, in the main, to the orthodox portion of the Church, avoiding, on the one hand, everything pertaining to the popular cults of Isis, Serapis, Mithra, the Magna Mater, and other

[1] Plutarch: *On Superstition*, *On the Tardy Vengeance of God*, *On the Impracticability of a Happy Life on Epicurean Principles*. Lucian: *Philopseudes*, *De Luctu*.

fashionable Oriental deities, and, on the other hand, taking from Hellenic beliefs only such as were in harmony with the general character of the Christian faith, little attracted by the Neo-Platonic theories of emanations, æons, and the like, which did so much to mould the Gnostic and other heresies.

It would seem that the Vision of the Otherworld never acquired the same importance in the Western Church as in the East; nevertheless, several of the Western fathers report similar cases, many of which, it is probable, already existed in popular tradition. One of these, related by St. Augustine, tells how a certain Curina, a native of Hippo, died, but, as the condition of his body suggested that he was merely in a trance, his friends delayed the burial for some days. At length, however, the funeral was about to take place, when the corpse returned to life, and told his friends that he had really died, but, as he was being brought up for judgment, it was discovered that the Angel of Death had mistaken him for another Curina, a blacksmith, who dwelt in the same neighbourhood. Accordingly, after being favoured with a vision of Paradise, our Curina was dismissed with a caution to mend his ways, and present himself to St. Augustine for baptism, both of which commands he obeyed.

The correspondence of St. Gregory the Great contains several instances of a similar kind. One of these preserves the experiences of a man of Constantinople, Stephen by name, which were much the same as those of Curina, he having received the fatal summons in place of another Stephen, who too was a blacksmith. Stephen, like Curina, was restored to the body, after receiving a vision, in his case, of Hell.

A fundamental difference is apparent between the Visions

just recorded, and those composed in the Eastern Church, these constituting a specific form of composition of which the primary object was to present a picture of the next world, while the Western fathers would appear merely to have introduced, by way of apologue, a current religious folk-tale. If a folk-tale, it was probably widely diffused, for both the above stories are evidently versions of one original—the scene of the first being placed at Hippo, of the second at Constantinople. Both have much in common with Plutarch's story of Thespesios, and nothing is more probable than that all were variants of a folk-tale current in antiquity—long before Plato, as likely as not, for he too introduces the story of Er as a floating tradition —and receiving at the hands of Plutarch and the Christian fathers embellishments proper to their respective creeds. Moreover, in both stories the persons who ought to have died were blacksmiths, members of a trade which, by an obvious association of ideas, has always appeared in popular mythology in a somewhat sinister light. The blunder of the Angel of Death in bringing the wrong person up for judgment, is one of the motives which frequently recur in the innumerable comic tales of Hell and Judgment which enjoyed much favour in the Middle Ages, and some of which are enshrined in the *Ingoldsby Legends* for the delectation of late-born men.

Elsewhere, however, in another of his epistles, St. Gregory records a vision which conforms more closely to the literary type. A certain soldier fell into a trance, and saw a bridge spanning a foul, smoky, stinking river, beyond which fair meadows lay, fresh and flowery, and goodly companies of folk walking therein clad in white apparel. Over the bridge a procession of the dead were passing, of

whom the righteous crossed successfully, and joined the companies that were already in the *prata beata* that lay beyond; the wicked fell into the river. Then the soldier recognised the aforesaid Stephen, who had since died finally, and was now endeavouring to cross the bridge; his foot slipped, and as he was hanging over the edge, certain grisly forms seized upon him, and endeavoured to drag him down, while white and radiant beings strove to bear him up. The issue is left undecided. The explanation of this incident was that Stephen had been liberal in almsgiving, but was addicted to sins of the flesh. Here we have a connecting link, passing on to the Irish school the bridge incident, belonging to Oriental myth, having first appeared in Chinvat bridge of the Avesta. St. Gregory likewise perpetuates the 'tug of war' for possession of the doubtful soul, which also first appears in the Persian books. Like St. Gregory, Adamnán's chronicler shows the parlous state of the kindly but carnal souls, though his robuster charity pronounces decidedly for their ultimate redemption (*F. A.*, c. 27).

In the land beyond the river were many fair mansions; one of these was then in course of construction, being built of golden bricks, which were the good works of the destined occupant; and they who brought the bricks were the persons whom he had befriended.

St. Gregory also relates the case of one Peter, a Spanish monk, who had died and gone to Hell, where he saw the torments of the wicked, and among them many who had lived in this world in greatness and high repute, and were then hanging in the flames. Peter was about to be thrown in himself, when an angel rescued him and sent him back to the body, with a caution.

It is certain that the earlier Middle Ages, as well as the later, possessed many stories dealing with the Otherworld, alike in form of the folk-tale and of the religious apologue. Probably, too, an examination of the ecclesiastical writers of the period would disclose examples of the treatment of the legend as a distinct class of literary composition, like the foregoing instances. Nevertheless, no important contribution to the subject appears to have been made, nor any new departure taken, until the legend entered upon a fresh course on Irish soil.

4. The Legend in Ireland

While the Christian Church of Teutonic England owed its existence, in the main, to the missionary enterprise of Rome, the much older Celtic Churches, and notably the Church of Ireland, were more closely connected with Gaul and the East. It was to Gaul that Ireland was mainly indebted for its original conversion, and the intercourse between the two countries remained close and unbroken. But the Church in the south of Gaul—and it was the south alone that preserved any considerable culture, or displayed missionary activity, in the earlier Middle Ages—had from the very first been closely in touch with the Churches in the East. The great monastery of Lerins, in which St. Patrick is said to have studied, was founded from Egypt, and for many centuries the Egyptian Church continued to manifest a lively interest in Gallic matters. Indeed, not only Lerins, but Marseilles, Lyons, and other parts of Southern Gaul maintained a constant intercourse with both Egypt and Syria, with the natural result that many institutions of the Gallic Church, despite

its increasing subjection to Rome, dating from the year 244, bore the impress of Oriental influences.[1] Hence the close relations with Gaul maintained by the Irish churchmen and scholars necessarily brought them into contact with their Egyptian and Syrian brethren, and with the ideas and practices which prevailed in their respective Churches.

Nor was Ireland's connection with the East confined to the intermediary of Gaul. Irish pilgrimages to Egypt continued until the end of the eighth century, and Dicuil records a topographical exploration of that country made by two Irishmen, Fidelis and his companion.[2] Documentary evidence is yet extant, proving that even homekeeping Irishmen were not debarred from all acquaintance with the East. The Saltair na Rann[3] contains an Irish version of the *Book of Adam and Eve*, a work written in Egypt in the fifth or sixth century, of which no mention outside of Ireland is known. Adamnán's work, *De Locis Sanctis*, already referred to, contains an account of the monastery on Mount Thabor, which might stand for the description of an Irish monastic community of his day. Indeed, the whole system both of the anchoretic and the cœnobitic life in Ireland corresponds closely to that which prevailed in Egypt and Syria; the monastic communities, consisting of groups of detached huts or bee-hive cells, enclosed within a general wall, the structure of the cells, and of the other earliest examples of Irish ecclesiastical architecture, all

[1] See *Ireland and the Celtic Church*, by Dr. G. T. Stokes; ed. 5, 1900, pp. 169-174.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 229, and cp. pp. 215-16.

[3] Edited by Mr. Whitley Stokes in *Anecdota Oxoniensia, Mediæval and Modern Series*, vol. i., part 3.

suggest a Syrian origin; and Dr. G. T. Stokes holds that 'the Irish schools were most probably modelled after the forms and rules of the Egyptian Lauras.'[1]

But it was not only Egyptian and Syrian influences to which Ireland was subjected by its intercourse with Southern Gaul. The civilisation of that country was essentially Greek, and so remained for many centuries after the Christian era; and this circumstance no doubt contributed to the well-known survival of Greek learning in the Irish schools, long after it had almost perished in the rest of Western Europe. It is not to be supposed that this learning was characterised by accuracy of scholarship, or by a wide acquaintance with classical literature; but neither was it always restricted to a mere smattering of the language, or to passages and quotations picked up at second-hand. Johannes Scotus Erigena translated the works of the pseudo-Areopagite; Dicuil and Firghil (Virgilius, Bishop of Salzburg), studied the Greek books of science; Homer, Aristotle, and other classical authors were known to some of the Irish writers; several of the Irish divines were acquainted with the Greek fathers and other theological works. Nor were the Greeks in person unknown to Ireland. Many Greek clerics had taken refuge there during the Iconoclast persecution, and left traces which were recognisable in Ussher's day; and the old poem on the Fair of Carman makes mention of the Greek merchants who resorted thither.

It is thus apparent that the Irish writers possessed

[1] G. T. Stokes, *op. cit.*, pp. 228-9. For other points of resemblance and instance of communication between the Irish and the Eastern Churches, cited by the learned author, see pp. 105 *n.*, 173-4, 186-7, 229, and Lecture X., *passim*.

ample means of becoming acquainted with the traditions, both oral and written, of the Greek and Eastern Churches. The knowledge thus acquired extended to the Apocalyptic Visions referred to in the preceding section, as is proved by internal evidence furnished by the Irish Visions, both by way of direct reference, and by the nature of their contents. It remains to see how far the predilection which the Irish writers manifested for this class of literature, and the special characteristics which it assumed in their hands, may have been determined by their familiarity with analogous ideas already existing in their national literature.

At the period in question, the traditional literature of Ireland would appear to have entered into the national life to no less a degree than in Greece itself. Indeed, in certain respects, it was still more closely interwoven with the habits of the people and the framework of society than in Greece, for the literary profession was provided for by a public endowment, something like that of an established National Church, and its professors constituted a body organised by law, and occupying a recognised position in the State. One of the most marked characteristics of early Irish civilisation, in its every branch, was an exaggerated tendency towards symmetrical classification and multiplicity of detail. This tendency extended to the social system, and the earliest records of ancient Ireland that have come down to us show that society was arranged according to a very elaborate scheme of ranks and classes,[1]

[1] This classification, in theory at least, regulated the structure of society from top to bottom. There were four ranks of kings, from the *Ard Rí*, High King, or Emperor, of all Ireland, to the *Rí Tuatha*, King of a Tribal Territory. The territories themselves were divided

among which the literary profession was remarkable alike for the number of its members, and for the consideration in which they were held. It was divided into several distinct orders, each of which was specially addicted to its own department of study, and of these the place of greatest honour and dignity belonged to the Filid, who combined with other functions the special duty of preserving and transmitting the national traditions.[1] The order of the Filid was further subdivided into seven ranks or degrees, graduated according to the attainments which their respective members were required to possess. For all, however, a knowledge of the romantic literature of their country was an indispensable qualification—the Árd-Ollamh, the chief of the order, being required to know two

according to a descending scale, analogous to the English division into county, hundred, tithing, etc. There were six grades of princes under the king, classified according to the extent of their lands. Society was divided into nobles, freemen, and serfs, and each of these classes was subdivided into a great number of minor grades. The family was traced to the seventeenth degree, and was grouped into six classes, whose rights and liabilities in matters of inheritance, in the receipt or payment of fines and damages, etc., are defined with the utmost minuteness. The land tenure, and the dues to be paid in respect of each kind; the circumstances of crimes and civil injuries, and the fines or damages to be paid for each; in short, all the details of public and private life, were elaborated with similar minuteness. For particulars, the reader may be referred to the ancient legal and customary treatises, and the respective commentaries thereon, printed in the Rolls Series, the *Lebor na g-Cert*, ed. O'Donovan, 1847, and O'Curry's *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, ed. W. K. Sullivan, 3 vols., 1873.

[1] The *Filid* must be distinguished from the *Bárd*, a name often applied to the poetic and literary class promiscuously, but really the title pertaining to a rank far below the *Filid* in dignity. See Dr. Douglas Hyde, *The Literary History of Ireland*, pp. 486, etc.

hundred and fifty *prím-scéla*, or principal stories, and one hundred of secondary importance; and so on in a descending scale through the inferior degrees of the literary hierarchy. These tales, in turn, were likewise grouped, with all the precision of a scientific classification, according to their subject-matter.[1] Two lists are extant giving the titles of the several kinds; the elder, preserved in the Book of Leinster, is ascribed by M. d'Arbois de Jubainville to the seventh century, or, at latest, the beginning of the eighth century. They are classed under the headings of *Catha*, battles; *Longasa*, travels (in exile); *Imrama*, voyages (voluntary); *Tógbála*, conquests; *Tóglasi*, destructions; *Airgne*, slaughters; *Forbasa*, sieges; *Oitti*, tragic fates; *Tána*, forays; *Tochmarca*, wooings; *Uatha*, [adventures in] caves; *Eachtra*, deeds, adventures; *Sluaigheadha*, hostings or expeditions; to which are to be added *Fessa*, banquets;

[1] It is not to be supposed that so elaborate a system ever existed, or could exist, in its entirety, or that the population of Ireland was ever sorted out into sets of social pigeon-holes with anything like the completeness represented by the chroniclers. The old Irish writers combined two characteristics, which may appear, at first glance, contradictory, though reflection may enable us to see how compatible they are on psychologic grounds, viz. a tendency to run riot in the exuberance of fancy, and an equally excessive love of system and minute detail. Nevertheless, writing as they did of the state of society in which they lived, and for readers who were acquainted with the facts which they described, they cannot be supposed to have invented their systems and classifications, but rather to have idealised and elaborated their picture of an existing state of things so as to make it accord with their conception of the true significance of the social scheme. Modern writers have often done much the same thing in a different way, in their treatment of the Feudal System, the Imperial Theory, the Renaissance, Reformation, and similar movements, etc.

Aithidi, elopements; *Serca*, love-stories; *Tomadma*, irruptions or invasions (of recent date); *Tocomlada*, colonies; *Fisi*, visions. The subjects of these tales were taken from the national history or mythology, or, oftener still may be, from that traditionary lore which forms a debatable ground between the two. Many of them were more esteemed as authorities for tribal history or genealogy than upon their purely literary merit, though in others the imaginative element is as frankly recognised as in a historical novel by Scott or Dumas.

The romantic literature of Ireland reached its height about the time of the greatest activity of the Irish Church, and the sacred and secular schools did not fail to exercise a mutual influence, for the Irish clergy by no means despised these relics of Paganism: they possessed a large share of that wise tolerance which we find in many of the great clerics of the Middle Ages, who did not desire the destruction of all the associations that had twined themselves about the lives of the people, but rather to enlist them into the service of the new faith.[1] Two classes of

[1] The Irish writers are further remarkable for not confining their tolerance to traditional practices and the like, but extending it even to the spiritual beings of the national faith. This point has been well put by Mr. Nutt, *Voyage of Bran*, ii. 205: 'And whereas in every other European land the ministers of the new faith were as bitterly opposed to the fanciful as to the business aspect of the older creed, in Ireland it is the saint who protects the bard, the monk who transcribes the myth, whilst the bird-flock of Faery, alike with the children of Adam, yearn for and acclaim the advent of the Apostle.' And even when it has seemed necessary to regard these beings as demons, several tales show priest or saint feeling for them the like regretful kindliness as Origen, Burns, and Uncle Toby expressed for the chief of the demons. A very striking instance of the eagerness shown by the Christian writers to put the best possible construction upon their

the Irish tales were specially adapted for ecclesiastical treatment, and being thus brought into contact with the general literature of mediæval Europe, have left upon it a deep and traceable impression. These were the *Imram*, or Voyage, and the *Fis*, or Vision, species distinct in kind, but containing in practice much that was common to both; for the course of the *Imram* lay, for the most part, among the enchanted lands of Celtic mythology, thinly disguised, in later times, by a coating of Christian eschatology; and the *Fis*, though more commonly of Christian origin, and often indited expressly for edification, was indebted to the same source for most of its *mise-en-scène*. Both types of narrative are represented among the legends which recount the adventures met with by Cuchulainn, Cormac Mac Áirt, and other ancient heroes in a purely pagan Otherworld. Starting thence and proceeding through the travel tales, similar in many respects to the foregoing, but more or less imbued with a Christian tinge, which relate the Voyages of Maelduin, of Tadg Mac Céin, of the Sons of Ua Corra, and the like, we reach, on the one hand, the Voyage of St. Brendan, one of the most picturesque and popular legends of the Middle Ages, and, on the other hand, the visions of the Irish Saints, the stories of St. Patrick's Purgatory, and similar legends which pervaded Western Europe, and passing into Italy would

pagan predecessors, occurs at the close of 'The Irish Ordeals,' etc., trans. by Mr. Whitley Stokes, *Irische Texte*, III. i. 221: 'The wise declare that when any strange apparition was revealed of old to the royal lords . . . it was a divine ministration that used to come in that wise, and not a demoniacal ministration. Angels, moreover, would come and help them, for they followed Natural Truth, and they served the commandment of the Law.'

appear to have led up to the story of the wicked Marquis of Brandenburg, and the opening of the *Tesoretto* of Brunetto Latini, which last, again, suggested to Dante the opening passages of the *Commedia*.

A visit to the Otherworld was one of the most frequent subjects of Irish legend. Not that the region visited is always so described; sometimes it is termed the realm of the Dagda, one of the most primitive culture-deities in the Irish mythology, and, at the same time, the counterpart of Yama and Yima;[1] sometimes, the island paradise of Manannán Mac Lir, the Sea-God; at others, the palace of Mider or of Oengus, both of whom shared with Lug many of the attributes of the Greek Apollo. Very often it is merely the rath, or island, or subaqueous abode, of some enchantress or fairy lady, but even then some detail of the story will almost always make it clear that the spot is to be identified with the land of departed spirits, although, in some instances, the authors may have been no more aware than Ariosto in describing the garden of Alcina, or, indeed, than Homer in his islands of the Phæacians, of Circe and of Calypso, that all their imaginary scenes alike had one common origin, the region where the κλυτὰ ἔθνεα νεκρῶν have their dwelling.[2]

[1] Most of the principal Irish deities include among their functions that of ruler of the dead. One of the most pronounced examples of the Yama type is Tethra, who is described in the legends as Chief of the Fomorians, whereby his distinctly Chthonian character is asserted; and, after the defeat of his people at the battle of Mag Tured, as ruler of a land beyond the ocean, like Varuna, when overcome by Indra (and cp. Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 168-9, and Pindar, *Olymp.* ii.). Thence, from time to time, he would send beautiful maidens to summon to him the chiefs and heroes of Eire.

[2] The subject of the Otherworld in Irish literature has been treated

The conception which the Irish formed of their Happy Otherworld resembled in substance the ideas which most other nations held upon the subject; but their descriptions of it are frequently remarkable for a poetry, a vivid sense of beauty—in short, for a *gusto*, which are far less common. For all that, however, they do not always reject the grosser —it would, perhaps, be more just to call them the simpler —pleasures which would naturally appeal to the healthy imaginations of a people addicted to a vigorous and somewhat rude way of life. Thus in the subterranean palace of the Dagda (afterwards usurped by his son, Oengus Óg), which was situate within the Brug na Boinne, and is described as a place of unceasing delight, whither death or sickness never came, the god sat beneath three fragrant apple-trees, always laden with ripe fruit, beside an inexhaustible vat of beer; two pigs were there, one alive and the other ready roasted, turn and turn about, and a caldron brought by the Dé Danann from Murias ('Sealand'), which was never empty of food, and from which none ever rose unsatisfied, for it gave to each one a portion corresponding to his rightful claims. These gross enjoyments recur even in the truly poetic lines which Mider sings to Béfind (or Etain), wife of King Eochaid Airem, in the story of the Brudin Da Derga,[1] tempting her to follow him to his realm of Magh Mór. This he describes as a wondrous land, traversed by warm sweet streams; the people thereof are handsome, without a blemish, conceived without sin or

very fully by Mr. Nutt in his *Essay on the Irish Vision of the Happy Otherworld, and the Celtic Doctrine of Rebirth*, appended to Professor Kuno Meyer's *Voyage of Bran, Son of Febal*, 2 vols., 1895-7.

[1] Extracted from the *Lebor na h-Udri*, by O'Curry, *Manners and Customs*, etc., vol. iii.

lust; their bodies are like the snow, white of skin and black of brow, their hair like tufts of primrose, their cheeks like the foxglove, and their eyes like the blackbird's eggs. But by way of additional attraction Mider promises the lady a cap of gold for her head, fresh pork, soft new milk, wine and mead of the choicest, and ale 'headier than the ale of Ireland.' We learn elsewhere that Mider also possessed a magic caldron[1] like that of the Dagda, and three cows which never ran dry. So, too, Manannán Mac Lir possessed among other highly desirable chattels seven pigs that would suffice to feed all the world, and seven cows whose milk would fill seven tubs, whence all the people of the world might drink their fill. It is interesting to observe how this side of the Irish Paradise received a twofold development; on the one hand, being subjected to a refining process, as we shall see when considering the *Fis Adamnáin*; on the other, developing into a veritable Cockayne, in such humorous writings as the *Vision of Mac Conglinne*.[2]

Perhaps the fullest and most poetic account of the Tir Tairngire is that contained in two poems of great beauty, which occur in the *Voyage of Bran, Son of Febal*, before cited.[3] It must suffice, in this place, to translate such portions as bear more immediately upon our subject.

[1] A similar caldron was a favourite property of supernatural beings in the heroic tales of Ireland as of Wales; indeed, so desirable a possession enters into the folklore of most nations.

[2] *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, 'The Vision of Mac Conglinne,' edited, with translation, notes, and glossary, by Prof. Kuno Meyer, 1892.

[3] *Ante*, note 3, p. 44. The work is edited, with translation, notes, and glossary, by Prof. Kuno Meyer, who dates the composition of the tale in its present form in the seventh century; Mr. Nutt suggests the eighth century (*op. cit.*, i. 141). Fragments of the tale exist in the L.U. Prof. Rhys identifies Bran with Cernunnos, the divine

A lovely maiden appears to Bran, bearing in her hand an apple branch with twigs of silver and golden fruit upon it; this she places in his hand, and sings:—

'An isle there is afar; round it sea-horses are flashing; a free stretch, against which white-sided surges swell; four pedestals sustain it. A delight of the eye, a glorious array, are the hosts that disport them in the heroes' chariot strife, in the Southern plain of Findarggat (silver-white). Of white bronze are the pedestals beneath it; throughout the glorious ages, throughout the ages of the world, shines the lovely land, over-snowed with many blossoms. There is a stately tree in bloom; the birds chant responsive to the [canonical] hours; at every hour they sing in harmony. Jewels of every hue are gleaming throughout the soft-voiced plain; perpetuity of joy, with linked melody, is in the Southern plain of Silvercloud. No wailing is known, nor guile, in the land of perpetual tilth; nothing rough nor harsh, but only sweet music, strikes the ear. No sorrow, no gloom, no death, no sickness at all, nor feebleness,—that is the token of Emain, no rival to it exists. The beauty of the wondrous land, lovely of aspect, a land fair to look upon—never its like was found. Shouldst thou next look on Airctec, bestrewn with dragon-stones and crystals; Ocean strews upon the land crystal tresses from his mane. Moorlands, thickets of every hue, in [the land of] Calm; the beauty of freshness, the hearing of music in its sweetness, the drinking of wine the brightest. In Magh Réin [Plain

ancestor of the ancient Celts (*Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 85-95). Mr. Nutt further suggests an identity with Brons, the Fisher King, and keeper of the Graal (*Studies on the Legend of the Holy Graal*, 1888, p. 208).

of the Sea] the golden chariots come at flood-tide to meet the sun; in Magh Mon [Plain of Games] are chariots of silver and of bronze, without a blemish. A herd of horses like yellow gold is there on the strand; another herd, of purple hue; after them, yet another herd, of the hue of a pure grey pearl. At the sun's uprising a fair man will come, who illumines the level lands; he rides over the fair plain whereon the sea beats, he tempers the ocean till it is [as] blood. The host will come across the pure sea; they show themselves, rowing towards the land; then they row to a flat rock, well in view, whence a hundred songs arise. It chants melody to the hosts, so that sorrow is not therein; the music swells from the choirs of hundreds, who look not for return or death. Emain of many forms by the sea, it may be near, it may be far; therein are women, many thousands, in chequered array, and the pure sea round about it. When he has heard the music's sound, the note of the birds in Imchiúin, a little band of ladies will come down from the height to the field of games, whereon he stands. Freedom with health shall come to the land on which laughter is poured forth; 'tis on Imchiúin, at every season, that length of life with joy shall come. A day of serenity unending scatters silver on the land; a pure white cliff is on the seaboard range, drawing the sun's heat from him. The multitude race their horses along Magh Mon, a glorious sport, not languid; in the chequered lea-land, all beauty excelling (?), they look not for return nor death.'

We may see at a glance how thoroughly pagan is the conception of the happy region here depicted, though

assuredly lacking neither in beauty nor refinement, in which respects the Tir Tairngire need fear no comparison with the Elysium of the Greek poets, which it so strongly resembles. It is equally evident that the lord of this Island Paradise, Manannán Mac Lir, is the Tuatha Dé Danann counterpart of the Fomorian Tethra, king of the dead, who sends his messengers in the guise of beautiful women—ἄγγελοι in all literalness—to call his subjects unto him in his realm beyond the ocean. Indeed, Tethra himself appears in a legend, exactly parallel to the foregoing in design, though of more primitive structure, which relates the passing of Connla, son of the famous Árd-Rí, Conn of the Hundred Battles. Connla, like Bran, was visited by a beautiful damsel, who promised to confer upon him a continuance of youth and beauty which should never fail or fade until the Judgment. She then gave him an apple and left him. The virtue of this apple was such that it afforded Connla nutriment enough for a month, at the end of which time the damsel returned, and told him that the ever-living ones had sent for him, having chosen him to become one of the folk of Tethra, there to dwell for ever, in the companies of his forefathers, in the midst of his acquaintance and friends.[1] And Connla followed her to the sea-shore, where a ship of glass awaited them, in which they embarked, while Conn followed them to the shore, weeping, and watched them until they were out of sight.

[1] In the disputation between Neid and Fercertue which was to decide which of them should be Árd Ollamh (Chief Doctor) of Ulster, Fercertue put the riddling question, 'What is it that thou traversest in haste?' Neid replied, 'The plain of age, the mountain of youth, the course of the ages, in pursuit of the King in the house of earth and stones, between the candle and its ending, between the combat and the hatred of combat, amid the brave warriors of Tethra.'

By far the greater number of the visits which the heroes and heroines of Irish tradition pay to the Otherworld are variations upon the same theme: a supernatural visitant, smitten with love for chief or maiden, induces him or her, by persuasion, guile, or force, to follow to fairy rath or oversea Elysium; a theme which has survived to our own day in the common legend of the *Leanamhán Sidhe*, or Fairy Lover. The story of Mider and Etain, or Eithne, above referred to, is an instance of this kind, Mider having won Etain of her husband, King Eochaid Airem, at a game of chess. In many cases where a hero's wife is thus abducted the loss is but temporary, the husband, a more martial and more successful Orpheus, winning back his Eurydice by force or stratagem. To this also the modern Irish fairy tales contain many parallels. So numerous are the examples of this type, that it is both impossible and unnecessary to discuss them *seriatim*; it is enough to select from each of the great tale cycles such instances as may best show the persistence of the theme, and of the original Irish notions concerning the Otherworld, some of which coloured the versions in which the legend appeared in Christian times. The Elysian abodes of the Dagda, of Oengus Óg, of Mider, and of Manannán Mac Lir, which have been described already, pertain to the mythological cycle of Irish legend; similar visits to the abodes of the Tuatha Dé Danann are recorded in many stories belonging to the greatest of the heroic cycles, namely, the Ultonian cycle.

One of the best and longest of these stories is the *Serglige Conchulaind*,[1] or Sick-bed of Cuchulainn, the

[1] Transcribed into the L.U. before 1103 A.D. from the earlier Book of Slane, now lost; edited (without a translation) by Professor Windisch

principal hero of the cycle in question. We have room only for a brief abstract of this story, giving the details which relate more particularly to our subject.

Once, in dream, Cuchulainn was visited by two ladies of great beauty, who, without vouchsafing any explanation of their conduct, kept smiting him with whips as he lay until they left him speechless, in which state he remained for nearly a year. At the end of that time Emer, Cuchulainn's wife, and those with her, saw one day a young man sitting by his bedside, singing how he was Oengus, and the dream-ladies were Fand and Liban, his sisters, of whom Fand, wife of Manannán Mac Lir, having been deserted by her husband, had conceived a great love for Cuchulainn, and promised that if he would visit her in the Tír Sorcha (Land of Light), she would make him whole, and give him gold and silver and wine *go leór*. Before complying with this message, Cuchulainn sent Loeg, his charioteer, to inspect and report. Loeg returned with a glowing account of the Tír Sorcha. He had been conducted to the house of Labraid Luathlam-ar-Claideb—Quick Hand on Sword—husband of Liban, where Fand was then residing. The rath was situate in the midst of 'a pure lake, whither companies of women resort'; before the door stood three stately trees, pure purple, and the bird-flock singing upon the branches of them without ceasing, 'and in the eastern

in *Irische Texte*, vol. i. pp. 197 *sqq*. Professor Windisch, who states that the tale is composed of materials from several distinct sources (*op. cit.*, pp. 202-3), calls attention to the thoroughly pagan character of it, despite the introduction of a passing allusion to Adam on p. 219. Portions of the descriptions of the Tír Tairngire contained in this tale and in the story of Mider have been rendered in metre by Dr. Douglas Hyde, *Literary History of Ireland*, pp. 202-3.

doorway of the *lios* a tree—not paltry the music thereon —of silver, on which the sun shines with exceeding radiance, like gold.' Within was the usual good cheer, including an inexhaustible vat of mead. Tempted by this account Cuchulainn repaired thither himself, and found that all Loeg had said was true, and more. The beautiful Fand consented to be his, on condition that he would aid her people in war against a rival god-clan; this done, he brought her back to Ireland. The upshot of it all was that Emer, whom Cuchulainn had always loved most fondly until Fand's spell was on him, became jealous of her rival, and sought to kill her. Cuchulainn objected to this, but Emer's devotion revived the unquenched embers of his flame for her. At the same time, Manannán had found that 'what our contempts do often hurl from us we wish it ours again,' and the piece concludes with the return of all to their *premiers amours*.

The Otherworld of the ancient Irish possessed no Tartarus. Malignant powers, indeed, there were in plenty; not to speak of a multitude of hags and witches, giants and ogres, goblins and spectres, the divine personages themselves often display a very sinister side of their character, while not uncommonly a brilliant chief or radiant lady of the Tuatha Dé Danann would be brother or sister to a hideous and savage hag or giant.[1] In like manner, the Irish Wonderland (Tír na n-Iongnadh) could show, along-

[1] As Zeus was brother to Pluto, and as the strife between the Olympian and Chthonian powers—the powers of light and darkness—are typified, in most mythologies, by discord between a pair of divine brothers; a conception surviving in such creations of the popular or the lettered imagination as Valentine and Orson, Alcina and Logistilla, etc.

side of its enchanted raths and Elysian pleasances, scenes of a widely different kind; seas and lakes haunted by terrible monsters, weird forests, and gloomy, perilous glens, although, it is true, this side of the picture is treated much less fully than the other. Nevertheless, there is no strict line of demarcation between the two, which exist side by side, as might the desert and fertile regions of the same country.

One of the nearest approximations to the gloomy Hades of the early Greeks is found in the realm of Scathach (The Shadowy) whither Cuchulainn was sent by the wizard Forgall Monach, his prospective father-in-law, in the hope of getting rid of him, but on pretext of completing his military education—an instance of the universal article of primitive belief that the ultimate arcana of knowledge are only to be won from the powers of death and darkness.[1] The approach to Scathach's country lay across a plain, to the one half of which the feet of whoso attempted to cross it would adhere, while in the other half the ground would rise and impale the passenger on the grass blades, like spear points, which grew thereon. Cuchulainn was guided across the plain by the familiar agency of a wheel and an apple, given him by a young man whom he found dwelling in a fairy rath, at the outset of his journey, and who thus discharged the office of *psychopompos*, which in one form or other—Sibyl, Michael, Virgil, hag or damsel—almost always appears to be indispensable. The way then led through a

[1] The episode is contained in the *Tochmarc Emere*, The Wooing of Emer, dated eighth century, by Professor K. Meyer. Miss Eleanor Hull translates the L.U. version in her *Cuchullin Saga*, pp. 56 *sqq*. Professor Meyer publishes a shorter version, with translation, in the *Revue Celtique*, xi. 442 *sq*.

narrow glen, peopled by monsters, and over high and perilous mountain passes. Finally, to reach his goal, he had to cross the 'Bridge of the Cliff,' an enchanted bridge, low at the two ends and high at the middle, of such kind that, so soon as one stepped upon either end, the other would rise and throw him back. This, Miss Hull says (*op. cit.*, p. 291), is the earliest occurrence in Irish legend of the bridge episode, which, as we have seen, had previously been a prominent feature in pictures of the Otherworld, and afterwards appears with almost equal frequency in the chivalrous literature of the Middle Ages. Miss Hull suggests that the idea, in the present case, is borrowed from the Norse; this, of course, is quite possible, having regard to the prominence in Northern myth of the Bridge of Giöll, crossed by Hermödr on his journey to the Shades in quest of the dead Balder; while the Wonderland depicted in the Erik Saga and in the Story of Gorm is likewise approached by a bridge.[1] However, without entering into the difficult question of the epoch at which the Balder myth assumed its present shape, or of the respective dates of the Norse and Irish legends in their original forms, the hypothesis hardly seems necessary to account for the introduction of so obvious and so widespread an incident into the Cuchulainn legend, where, moreover, the Bridge of the Cliff differs widely from the Rainbow bridge of Giöll and from the more commonplace bridges of the Norse Sagas. As Miss Hull herself observes, the idea recurs in another branch of Celtic story, the Arthurian legend,[2]

[1] Mr. Nutt gives abstracts of these stories in the *Voyage of Bran*, i. 297 *sqq*.

[2] In the Perceval legend, a bridge of glass occurs in Gautier's continuation of the *Conte du Graal* (Nutt, *Studies*, etc., p. 17).

and 'belongs to the Hell doctrine of nearly all Oriental religions' (*loc. cit.*). Several of these we have already examined, and have seen how the same idea passed into the eschatology of the Western Church. Neither is it confined to the cultured races, from Vedic India to Iceland; it occurs also among such primitive nations as the Inoits of Aleutia and the Bagadas of the Nilghiris. From them to Addison's *Vision of Mirza* is a long step in every sense.[1]

Another story connected with the same cycle, the *Echtra Nerai*, Adventures of Nera, otherwise called the *Táin Bo Aingen*, Cattle raid of Aingen,[2] may receive mention here as presenting a feature which frequently recurs in the ecclesiastical visions, while the main outlines of the story are preserved in modern folk-tales. As Ailill, king of Connacht, was keeping the Samhain festival in his rath of Cruachan, he offered to give his gold-hilted sword to any one who should dare to put a withe on the foot of a newly hanged man, who was swinging outside. Nera accepted the challenge, and after several vain attempts (the withe springing off of its own accord) succeeded. The corpse then spoke, and asked Nera for a drink, and Nera obligingly took the corpse on his shoulders, and offered to take him to a house which appeared hard by, standing amid a lake of fire. The corpse declined this offer, which is hardly to be

[1] A similar 'obstacle bridge' occurs in other Irish Sagas. In the *Voyage of Maelduin's Curach* is a bridge of glass, on which the passenger kept falling backwards. Of this kind must have been the bridge which the celebrated Irish M.P.—real or mythical—described as 'separating' two shores.

[2] Edited and translated by Professor K. Meyer in *Revue Celtique*, x. 212 *sqq.*, from the MSS. in T. C. D.—H. 2, 16 and Eg. 1782.

wondered at, and the rest of the story follows the conventional lines of the ordinary folk-tale, but we have here the moat of fire, as in the *Fis Adamnáin* and elsewhere.

Visits to the enchanted abodes of the Tuatha Dé Danann—to the Otherworld, that is—are common in the tales belonging to the third great group of heroic tales, second in importance to the Cuchulainn cycle above, namely, the Finn cycle, in which occurs the most celebrated of them all—the visit of Oísin to Niamh Cinn Óir, which so late as the eighteenth century inspired Michael Comyn with his fine poem, the *Laoi Oísin ar dTir na n-óg*. Still, the tales of this cycle, however ancient their materials, would appear to have undergone a somewhat modernising influence, comparatively speaking, in receiving artistic shape, in which last respect they betray more signs of a deliberately literary treatment than their predecessors, while in their treatment of the Otherworld they do not appear to have contributed materially to the evolution of the legend.

Distinct from the Finn cycle, though dealing in part with the persons and events of the period to which Finn has been assigned by tradition, is a group of highly picturesque tales relating to the dynasty of Conn Cedcathach (of the Hundred Battles) Árd Rí of Ireland, according to tradition, in the second century A.D. In the Conn cycle the Otherworld legend figures prominently, the monarch himself, his sons Árt and Connla, and his grandson Cormac, all having journeyed thither. These tales, moreover, furnish certain links which connect the *Echtra* with the *Imram* and *Fis*.

It is said to have been Conn's daily wont to make the circuit of Temair (Tara), in company of his Druids and

poets, to see that none of the Tuatha Dé Danann, or Daoine Sidhe, alighted thereon. One day, while so engaged, he trod upon a flagstone, which shrieked so loud as to be heard all over Temair and Magh Breg. Conn asked his chief Druid for an explanation of this wonder, but the Druid required a respite of fifty days before he could give it. At the end of that time the king and his suite again repaired to the spot, and the Druid declared that the name of the flag was Fál, and that it had been brought from Inis Fáil by the Tuatha Dé Danann to remain at Temair for ever, and any year the Árd Rí of Éire failed to look upon it, dearth would be on the land.[1] And suddenly a mist fell upon them, and from out of the mist was heard the sound of a horseman, who cast three darts at them. 'Whosoever aims at Conn in Temair will be violating the king's majesty,' exclaimed the Druid; whereupon the horseman came forward and, greeting Conn, invited him to his home. Conn followed, and soon reached a fair plain in which stood a royal rath, and a great tree, as it were of gold, in the doorway.[2] On entering, he saw a

[1] This flagstone, the Lia Fáil, was endowed with the property of shrieking whenever pressed by the foot of a lawful king. The frequency of vocal stones in Irish legend will be referred to later on. Popular tradition identifies the Lia Fáil with the stone now inside the Coronation Chair at Westminster, stolen by Edward I. from Scone, where the kings of Alban used to be crowned upon it, and whither it was said to have been brought from Tara by the Dalriad Scots. I believe, however, that the identity of the stone so taken to Scotland by the Dalriada with that of Tara has been impugned. The practice of inaugurating a king or chief upon a certain stone survived into late historical times.

[2] The habitual presence of the great tree outside the raths of the Tuatha Dé Danann is doubtless to be ascribed to the custom which

lovely damsel, a golden diadem on her head, standing by a silver vat hooped with gold, full of red ale, and a golden can and cup upon it. Beside it was a royal throne, whereon sat a Scál (champion) of majestic stature, and of a beauty never seen at Temair. Conn asked him who he was: he replied, 'No living champion am I, but one of Adam's sons returned from death; I am Lugh Mac Ceithlenn,[1] and I am come to reveal to thee the life of thine own sovereignty, and the sovereignty of every king who shall be after thee in Éire.'—'And the maiden who was present to them in the house was the sovereignty of Éire for ever.' Then were revealed to Conn the names of all the kings of his race who should succeed to him in Éire, a cup of ale being borne to the name of each. The scene, which suggests the similar revelation made to Macbeth in the witches' cavern, closes with a prophecy of St. Patrick—whom God should honour, and who should kindle a torch that would illumine Éire from sea to sea—and of the later races of kings that should rule over Ireland.

Here we have another instance of Christian embroidery upon a thoroughly Pagan stuff; however, the identification of the Dé Danann Lugh as a son of Adam returned from

prevailed in Ireland of having in a similar position a public tree of the tribe, round or beside which assemblies were held and games celebrated. The Irish chronicles frequently report the cutting down of such a tree by raiders as an insult to the invaded tribe. This practice was exactly paralleled in the mediæval republics of Italy, where an invading army would often put scorn and offence upon a city by cutting down the public tree which stood outside the gates, and was the central point in games and festivals.

[1] Cethlenn was the wife of Balor of the Mighty Blows, a Fomorian chief, and therefore of the Chthonian race of Tethra. She has left her name to Enniskillen, Inis Cethlenn, Cethlenn's Island.

the dead was true in a fuller sense than the author, probably, was aware.

Another visit of Conn to the Tír na n-Óg is related in a tale known as the *Echtra Airt*, or Adventures of Árt.[1] The Leanamhán Sidhe, who figures in this story, bears a more sinister aspect than do most of her order in Irish legend, and possesses affinities to the witch-lady or Lamia. She was Bécuma Cneisgel (B. White-skin), wife of the Dé Danann chief Labrad Luathlam-ar-Claideb (Swift Hand on Sword), and having been found guilty of infidelity, had been banished from the Tír Tairngire. Finding a curach on the shore, she stepped in; this 'trim skiff' of the Wonderland 'asked no aid of sail or oar,' and Bécuma, 'leaving it to the heaving of wind over sea,' reached Benn Edair, the Hill of Howth. Here she found Conn, who had retired thither to mourn the recent death of his wife, and introduced herself to him as Delbchaem (Fair-form), daughter of Morgan (Sea-born), come to Ireland from the Tír Tairngire for love of Conn's son Árt. However, it was ultimately settled that she should marry Conn himself, and she returned with him to Temair, having first obtained a pledge from the king, according to the rules of Irish chivalry, that he would grant her the boon she might ask of him, which proved to be the banishment of Árt for a year. Henceforth, all went wrong with the country; the land yielded neither corn nor milk, and the Druids, on being consulted, affirmed that by reason of Bécuma's

[1] *The Adventures of Árt, son of Conn, and the Courtship of Delbchaem*, *Ériu*, iii. 149 *sqq*. Edited and translated by Mr. R. I. Best, from the *Echtra Airt*, one of the *Prím-scéla* of Ireland, preserved in Early Modern Irish in the Book of Fermoy, R.I.A., a MS. of the fifteenth century.

wickedness the land was under a curse, which could only be removed by sacrificing the son of a sinless couple, and mingling his blood with the soil of Temair. Conn set forth in quest of such a youth; at Benn Edair he found a curach which bore him across the sea, through herds of strange sea-monsters of fearsome aspect, while the waves rose and the firmament trembled, until he came to a strange isle, 'having fair fragrant apple-trees, and many wells of wine, most beautiful, and a fair bright wood, adorned with clustering hazel-nuts, surrounding those wells, with lovely golden yellow nuts, and little bees, ever beautiful, hovering over the fruits, which were dropping their blossoms and their leaves into the wells' (tr. Best, *loc. cit.*). Hard by was a goodly house, the dwelling of Daire Degamra; the thatch was of birds' wings, white, and yellow, and blue; the doors were of crystal, and the posts of bronze. Inside was a crystal throne, whereon sat Segda Saerlabrad, son of Daire. Conn was made welcome; his feet were washed by an invisible hand, which likewise guided him to the hearth, wherefrom a flame started up of its own accord. Tables laden with various kinds of meat were set before him by invisible attendants, and a drinking horn was set thereon. There was a vat, finely wrought, of blue crystal, and three golden hoops about it, wherein Daire bade him bathe. Then he was bidden fall to; but it was *geis* to him to eat alone, whereas the inmates told him that it was equally *geis* to them to eat save alone; however, Segda, to oblige the guest, consented to eat with him. Next morning Conn asked permission to take Segda back with him, having heard that he was that son of a sinless couple of whom he was in quest. His parents admitted that this was so, for they had never come together save at

his conception, and so it had been with their own parents. Conn did not divulge why he needed the youth; nevertheless, his parents refused to let him go, but Segda proving resolute not to deny the king, they consented, putting him under the protection of Conn, and Árt and Finn, and the 'men of art,' for his safe return. The *dénouement*, showing how Segda was preserved from sacrifice, is too long to relate here, having nothing to do with our subject.

The story then goes on to Árt, whose adventures are the ostensible subject of it. Bécuma behaved like the typical stepmother of the folk-tale. In order to procure his absence from Ireland, she challenged him to chess, and on winning—by foul play, being aided by spiritual agencies at her command—put a *geis* on him not to return to Ireland without the before-mentioned Delbchaem, daughter of Morgan, who dwelt in an isle in the sea. Árt, like his father, set out in a curach, and reached an island wherein was a dún similar to that of Daire. In it was a company of fair women, and among them Crede Firalaind (Truly-beautiful). Árt was welcomed and feasted; he told his tale, and Crede told him that his coming had long been decreed; she gave him a 'variegated mantle, with adornments of gold from Arabia,' and three kisses, and showed him a crystal bower, wherein was an inexhaustible vat, which straightway became full again, however often emptied. Here Árt stayed a fortnight, and upon his leaving, Crede instructed him as to the way he had to follow. This way was wild and difficult, full of the dangers and obstacles which commonly waylay the hero of romance, though they only call for mention here as constituting, with the realm of Scathach before described,

as near an approach to a Tartarus myth as Irish legend contains. The terrors which Árt had to traverse included stretches of ocean filled with sea-monsters that had to be fought and overcome; a wood, where it was as though spear-points of battle were under the feet, like leaves of the forest; a venomous icy mountain, with a glen full of toads which lay in wait for passers-by; an icy river, with a narrow bridge over, defended by a giant whom no weapons would harm, fire burn, nor water drown. Of course, all ended as it should, but the remainder of the story casts no light upon the Otherworld.

One of the best-known stories belonging to this cycle is that which relates the adventures of Cormac, son of Árt, in the Tír Tairngire.[1] At the dawn of a May morning Cormac was walking on the ramparts of Temair, when he espied a dignified, grey-haired warrior approaching him, bearing on his shoulder a branch of silver and three golden apples on it; and the music which those apples made when shaken would lull to rest sick folk, and wounded men, and women in the pains of childbirth. After the two had exchanged greetings, Cormac asked the stranger whence he had come. 'From a land,' he replied, 'where there is nought save truth, and there is neither envy, nor jealousy, nor hate, nor haughtiness' (tr. W. S.). They plighted their friendship, and Cormac begged for the musical branch, which the other gave him, exacting in return the promise of three boons which he should crave. A year later the warrior returned, and claimed his first boon, which was none other than Cormac's own daughter

[1] Edited, with translation and notes, by Mr. Whitley Stokes, *Irische Texte*, III. i. 183 *sqq.*, from the Book of Ballymote, R.I.A., and the Yellow Book of Lecan, T.C.D., both MSS. of the fourteenth century.

Ailbe. Though loath, Cormac submitted, bound by his promise,[1] and stilled the lamentations of his household by shaking the branch, and casting them into a profound sleep. After a month the warrior returned, and demanded Conn's son, and, finally, his wife. Cormac still felt himself bound to comply, but he started off in pursuit, followed by all his people. Upon their passing beyond the walls a dense mist fell upon them, and Cormac found himself in the plain alone. Before him stood a great dún, with a stockade of bronze about it, and within it a house of silver. The thatch of this house was the wings of white birds. It was half thatched only, and troops of fairy horsemen kept bringing other wings to complete it, but the wind was always carrying them away. After this, he saw a man feeding a fire with a great oak-tree, entire, and as soon as one was consumed he would replace it with another. Then he came to an enclosure also ramparted with bronze, and four houses therein; one of these was a great palace, 'with its beams of bronze, its wattling of silver, and its thatch the wings of white birds. Then he sees in the garth a shining fountain, with five streams flowing out of it, and the hosts in turn a-drinking its waters. Nine hazels of Buan grow over the well, the purple hazels drop their nuts into the fountain, and the five salmon which are in the fountain sever them and send their husks floating down

[1] Another instance of the sacred character with which the Irish code of honour invested a pledge, and which is apparent in the stories, before quoted, of Mider, Conn, Árt, etc. So in the *Baile Mongáin*, a story printed by Prof. K. Meyer as an appendix to his *Voyage of Bran*, Mongán is obliged to surrender his wife Dubhlaca to the King of Leinster (apparently an euhemerisation of Manannán, who figures in an earlier version, also given by Prof. Meyer (*op. cit.*)) in fulfilment of a like promise.

the stream. Now the sound of the falling of those streams is more melodious than any music that men sing' (W. S. *loc. cit.*). In the house Cormac found a warrior of exceeding beauty, both in face and figure, and a maiden, 'the loveliest of the world's women,' with a helmet of gold on her yellow hair. Her feet, Cormac noticed, were washed by invisible hands, and within a partition was a bath, heated without visible agency, and Cormac bathed there. In the afternoon a man came in, bearing in one hand an axe and in the other a log of wood, and followed by a pig. At the warrior's bidding, the man kindled a fire with the log, killed the pig, and put him in a caldron on the fire to boil. After a while the damsel bade him turn the pig, but he replied that it was useless, for that pig would never be done until a truth had been told for every quarter. Thereupon each one told some truth; the man how he had obtained the log and the pig, the properties of which were such that after the log had been burnt out at night, and the pig eaten, the pig would be found alive in the morning, and the log whole; and one quarter of the pig was cooked. The warrior told how there was a field outside the lios, which was found, at ploughing time, to be ready ploughed, harrowed, and sown with wheat; at harvest time, ready stacked, and so on, and they had been eating of that wheat ever since, and it none the less; and another quarter was done. The girl said that she had a herd of seven cows, whose milk sufficed for all the people of the Tír Tairngire, and seven sheep whose wool furnished the garments of them; and the third quarter was cooked. Then Cormac related the reason of his coming, and the pig was cooked entirely. When Cormac's portion was set before him, he said that he never ate unless there were fifty men in his

company. Then the warrior sang a strain which sent him to sleep, and on waking he beheld fifty men, and with them his wife, son, and daughter. So they set to upon the food and ale in all mirth and gladness. And a silver cup was placed in the warrior's hand, who, as Cormac admired the workmanship of it, told him that there was something yet more wonderful about it, for when three lies were told under it it would break into three pieces, while the utterance of three truths would make it whole again. He then told three lies, and the cup broke, even as he had said; then, to restore it, he declared that neither had Cormac's wife nor daughter seen a man, nor his son a woman, since they had left him, and in proof that his words were true, the cup came together, perfect as before. So Cormac received again his wife and son and daughter; and with them the cup, that he might discern between truth and falsehood in his judgments, and the bell-branch for music and delight. And the warrior declared that he was Manannán Mac Lír, who had allured Conn to the Tír Tairngire that he might behold the wonder of it. And the men who had brought the wings to complete the thatch of the house were 'the men of art in Ireland, collecting cattle and wealth which passed away into nothing'; the man burning oak-trees was a young lord, paying out of his own husbandry for all that he consumed; the fountain was the Fountain of Knowledge, and the five streams issuing thereout the five senses, 'And no man will have knowledge who drinketh not a draught out of the fountain itself, and out of the streams. The folk of many arts are those who drink of them both' (W. S. *loc. cit.*).

The foregoing group of stories from the Conn cycle probably represent a very ancient legend, several of them

being manifest variants of a single original, which at some period became connected in turn with the successive members of the dynasty. This is apparent even in several minute points of detail: *e.g.* Conn's first wife, for whom he mourned, and Cormac's wife, taken from him by Manannán, were both named Ethne Taebfada (Long-side). The group represents a stage in the theory of the Otherworld in advance of previous conceptions;[1] and although the ideas which it contains fall far short of an eschatology, properly so called, they yet contain materials which later writers were able to employ in that sense. We can discern here the rudiments of an ethical theory of the Otherworld. In the story of Connla, the land of Tethra appears as a happy place whither the souls of famous chieftains and warriors are borne across the sea, as Achilles was rapt away to the isle of Leuke; and even this aristocratic Elysium—parallels to which abound from Polynesia to Greece, and from Greece to America—contains in germ a certain ethical idea. The favour of the immortals is reserved for chieftains famous for their birth and qualities, and thus the process is begun which first designates as a 'gentleman' the scion of a noble *gens*, and then goes on to require in such an one qualities worthy of his origin, and to

> 'Loke who that is most vertuous alway,
> Privë and apert, and most entendeth ay
> To do the gentil dedes that he can,
> And take him for the gretest gentilman.'

Thus, in the Adventures of Cormac, Manannán describes

[1] At the same time, it is perceptible that incidents of the *märchen* type are more numerous in this group than in the great heroic cycles.

the Tír Tairngire as 'a land where there is naught save truth, and there is neither envy nor jealousy, hate nor haughtiness'; a description which is applied in a greatly amplified form to Heaven, at the close of the *Fís Adamnáin*, and in other Christian writings. It reminds us of a passage already cited from the Avesta, descriptive of the Var of Yima. Indeed, in Ireland as in Irân, 'everything that maketh a lie' is excluded from the ideal country, even as we have seen a want of fidelity to plighted faith to be the vice most inconsistent with the character of a king.

In the episode of Segda Saerlabrad, and again in the Adventures of Cormac, occurs that idea of chastity in connection with the Tír Tairngire to which, in its more developed form in the *Voyage of Bran*, we shall have to refer. This group, moreover, is marked by a tendency to conscious allegory which is foreign to the previous cycles. The maiden whom Conn finds in the dún is a personification of the sovereignty of Éire; and the dún visited by Cormac is a veritable 'House of the Interpreter.' The ethical significance of the wonders seen by Cormac on the way thither, and there expounded to him, is entirely symbolical of the life of this world, wherein the story resembles not merely the *Shepherd of Hermas* and the *Pilgrim's Progress*, but the *Tablet of Cebes* and the *Choice of Herakles* among the Greeks, and countless moral apologues, Oriental and mediæval.

The Dé Danann chieftains, seated on their crystal thrones beside the marvellous tree and the vat of ale, are an advance upon the Dagda, seated beside his vat of ale and apple-trees, and display the legend in a stage at which it is ready to coalesce with, and give native

colour to, the Hebraic imagery of the Throne and its Occupant.

The pleasantly told little apologue of the Fountain of Knowledge and its five streams, which are the five senses, interprets a very primitive Irish legend in the light of a simple but not shallow philosophy.

The Irish heroic tales having passed through the hands of Christian redactors, the question occurs whether we must ascribe to them any ethical element that occurs therein. Although it is hard to pronounce with certainty, where they contain no express reference to the Christian faith, it would be rash, and probably a mistake, to reply in the affirmative in all cases. Certain ethical ideas there must have been in pre-Christian Ireland, and the places and the mode in which we find them are often those in which they might most naturally appear. In the instances referred to, there is nothing inconsistent with a system of ethics far more primitive than that to which the ancient Irish might conceivably have attained. Moreover, there is nothing about the passages in question suggestive of an interpolation; they arise quite naturally out of the narrative, and in one striking instance, that of Segda Saerlabrad, are expressly bound up with the pagan idea of human sacrifice in a manner that no Christian writer could or would have invented. Neither does it seem likely that an ecclesiastical writer who should make such interpolations in the interest of the Christian religion would make no mention of that religion in connection with them. The very tales in question show in what a clumsy and perfunctory manner such interpolations were made, when it was found expedient to bring an ancient legend into agreement with Christian doctrine.

Instances of this are furnished by the prophecies of Manannán Mac Lír in the *Voyage of Bran*, and the reference to the Judgment in the Adventures of Connla. The last-named story further contains a prophecy of the coming of the law which shall destroy Druidism and its charms 'upon the lips of black lying demons.'

As previously mentioned, there exists in these same stories a connection between the Echtra and Imram classes of tales. In several of them the hero departs in his curach in quest of a Wonderland that lies oversea,[1] passing in the course of his voyage through the herds of sea-monsters which beset the heroes of the Imrama, and beholding marvels and visiting enchanted islands entirely similar to those which occur in the latter.

In the Imrama proper we may note in an ascending scale the gradual preponderance of Christian ideas, and the assimilation of the old Irish conception of the Otherworld to a genuine eschatology. Some of them, such as the *Voyage of Bran*, and Cuchulainn's quest of the sons of Doel Dermait, relate a purely pagan legend, though the clerical redactors have sought to dissociate them from the paganism which was scarcely forgotten in their day by the interpolation of a Christian prophecy, or the like, as in Christian Rome the statues of the Olympian deities were converted into the effigies of Christian saints by the apposition of a nimbus to their heads. Then come a group written from a Christian point of view, and enforcing a lesson in Christian morals, although the framework of the story and most of the episodes are derived from the older literature:[2]

[1] In the story of Cormac, Manannán's Paradise, instead of lying oversea, is placed within a dún, at which Cormac arrives by land.

[2] So the group of Carolingian romances, which long passed for the work of Archbishop Turpin, retained the characteristics of a barbar-

such are the Voyages of Maelduin, of the sons of Ua Corra, and of Snedgus and Mac Ríagla. Finally, there are the purely ecclesiastical Imrama, included in the acts of one or other of the saints, of which class the Voyage of St. Brendan is in every way the most important example.

We have been induced somewhat to anticipate the earliest of the Imrama, and to give the greater part of the description of Manannán's Elysium contained in the Voyage of Bran, in order to present in a single view the different forms in which the Otherworld was conceived by the ancient Irish. The story goes on to relate how, the maiden's song ended, the branch leapt back again into her hand, and she vanished; but the glamour was on Bran, and he set forth in his curach across the sea. Here he meets Manannán Mac Lír, traversing the sea in his chariot like a veritable Poseidon.[1] The god accosts Bran, and sings to him a song concerning his Elysian realm beyond the sea. His description adds but little to that contained in the maiden's song; one touch, however, we may note, by reason of its frequent occurrence in subsequent writings. He speaks of a 'charming delightful game,' at which the denizens play over their wine, 'men and gentle women beneath a bush, without sin, without transgression.' This passage has been accredited to Christian transcribers; however, the remarks previously offered in relation to such interpolations in general would seem to apply to the present case. The very poetical

ous society in their views concerning magic, superstition, morals, etc., though sanctified by the addition of ecclesiastical miracles, and other matters of edification, which earned for it the formal approval of Pope Calixtus II. in the year 1122.

[1] Manannán is presented in like fashion in the story of Mongán, *op. cit.*

description of the Tír Tairngire contained in this tale, while thoroughly in accord with the more primitive legends, though amplified and drawn by a more masterly hand, is marked by a refinement of imagination and execution more than sufficient to account for the occurrence of the idea in question, without any air of incongruity with the rest of the description.[1] We may add that it seems most unlikely that a Christian scribe would, if he could, introduce a touch of the kind, when he has not found it necessary, in this and other legends where the old Irish conception of the Otherworld has undergone an euhemerising and Christianising process, to delete the episodes of enchanted dúns and islands where the wayfarer is refreshed with delights akin to those of the Mohammedan Paradise.[2]

[1] So in the tale of Mider, *ante*, where, as here, it is introduced into the description of the pagan Elysium, Magh Mór; the ecclesiastical interpolations, as here again, being brought in in the usual incongruous manner.

[2] As in the *Voyage of Maelduin's Curach*, an Imram of substantially the original type, treated from a Christian point of view. The trait is copied in the *Adventures of Tadg Mac Céin*, a late mediæval romance composed in the archaic style, where it receives from Tadg the characteristic comment, ''Tis queer, though charming'; he evidently regarded it as an example intended rather for edification than imitation. It is interesting to note how the idea recurs in modern Irish poetry, as, indeed, practically, in Irish peasant life. In poor Mangan's beautiful *Love Ballad*, translated or imitated from the Irish, the hero—

> 'Sheltered by the sloe-bush black,
> Sat, laughed, and talked, while thick sleet fell,
> And cold rain.
> Thanks to God! no guilty leaven
> Dashed our childish mirth.
> You rejoice for this in Heaven,
> I not less on earth.'

Manannán's song in the present tale contains a palpable interpolation of the usual kind, in the form of several stanzas prophetic of the coming of Christ.

Another Imram belongs to the Cuchulainn cycle, and in its original form was probably older than any other story of this class that has come down to us, but it is only preserved in a later redaction. Cuchulainn having overcome in battle the king of the Ui Maine, the king put a spell on him that he should know no peace until he had ascertained why the children of Doel Dermait had left their country. Cuchulainn could find no one to tell him this, and became a prey to unrest. At length he had occasion to fight a duel with the king of Alba's son, whom he vanquished and would have slain, but that the prince begged his life, which Cuchulainn granted him on condition that he would solve the riddle. This the prince could not do himself, but he promised to take Cuchulainn to those who could. Cuchulainn accepted these terms, and embarked on board the prince's ship with his charioteer Loeg and his comrade Lugaid. They first came to a fair island, wherein was a dún surrounded by a wall of silver and a stockade of bronze upon it. They received a cordial welcome, but upon propounding their question were directed to another island, where dwelt Achtlann, daughter of Doel Dermait and wife of Condla Coel Corrbacc, a kind of marine Enceladus, who used to lie all across his island, and at every breath he drew would send a great wave along the sea with the wind of it. Achtlann guided them to a third island, where two great giants bore joint rule, Corpre Cundail, a kinsman of Doel Dermait, and Eochaid Glas Corpre. The former challenged Cuchulainn to fight, and, being overcome, treated

him hospitably, and told him of Doel Dermait's children, who were held captive in that island by Eochaid. Next day Cuchulainn attacked Eochaid in his 'Place of Torture,' the Glenn; but the giant was so tall that Cuchulainn could only reach him by jumping on to the rim of his shield, from which Eochaid kept blowing him off each time. Cuchulainn, however, by dint of one of those gymnastic feats for which he was famous, leapt into the air over the giant and slew him from above. He then released the captives, who straightway bathed in the giant's blood, and being thus healed of their tortures and sufferings, were enabled to return to their own country. In this story, which assuredly bears small imprint of Christian influences, we probably have the earliest form of that episode of the release of the captives of some giant or wizard, which recurs in the Graal romances, and is one of the most frequent incidents of the romantic tales of chivalry.[1] Its meaning is clear, the release of the dead from the powers of the lower world, a feat which is no less frequently accomplished by different means, in mediæval stories, by a saint or jongleur, according as the scope of the work is religious or comic.

The earliest of the Christian Imrama that we possess is *The Voyage of Maelduin's Curach*, the composition of which Professor Zimmer refers to the eighth century at latest, though it contains interpolations which Mr. Nutt considers to have been made at the end of the tenth

[1] One of the most explicit instances occurs in the Graal series, in the *Queste*, when Perceval is informed that the Castle of Maidens is Hell, and the captives therein are the souls that await Christ's coming; the seven knights that defend the castle being the seven deadly sins (Nutt, *Studies*, etc., p. 41).

century.[1] It relates a voyage undertaken by Maelduin, a young noble of the Eoghanachta, in order to find the murderer of his father who had been slain by a marauder of Leix. The tale is a remarkably fine one of its kind, and its simple and picturesque prose is by no means improved upon by Tennyson's poem, the subject of which it suggested. It is long, and contains a great variety of incidents, some of which, it is very possible, may not belong to the original Celtic stock, but may be due to classical sources. Certain it is that a great part of them belong to that class of 'ferlies' which old writers used to place in *terræ incognitæ*, and have their analogues in the writings of Herodotus and Aelian, and, Mr. Stokes says, Megasthenes, to whom we may add Lucian and Sinbad. The majority of them, however, are variants, and often developments, of topics common in Irish legend. We must content ourselves with giving a brief summary of those episodes which most illustrate the development of the Otherworld legend in Irish ecclesiastical literature.

As usual, the narrative mainly consists of the visits paid by the wanderer to a number of enchanted islands, which are mostly of the usual Wonderland pattern, though the present description of them contains, in most cases, certain distinctive features of its own. The wanderers are entertained in stately dúns, with walls and palisades of the precious metals or of crystal; they are regaled with magic food; there is the usual Calypso episode, etc. etc. One island is raised above the sea upon a pedestal; in another is a river of fire; one is encompassed with a wall of water;

[1] Edited and translated by Mr. W. Stokes in *Rev. Celtique*, ix.-x., from a version contained in the L.U., parts being completed from later versions. Cf. *Voyage of Bran*, i. 162-3.

over another a stream rises on one side and descends on the other, forming an arch like a rainbow; upon another is a tall column with a mystical veil depending from it and enshrouding the island,—all of which recall features of the Paradise described in the *Fis Adamnáin.*

Some of the incidents bear a decidedly infernal significance. On one island the voyagers beheld a horse-race, and heard the shouts of the crowd; both jockeys and spectators were demons. It has been suggested that this incident, for which no parallel exists, so far as I am aware, in earlier narratives, may be of Norse origin; possibly it may be one of those loans from classical literature before referred to, and ecclesiastical influences may have depicted in Stygian colouring the pagan Elysium in which departed heroes continue to ply their wonted sports.[1] At the same time, it is possible that the writer may have dealt in a like manner with the sports of Magh Mell, in Manannán's Elysium, described in the *Imram Bráin.* Of course, the question of foreign importation turns upon the other question, whether horse-races, as well as chariot-races, were known in Ireland at the date when the *Voyage of Maelduin* was written.

On another island they saw a party of demon smiths forging a mass of glowing metal, which one of them threw after the curach, as Polyphemus threw the rock after Odysseus.[2] On another they came to a huge, hideous mill, and the miller, huge and hideous to match, told them that the grist which he cast into his mill was all things that had

[1] Pars in gramineis exercent membra palaestris;
Contendunt ludo, et fulva luctantur arena, etc.
VIRG., *Aen.*, vi. 642-3.

[2] *Odyssey*, ix. 481 *sqq.*

been begrudged on earth. This demon miller is rather a favourite symbol in Irish legend, and is not confined to professedly religious compositions. It occurs in the story of Mongán in a slightly different form; in the Voyage of the sons of Ua Corra, who saw all manner of precious things cast into the mill, and the miller told them, 'I cast into the mouth of the mill all things for which grudging has been made, and 'tis the Miller of Hell I am'; and it survived in local tradition as the *Muilleann Luprachán* (Pixies' Mill) near Tuam.[1]

There is something weirdly picturesque in this demon miller who casts into his Mill of Vanities, and grinds down there, all the objects of worldly covetise; the conception reminds us rather curiously of the mystical Wheat-sieve in the carnival hymn of the Florentine Piagnoni, *Il Trionfo del Vaglio.*

In striking contrast to these rude sketches of the infernal realm is a short but vivid episode in which the subjects borrowed from the primitive Elysium are rendered by a master's hand. One island by which the voyagers passed was surrounded by a wall of fire, which revolved about the island continually. 'There was an open doorway in the side of that rampart. Now whenever the doorway would come (in its revolution) opposite to them, they used to see (through it) the whole island and all that was therein, and all its indwellers, even human beings, beautiful, abundant, wearing adorned garments, and feasting, with golden vessels in their hands. And the wanderers heard the ale-music. And for a long space were they seeing the marvel they beheld, and they deemed it delightful' (trans.

[1] David Fitzgerald, 'Popular Tales of Ireland,' *Rev. Celtique*, iv. 189 *sqq.*

W. S., *loc. cit.*).[1] Never perhaps in sacred or profane literature has a passage of equal brevity portrayed with equal vividness that Celestial Feast which, as fact or symbol, enters into every creed; from the gross delights of that 'humbler heaven' which 'kindly Nature' has given to the hopes of primitive man, to the imagery wherewith higher creeds seek to picture the indescribable *ben dell' intelletto*. There is no superfluous detail, and none is needed, but the picture flashes out before the reader's eye as it did before Maelduin and his crew—that ideal region, cut off from the wanderers by a fiery wall which forbids their access, but grants them a fleeting vision before they pass on their way.

This tale contains a group of incidents which are largely represented in the Acts of the Irish Saints. On one island an old hermit, fifteenth in descent from St. Brenainn of Birr, dwelt beside a lake. Hard by, a great eagle, very old, alighted, bearing in his beak a branch and berries on it. Two other eagles came and picked off the vermin which infested the plumage of the first; they then ate of the berries and cast others into the lake, after which the old eagle plunged into the water, and washed until his youthful vigour returned to him, after which they all flew away. One of Maelduin's crew bathed in the lake wherein the berries had been cast, and lost neither tooth nor hair, nor suffered from any infirmity until the day of his death. As we have seen, mystical birds abound in Irish descriptions of the Otherworld, but in the present curious episode

[1] The root conception belongs to the common stock of Celtic tradition. We shall see more of the fiery rampart later on; for the revolving wall, cp. the castle in the Welsh story of Peredur, which spun round faster than the winds.

we can easily recognise the classical legend of the Phœnix. Mr. Nutt well develops this point in the essay to which we have so often had occasion to refer, and gives an interesting parallel in an Anglo-Saxon poem on the Phœnix. For this, and the discussion thereon, we must refer the reader to Mr. Nutt's work. We may note the very characteristic way in which the Irish writer adapts the foreign incident to the accepted forms of the national literature. The rejuvenescence of the eagle is effected not by fire but by water, which owes its properties to certain berries dropped therein, these evidently belonging to the species which dropped from the quicken-trees—a variant of the hazels of Buan—into the wells where the Salmon of Knowledge consumed them, and thereby acquired his supernatural virtues.

Another island was covered with trees, which were the resort of birds; and here dwelt a man, clad with his own hair. This was a pilgrim from Ireland who had been wrecked on the island, and the birds were his children, with whom he was to abide there till Doomsday.

Another anchorite, likewise clad with his own hair, dwelt upon an island surrounded with a golden rampart, and the ground of the island was white as down.[1] He was fed by a fountain, which ran on Wednesdays and Fridays with whey or water, on Sundays and the feasts of Martyrs with good milk, and on High Days with ale or wine.

On yet another island dwelt a hermit covered with white hair, so that he looked like a white bird. He had been cook at the monastery of Torach, where he used to embezzle and sell the provisions of the community, and hoard

[1] Probably a reminiscence of some hermit who had chosen a snowy region in the North for his retreat.

the proceeds, until he became exceeding rich, and waxed proud. One day he was bidden bury a peasant; on digging the grave, he was accosted by a corpse already buried on the spot, who forbade him to lay that sinner's corpse atop of him, a holy man. The cook asked the corpse what boon he would grant him for compliance; the corpse replied, 'Eternal life'; and the cook found another resting-place for the peasant. Some time later, the cook felt a desire to quit the island, so he set forth in a curach, laden with all his ill-gotten wealth. At sea he was hailed by a man seated upon a wave, who told him that all the air about him was thick with demons, because of his pride and thefts, and bade him fling all his riches into the sea. He obeyed, reserving to himself only a little wooden cup. The man gave him seven cakes and a cupful of whey-water, which the cook carried to a rock, and this was his only food for seven years, after which time he had lived on salmon which an otter had brought him periodically.[1] In the man sitting upon the wave, it is impossible not to recognise an adaptation of Manannán Mac Lir, who drove over the waves in his chariot to meet Bran.

The prevalence of the island-hermit incident in Irish legend is accounted for by the early history of the Irish Church. The pastoral duties and missionary work of the early saints necessitated frequent voyages to the Western Isles of Scotland, to Britain and to Gaul, while that passion for solitude and retirement, which alternated in them with

[1] A similar miraculous provision by the agency of some animal occurs in the legends of several of the Irish hermits. In Wolfram's *Parzifal*, the Grail appears as a 'stone which yields all manner of food and drink, the power of which is sustained by a dove, who every week lays a Host upon it.'—Nutt, *Studies*, etc., p. 25.

an intense activity in their calling, and even a vehement partizanship in public life, found full gratification on the small islands which fringe the western coasts of Ireland. These islands naturally became the scene of those miracles which in Ireland, as elsewhere, clustered about the names of the saints; but here, as in other things, a strong nationality asserted itself, and recollections of the island Paradise of antiquity entered largely into the legends of the saints, rendering easy the transition from the island retreat to the Paradise where the saints dwelt with Enoch and Elijah, beside the Tree of Life, amid the songs of the bird-souls of the righteous. No doubt a certain number of these wandering saints would be blown out of their course to strange lands, and bring back tidings of the wonders they had actually seen, which would lose nothing in their passage from mouth to mouth. One such case is reported by Adamnán himself, that of one Baitan, who set out with several others in quest of an ocean solitude, but returned after long wanderings.[1]

In the *Voyage of the Curach of the Ua Corra*,[2] the ethical and eschatological element is entirely in the ascendant. Conall Dearg ua Conaill Fhinn, a rich and hospitable noble of Connacht, being discontented at having no children,

[1] *Vita S. Columbæ*, I. xiv.

[2] *Iomram Churraig h-Ua g-Corra*, ed. and trans. by Mr. W. Stokes, in *Rev. Celt.*, xiv. 22 *sqq.*, from the Book of Fermoy, a MS. of the fourteenth century. The tale, in its present form, is later than that of Maelduin, though Professor Zimmer considers that the original was written early in the eighth century, the present being probably 'a thirteenth-century *rifacimento*, save the opening portion, which he (Zimmer) thus looks upon as being the earliest fragment of this genre of story-telling.'—Nutt, *Voyage of Bran*, i. 162. Mr. Stokes, however, regards the extant version as a work of the eleventh century, *loc. cit.*

entered into a compact with the Devil, who undertook that Conall should have children, on condition that they should belong to himself. In due time Conall's wife bore him triplets, who received 'heathen baptism' by the names of Lochan, Einne, and Silvester. These grew up to be mighty men of valour; howbeit, they considered that as they belonged to the Devil, it was hard if they might not harry his enemies. Accordingly, they set themselves to plunder and burn the churches and monasteries of Tuam, and of half Connacht besides. Finally, they proposed to add the last touch to their guilt by murdering the Erenach of Clogher, their mother's father, and burning his church on him. The better to effect their purpose, they visited the Erenach and partook of his hospitality, and went to sleep, awaiting the coming of night. Then Lochan had a dream, wherein he saw Hell with its four rivers, one of them full of toads, another of serpents, the third running fire, and the fourth ice. He also saw the 'Piast of Hell,' 'and abundance of heads and feet on it,' a form under which 'the old Dragon' often appears in Irish sacred legend. He was then taken to Heaven, and saw 'the Lord Himself on His throne, and bird-flocks of angels making music to Him,' the sweetest singer of all being Michael, in form of a bird. On waking, he related his vision to his brethren, and they all, moved to repentance, vowed thenceforth to serve God instead of the Devil. Accordingly, 'they made staves of their spear-shafts,' instead of beating their spears into pruning-hooks, and betook themselves to St. Finden of Clonard, to whom they made confession. He instructed them in religion for a year and a day, and then bade them go and restore the churches which they had destroyed. This they did; and then, 'one day when they came forth over the edge of the

haven, they were contemplating the sun, as he went past them westwards, and they marvelled much concerning his course. "And in what direction goes the sun," say they, "when he goes under the sea? And what more wondrous thing," say they, "than the sea without ice, and ice on every other water?"'[1]

These reflections, so typical of the old Irish attitude towards Nature, although to us they may seem to be more in keeping with the ideas of much more recent times, awoke in the Ui Corra that spirit of wandering, than which, perhaps, no other Leanamhán Sidhe casts more potent spells on man. They got a friend, a wright, to build them a ship, wherein they embarked, with a bishop, a priest, a deacon, a shipwright, a buffoon, and a servant, being nine in all; then, at the bishop's bidding, they committed themselves to the guidance of the winds.

The incidents of the voyage and the lands they visited resemble those described in the Voyage of Maelduin, several of the islands at which they touched exhibiting the *mise en scène* of pagan legend, adapted in the usual manner to the Christian drama. Thus on one of these islands they found an orchard of fair, fragrant apple-trees, and a most beautiful river flowing through it; and 'when the wind would move the tree-tops of the grove, sweeter was their song than any music' (trans. W. Stokes, *loc. cit.*). And the apples and the river, which was of wine, cured all wounds

[1] Here, again, the harp in the hands of a modern minstrel re-echoes the ancient tune:

> 'And, as I watch the line of light, that plays
> Along the smooth wave, tow'rd the burning west,
> I long to tread that golden path of rays,
> And think 'twould lead to some bright isle of rest.'—MOORE.

and sickness. Many of the adventures belong to the common stock of wonder voyages; here, as in the Voyage of Maelduin, mention is made of the island uplifted above the sea by a pedestal, whence the voices of the islanders could be heard, but the speakers not seen; of the watery arch, the pillar and net, the demon smiths, etc. On one island flowers were growing as big as tables, dropping honey, and about them beautiful bright bird-flocks were singing. Here dwelt a 'son of the Church,' Dega, a disciple of the Apostle Andrew, who had gone on a pilgrimage across the ocean to expiate his having forgotten his nocturn one night; he was awaiting Doomsday on that island, together with the birds, who were the souls of holy human beings.

In these islands, the abode of pilgrims and hermits until Doomsday, we have, in a pagan setting, the limbo of the *boni sed non valde*. A little further on, we come to what is the first incident of a purely Purgatorial nature occurring in this class of literature. One island was divided into two parts—the one part inhabited by the living, the other by the dead. Multitudes were lying there on red-hot flagstones, with red-hot spits through them, howling terribly as a fiery sea sent its billows of flame over them. These were they who had failed to make expiation for their sins on earth, and were tormented in this manner until Doomsday.

The voyagers also perceived flocks of birds rising from out of a river, pursued by eels, otters, and black swans. These were the spirits of the damned, let out of Hell for a day's respite on Sundays, though they were not allowed to enjoy this boon in peace, for the eels, etc., were demons that kept pursuing them. One of these birds had three

beautiful rays on its breast; this was a woman who had forsaken her husband, but had brought him food when sick and in want. This notion that the damned were periodically allowed a day's holiday[1] was generally accepted by the early Church in Ireland, as elsewhere. Sometimes, as here, this was believed to take place so often as every Sunday; by some, only on the great festivals of the Church, as Christmas Day and Easter. Our author, like several other of the Irish Churchmen, was a strict Sabbatarian, and gives to violations of the Sunday a place disproportionately large, visiting them with a severity that seems excessive. For instance, a solitary rower was rowing with a fiery spade upon a fiery river, the waves of which kept breaking over him; this was a boatman who had plied his trade on Sunday. The lurid picturesqueness of this figure, worthy of Dante, is spoiled by the disproportion between crime and punishment. A horseman bestrode a fiery horse; he had stolen his brother's horse, and ridden him on a Sunday. There was also a black, smoky giant, carrying an iron staff as big as a mill-shaft, and flakes of fire, as big as fleeces, coming out of his throat. This was no Typhoeus, nor heresiarch, nor conqueror, the scourge of nations, but a man who had carried firewood on a Sunday; for this he now bore on his back

[1] A similar belief existed in the old Latin religion. Outside the city gates of every town there used to be a pit, the 'Mundus,' which was regarded as the receptacle of the souls of the dead. It was covered with a flagstone, which was lifted on three days in the year, occurring in August, October, and November, to give the imprisoned souls a holiday. Cp. the belief, once prevalent all over Europe, and still existing in many parts, that on All Souls' Eve the spirits would go through their towns in procession, and visit their former homes.

a bundle of faggots, the load of six oxen, which would blaze up, ever and anon, when he would fling himself into the sea, 'but it was increase of pain to him.'

Reference has already been made to the demon miller, grinding the world's vain riches. One island was peopled by men wailing aloud as they were mangled by the fiery red beaks and talons of sable birds, while their tongues were aflame within their heads; these were dishonest smiths.

Other islands which the Ui Corra visited were variants of the earthly Paradise, being inhabited by pilgrims, solitaries, etc., like those already described.

The *Voyage of Snedgus and Mac Ríagla*[1] is equally Christian in conception, and in some respects approximates yet more closely to the eschatology of the *Fis*. The men of Ross, unable to endure the tyranny of Fiacha, their chief, killed him, thereby rendering themselves liable to death. At the instance of St. Colm Cille, this doom was commuted to the old Irish punishment of exposure on the sea; and they were set adrift, sixty couples of them, in as many small boats, 'for God to judge them.' It was Snedgus and Mac Ríagla that were sent to bear this sentence to them, and shortly afterwards they embarked on their own account to make a pilgrimage to the East. After visiting several islands of the familiar type, they came to one whereon was a great tree, and many beautiful

[1] *Imrum Snedghusa agus Mic Ríagla*, ed. and trans. by Mr. Whitley Stokes, *Rev. Celt.*, ix. 12 *sqq.*, from the Yellow Book of Lecan, before mentioned; and see O'Curry, *MS. Materials of Irish History*, pp. 333 *sqq*. Mr. Stokes ascribes the tale to the middle of the seventh century; Mr. Nutt, to the middle or latter part of the ninth century. —*Voyage of Bran*, i. 231.

birds perched thereon. And 'melodious was the music of those birds, singing psalms and canticles, praising the Lord. For they were the birds of the plain of Heaven, and neither trunk nor leaf of that tree decayed' (trans. W. Stokes, *loc. cit.*). On the top of the tree sat a great bird, with a head of gold and wings of silver, who told of the Creation of the World, of the Nativity, Baptism, Passion, Resurrection, etc.; 'and he tells tidings of Doom; and then all the birds used to beat their sides with their wings, so that showers of blood dropt out of their sides, for dread of the tidings of Doom' (*Ibid.*).

After which they came to a land where they found the banished men of Ross, who were to abide there until Judgment, for they were guiltless in what they had done; Fiacha having apparently deserved his fate. 'Good is this island,' they said, 'wherein we are, for in it are Elijah and Enoch, and noble is the dwelling wherein is Elijah.' And they showed the voyagers a lake of water and a lake of fire, which should long since have come over Eire, had not St. Patrick and St. Martin been praying for the land. The travellers asked to see Enoch, but were told that he was 'in a secret place, until we shall all go to battle on the Day of Judgment.'[1]

[1] The anticipation of a general battle immediately prior to the Judgment, though an article of many religions (*e.g.* the Persian, the Norse, etc.), is unusual in Irish writings of the present class; it is probably suggested by the prophecies contained in the Revelations, and in the prophetical books of the Old Testament, more especially the mention of the Battle of Armageddon in Rev. xvi. The mention of Enoch in connection with this battle is singular, and suggests the legend of Enoch in the Talmud. The disappearance of a national hero, and his seclusion until he shall appear to take part in some great conflict, though common to the traditions of most races (some of

We might have expected to find Enoch and Elijah in the Terrestrial Paradise, in company of the bird-flocks, as in other writings, but the construction of the *Imram* was commonly loose. The introduction of them shows that the fusion of the national traditions with the teaching of the Church was now complete. This is equally apparent in the description of another island, on which they landed: 'A great lofty island, and all therein was delightful and hallowed. Good was the king that abode in this island, and he was holy and righteous,' etc. (trans. W. Stokes, *loc. cit.*). His dún had one hundred doors; at each door was an altar, and at each altar a priest, celebrating the Eucharist. This king and his dún again remind us of the castle of the Graal.

We have now traced, in outline, the development of the Otherworld theory in Irish legend, from its primitive conception as a Land of Cockayne, presided over by the Dagda, with his inexhaustible ale-vat and ready-roasted pigs, to its identification with the Terrestrial Paradise, though without losing its distinctive features. One step only remained to be taken before the *Imram*, thus modified, should pass beyond the country of its birth, and assume a prominent place in the literature of mediæval Europe. This step was taken in the group of stories—some legendary, others more or less historic, though intermingled with legendary matter—which narrated the

the most familiar being Arthur, Dietrich of Berne, Holger Danske, Frederick II.—not Frederick I., Barbarossa), has always appealed to the Irish imagination, and recurs in the modern folk-tales of Gearoid Iarla, O'Sullivan, the MacMahon, etc. It will be remembered that on Mr. Parnell's death many believed that the Chief was not really dead, but had only disappeared for a time.

voyages of the Irish Saints, or, rather, in that most famous example of its class which purports to give an account of the travels of St. Brendan of Clonfert, surnamed 'the Voyager.' So entirely does it surpass all others in popularity and influence, and especially in those circumstances which connect it with our subject, that it may be taken as the representative of its class; as, however, it is later in date of composition than the *Fis Adamnáin*, and even reproduces some passages of the latter, it may be left for a later section.

The authors of the Voyages of the Ui Corra, and of Snedgus and Mac Ríagla, had not only given an entirely Christian tone to the *Imram*, but, without abandoning the imagery of the Otherworld handed down by the national traditions, had blent therewith a number of conceptions derived through the medium of the Apocalyptic literature of the early Church from both classical and Hebraistic sources. Further, they prepared the transition from the *Imram* to the *Fis*.[1]

The Visions of the Saints figure prominently in the hagiology of Ireland as of other countries; not all of them, however, related to the Otherworld, or, in particular, treated the Otherworld as a subject in itself, and not merely

[1] There is no intention to suggest that the *Echtra*, the *Imram*, and the *Fis*, or the tales in each group, succeeded one another in the order in which they are referred to in the text, either in their present form or in their original composition, least of all as regards the very ancient materials which are embodied in all of them. It has been attempted to present them in such order as may best illustrate the development of the eschatological idea, and the increasing fusion of native traditions with the Church legends. A later writer, on account of his subject, or for other reasons, might sometimes employ a more archaic form of narrative than some of his predecessors.

as the medium for conveying some moral lesson, or for revealing the fate of an individual. Adamnán, in his *Life of St. Colm Cille*, one of his authentic works, states that the saint was often rewarded with angelic intercourse, and received frequent revelations concerning the fates of the good and of the wicked.[1] However, the most famous of these Visions, with the exception of that of Adamnán, were those of St. Fursa (*c.* 570-*c.* 650 A.D.), which derived additional celebrity from the mention made of them by Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History*.[2]

The exact place of St. Fursa's birth and race appear to be unknown, though it seems that he was a Munsterman. The principal scene of his early ministrations was the neighbourhood of Loch Orbsen (Corrib), and he afterwards spent some time as a hermit upon an island in the ocean. At a later date he visited England, probably about 633 A.D., as recorded by Bede, and won the favour and respect of Sigebert, King of East Anglia. The monastery of Burghcastle, in Suffolk, was founded under his auspices, and his labours were attended with many conversions among the Saxons. He next passed over to

[1] Sanctorum quoque angelorum dulces et suavissimas frequentationes luminosas habere meruit. Quorumdam justorum animas crebro ab angelis ad summa coelorum vehi, Sancto revelante Spiritu, videbat. Sed et reproborum alias ad inferna a demonibus ferri saepenumero aspiciebat.—*Vita S. Columbæ*, I. i. Part III. of the Life is largely devoted to these visions, which, however, do not throw light upon our subject.

[2] Bede, *Hist. Eccl.*, III. xix., where the author relates St. Fursa's arrival in England from Ireland, and gives an account of his visions. See, too, the Very Rev. Canon O'Hanlon, *Lives of the Irish Saints*, under 16th January, where an account is given of several Acts, Visions, etc., of St. Fursa, mostly of the usual mediæval type.

Gaul, where he enjoyed a great reputation, and exercised influence over King Clovis II. In Gaul he founded the monastery of Lagny, and a branch of it at Perronne.

Fursa's visions of the Otherworld must have appeared to him before his visit to England, probably during the solitude of his ocean retreat. However, he continued to see visions, of one sort or other, during the latter part of his life. Indeed, it is probable that in his case, as in so many others, the visions were largely produced by physical causes—a constitutional tendency, stimulated by special circumstances—for we read that the first of his visions came to him in a trance, during an illness, and the rest after long fasting.

In the first vision, his soul was conveyed out of the body, and 'he was graced with the sight and the hearing of the praises of the Heavenly Hosts.' Three days later, he was again taken by three angels, who represented the Trinity, and borne through clouds of hideous, misshapen demons, who attempted to bar his progress, and cast at him showers of fiery arrows, which the leading angel caught on his buckler.[1] On their way they passed by Satan, who raised up his head, like that of a serpent, and argued against Fursa's acceptance into Eternal Life, by reason of the sins to which he was prone, and among these, chiefly, a vindictive spirit; but although he showed that 'the Devil can cite Scripture for his purpose,' the angels answered his arguments, and they passed on. Then Fursa, like Scipio in the 'Dream,' was bidden to look back upon the world; and it appeared to him as it were a dark valley, and in the air about it four fires were burning. These were the fires that destroy the world; and the first

[1] Probably suggested by Ephesians vi. 16.

fire was Neglect of the Baptismal Vow to renounce the Devil and his works; the second fire was Covetousness; the third Dissension, and the fourth Injustice. Fursa descried a fire approaching, and was dismayed; but the angel said to him, 'What thou hast not kindled shall not consume thee'; for the fire tried every one according to his works; and 'as the body is consumed by self-willed pleasure, so shall the soul burn with everlasting punishment.' The doctrine is as old as the Rabbis, but the moral lesson is here finely conceived and forcibly conveyed. Seven times more did as many demons in succession attempt to bar Fursa's progress, contesting his right to admittance with various eristic arguments, supported by texts of Scripture. It is to be remarked that the obstacles which commonly obstruct the hero's access to the enchanted lands of fable, and often survive in theological adaptations of the subject, have here assumed an aspect almost purely intellectual and spiritual. All objections having been satisfactorily answered by the angels, Fursa found himself surrounded by a great brightness, and saw vast multitudes of angels and saints flying with wings in motion. Among these Fursa recognised several friends, with whom he held converse. He then approached a region of serener air, where the angelic host, disposed in four choirs, were singing the *Tersanctus*. Here he received long instructions in theology and morals, which he was bidden to announce to the princes and prelates of Ireland; he was then conducted back to his body. On the way, a great fire approached in a threatening manner; the angels diverted it, but from out of the midst of it demons shot forth a sinner, aiming him at Fursa. The angels cast him back, but not until he had struck Fursa's shoulder and

burnt it. This was a sinner from whom Fursa had accepted a cloak, while ministering to him on his death-bed.[1]

Another of the Visions of the Irish saints, attributed to St. Laisrén, has been made available for the first time by Professor Kuno Meyer.[2] This Laisrén, he thinks, was probably the most celebrated of the many saints bearing that name, the Abbot of Lethglenn (Leighlin) in the Co. Carlow, who died in the year 638. From the mere fragment that survives, it would seem that the complete Vision must have treated the subject with great fulness, though a part of Laisrén's visit to Hell is all that is left. It is more in the style of Fursa's vision than that of Adamnán, though it differs from both in certain respects, notably in the manner of the revelation to the seer of the vision. Laisrén had gone to Cluain Cháin, in Connacht, to purify a church there, and after nine days' fasting fell asleep. In his sleep he heard a voice say 'Arise!' and upon this command being repeated, he raised his head, crossing himself. The church was all lighted up, and between the chancel and the altar stood a shining figure, who said to him, 'Come towards me!' At this Laisrén was seized with a trembling, and in some mysterious

[1] This episode suggests the manner in which Virgil protected Dante from the onset of Filippo Argenti (*Inf.* viii. 40 *sqq.*), though the latter passage does not contain any moral, in connection with Dante's own previous conduct, as is the case in Fursa's vision, and in similar moral legends of the Middle Ages.

[2] *The Vision of Laisrén*, in *Stories and Songs from Irish MSS.*, by Professor Kuno Meyer, *Otia Merseiana*, i. 1899; ed. and trans. with notes from Rawlinson B. 512, a fifteenth-century MS. in the Bodleian. Professor Meyer considers that the original was an O. I. work of the late ninth or early tenth century (p. 112).

manner he became aware that his own spirit was parted from the body, and was hovering over his head. The roof of the church then opened, and two angels, taking Laisrén's soul between them, bore him aloft into the air, where a host of angels received him. Further progress was opposed by three hordes of fiery demons, armed with fiery spears and darts, one of whom preferred against Laisrén a long charge, enumerating all the sins which he had committed since birth, and of which he had failed to make confession; 'and the demon said nothing that was not true.' However, 'an angel of the great host' succeeded in answering all charges, and dismissed the demons; he then bade Laisrén's conductors take him to see Hell. The two angels let him down into a glen lying towards the north, which seemed to be as long as from the rising of the sun to his setting. They entered into a pit like a cave between two mountains, and at length came to a lofty black mountain, in the upper part of which was a glen, broad below and narrow above, and this was the porch of Hell. In the midst of the glen Laisrén saw very many of the people of Ireland, wailing; so many that he thought a pestilence must have brought them thither, but the angel explained that 'whoever is under the displeasure of God after thee, here do they behold (their) souls, and this is their certain fate, unless they repent' (tr. K. M., *loc. cit.*). Laisrén would fain have spoken to them, but the angel forbade it, 'lest they despair.' However, he enjoined Laisrén to preach repentance to them, whereby they should escape that evil. 'And again, he who shall live in righteousness, he sees life while he is in the body, and he shall be in life if he is steadfast in righteousness. Tell them also,' said the angel, 'that he who lives in righteous-

ness be steadfast in it, for there is not much time for them to consider, until death comes to them' (*Ibid.*).

They entered into Hell, and saw a wild and billowy sea of fire, and the souls aflame therein, wailing, their heads above the surface. Some had fiery nails through their tongues, others through the ears, or the eyes; others, again, were being driven by demons with fiery forks. Laisrén, asking what these different torments might mean, was told that those with nails through their tongues had been less frequent in worship and praise than in blasphemy, falsehood, prying, and boasting. Here the fragment breaks off.

In his preface to the foregoing work, Professor Meyer appears to anticipate further discoveries in this field of research; however, of all the Irish Visions yet brought to light, the *Fis Adamnáin* excels the rest in interest and importance even more completely than the Voyage of St. Brendan excels all other members of its own class, and may be regarded as the type of its *genre*, in its most highly developed form.

Before proceeding to examine the contents of that *Fis*, we may glance at two other works by Irish ecclesiastical writers which show that a great part of the imagery and incidents contained alike in the sacred *Imram* and in the *Fis* belonged to a common stock of ideas current in the Irish eschatology of that period.

One of these is the *Scél Lái Brátha* ('Tidings of Doomsday'), a homily ascribed to 'Matthew, son of Alphæus,' which is preserved in the *Lebor na h-Udri*, and was therefore written in the eleventh century at latest.[1] In it

[1] Edited by Mr. Whitley Stokes, in *A Middle Irish Homily*, *Rev. Celt.*, iv. 245 *sq.*

occurs the familiar distinction between the *Mali sed non valde* and the *Mali valde*, both of whom are condemned in their several degrees; the *Boni sed non valde*, who are finally saved by virtue of their almsgiving, and the *Boni valde*, who go direct to Heaven. This classification, though not expressly made in the *Fis Adamnáin*, lies at the root of the scheme of rewards and punishments there set forth. Indeed, Professor Zimmer points out the frequency of this division in works written by Irish authors or under Irish influences.[1] The *Limbus patrum*, the *Limbus infantium*, etc., represent similar attempts of the mediæval theologians to provide for cases which do not seem to them to be adequately dealt with by the broader distinctions. Dante, in effect, adopts an analogous fourfold arrangement; the infernal regions inside and without the City of Dis being allotted to sinners of greater or less degree of guilt, while the system of Purgatory is adapted to the respective cases of the *Boni valde* and the *Boni sed non valde* respectively.

In its descriptions of both regions of the Otherworld, the homily presents several points of resemblance to the *Fis Adamnáin*. 'In no wise pleasant is the path of the sinful; they find not food nor drink, but perpetual hunger,

[1] Cited by Mr. Nutt, *Voyage of Bran*, i. 225, where it is suggested that this circumstance may have arisen in the distinction between the Pagan Elysium and Heaven, a provisional Hell being added for the sake of symmetry. But it appears quite as probable that this classification may be another instance of the acquaintance of the Irish Church with Eastern writers, for the fourfold division already exists in the *Book of Enoch*, c. 22, the several categories being: (1) The martyrs, as in the *Fis Adamnáin*; (2) The rest of the righteous; (3) Sinners who have been punished in this life; (4) Sinners who have not made expiation.

great thirst, and bitter cold. Then they are conducted to the Devil's house amid the sound of despair and heavy, long-drawn moaning. Piteous are the crying and wailing, the weeping and sighing, the mourning and smiting of hands of the sinners, as they are dragged towards Hell's torments. But theirs is the weariness of remorse without avail; for their prayer is not heard there, seeing that they had not hearkened aforetime while they were in this life, body and soul dwelling together.' Here, too, we have the simile of the closing of the locks, which are here threefold: 'to wit, the closing of Hell upon them through ages everlasting; the closing of their eyes to the world upon which they had set their love; and the closing of the Kingdom of Heaven against them.' The description of the torments of Hell is copious and varied. Cold, gloomy tracts, abounding in dark, fœtid lakes, alternate with regions of glowing though murky flames,[1] where the sinners stand on red-hot flagstones. Herein swarm monsters of various kinds: adders, toads, cats which rend the damned, demons who torment them and hew them with swords, and, above all, the Piast, the old serpent—'a strange serpent,' indeed, for he is depicted with one hundred necks, and one hundred heads on each, and five hundred teeth in every mouth; one hundred arms he has, one hundred hands on every arm, and one hundred claws on every hand.[2]

[1] Cp. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, i. 61-3:—

> 'A dungeon horrible on all sides round,
> As one great furnace, flamed; yet from those flames
> No light, but rather darkness visible.'

[2] Possibly this amplification of the usual description of the Piast owes something to the picture of Rumour, in Book IV. of the *Aeneid*.

There is little attempt made to discriminate between the penalties accorded to different kinds of guilt.

Heaven is described in the same rhapsodical style as in the *Fis Adamnáin*, the *Félire Oengusa*, etc.

Another moral treatise is the *Dá Brón Flatha Nime*, 'The Two Sorrows of the Kingdom of Heaven,' *i.e.* the two sorrows referred to ch. 33 of the *Fis Adamnáin*. Here, too, Elias is represented as standing in Paradise, the Gospels in his hand, and he preaching to the birds that perch on the Tree of Life, eating its berries.[1]

5. The Fis Adamnáin

The general plan of the *Fis Adamnáin* is distinguished from that of the other similar writings that have come down to us by an architectonic character to which they can

[1] David Fitzgerald, *loc. cit.*, pp. 192-3, where he cites from Kuhn, *Die Herabkunft des Feuers*, a passage of the Vedas: 'Two birds sit on the top of the imperishable açvattha, one eating its figs, and the other looking on.' He also cites from the *Félire Oengusa*: 'A great tree that was in the Eastern world, and the heathens used to worship it, so that the Christians fasted against all the Saints of Europe that the tree might fall, *et statim cecidit.*' This passage contrasts curiously with the terms in which the 'great tree' is described in other Irish writings. The *Félire* also speaks of Elijah, Gospel in hand, preaching to the spirits under the Tree of Life in Paradise, while the bird-flocks come to eat the berries of it, which are sweeter than honey and headier than wine; just as the ale of the Tír Tairngire is described as headier than the ale of Éire.

The human souls in the form of birds are a variant of a belief of world-wide extent. In Lithuania and the neighbouring countries the belief still exists, or existed lately, that the souls of dead children return as birds. Nearer to the present instance is the Mohammedan belief that the martyrs for Islam feast on the fruits of Paradise in the shape of beautiful green birds.

make no claim. The structure proper to the *Imram* was, in great measure, that of a framework into which a greater or less number of incidents could be fitted, according to the author's taste, without impairing the general effect; the same, in a somewhat less degree, may be said of the *Echtra*, which are more nearly akin to the romance of adventure than to the epic. The early Christian writers, again, solely intent upon edification, and being for the most part men of little culture—for this species of composition, after all, was but a by-way of ecclesiastical literature—were usually content to repeat a few topics belonging to the common stock of ideas prevalent in their day, and paid but little heed to literary effect, or even to the clear conception, or orderly presentment, of their subject.[1]

Thus, in the *Fis Adamnáin*, we have the first serious attempt made between the Vision of Enoch and the *Commedia* of Dante, either to think the subject thoroughly out, or to treat it in a literary spirit: an attempt on the part of the author to construct in his own mind some distinct idea of the Otherworld, and to present his conception to his readers in a coherent form. In some respects, indeed, the construction of it is superior to that of its early predecessor, for, with due allowance made for the topographical minuteness displayed by the author of the Book of Enoch in his reproduction, in the description of Hell, of the details of his model, the *Fis* manifests a more complete grasp of the subject as a whole, while it gains by the omission of the voluminous discussion of things celestial and sublunary, in which the older writer

[1] Cp. hereon Professor Alessandro d'Ancona, *I Precursori di Dante* (Firenze, 1874), pp. 29-30, 108, etc.

indulges, and which can only encumber a work conceived with less breadth and executed with less power than Dante, and he alone, has brought to the task.

All the same, it cannot be denied that these architectonic qualities are still at a rudimentary stage, and the very fact that so moderate an exercise of constructive power should suffice to set this work, as a literary achievement, so far above all other precursors of Dante, does but enhance our appreciation of the height at which the stately edifice of his creation towers above all previous efforts.

The structural imperfections of the *Fis Adamnáin* are enhanced by the appearance of composite design which the work bears in its present form, being apparently made up from two distinct versions, or else having been 'perfected' by some redactor by the addition of other matter. The latter explanation seems to us most probable. The first twenty chapters contain a complete and consistent account of the soul's progress from death to judgment, followed by his relegation to the place which he has merited. It is this part of the work which displays that care for construction already noticed; a great part of the details, whether of native or foreign origin, which had come to be accepted as conventional features of the *Fis* or sacred *Imram*, is here rejected, and the borrowings from the old romantic literature, though still abundant, are made duly subservient to the general design. This part, moreover, together with the peroration in chapter 32, bears testimony, by way of direct reference and otherwise, to the author's possession of a greater erudition, and a wider culture, than were evinced by most of those who had treated of the same subject. Thus, apparently, we are entitled to conjecture that chapters 1-20, chapter 31 (probably), and chapter 32,

may represent the work which originally purported, not, indeed, to have been written by Adamnán, but to contain the account of a vision seen and already related by him. If this hypothesis be correct, then the evidences of superior culture and erudition, apparent in this part of the work, and entirely consistent with what we know of Adamnán, increase the probability that it is founded upon some more or less accurate tradition of a vision actually related by him. For, to repeat what has been said on an earlier page, there is nothing but what is natural and probable in the tradition that Adamnán beheld, or composed for spiritual edification, a vision of the kind then so much in vogue, and took the occasion of a great concourse of the chief men of Ireland in order to promulgate it; while it is equally probable that a man of his culture and acquirements should have expended upon his task an originality and executive skill previously unknown, and altogether improbable that a work of one of the foremost and most famous men of his day, after being thus publicly made known, should have been left unrecorded save by the passing mention of a chronicler.

To return to the structure of the *Fís*: at the end of the first twenty chapters, all that was necessary, in order to complete the design, was to bring Adamnán back into Paradise, and to dismiss him with the admonition to communicate what he had seen and heard, as in chapter 31, after which the peroration in chapter 32 naturally follows, and forms a fitting conclusion to the whole. However, it would seem that the redactor, following the example frequently set by mediæval compilers, who knew not how often the half is better than the whole, and were apt to look on perfection as consisting rather in the abundance of

matter than in the due disposition of it, has attempted to supplement the design of the original author by the introduction of additional details which had long ere then become matters of common form in descriptions of the Otherworld. Even so, however, it must be admitted that he has managed his transitions with more than common skill. Although the wording of chapter 20 suggests that it was the intention of the original author to represent the fate of the lost in concise but impressive terms—a plan quite in keeping with the general tone of restraint which pervades the work—it might yet have been quite consistent with his design to insert the usual description of the various torments with which the different kinds of sinners are afflicted, and such a description would follow on quite naturally in the place where it actually occurs in the existing text. But the author of this part, whether the original author or a later editor, does not rest content with such a description; he introduces what amounts to a structural alteration of the work, and that in a style wholly inconsistent with the design of the earlier part. For in that part the road has been fully traced by which the departed spirits have already reached their final habitations; now, however, their pilgrimage is resumed anew, and the familiar bridge incident appears in chapter 21, where it discharges its usual double function of an approach to the Divine Presence, and of a sieve, or winnowing fan, as it were, for separating the wheat from the chaff. Wholly consistent as this is with mediæval eschatology, it is entirely inconsistent with the general plan of the present work, whereby that separation is effected by quite other means. Minor inconsistencies occur in the purgatorial nature of several of the punishments described in this second part, for we might expect that all require-

ments of the kind had been fulfilled during the soul's progress through the seven so-called Heavens. These small inconsistencies, of themselves, would count for little, and might be regarded as faults of construction on the author's part, or as the result of the imperfect development of the purgatorial theory, which leads to similar inconsistencies in other writings of this class, where a clear distinction is not often made between a normal process of purgation in the intermediate state, and the postponement, in special cases, of the final decision; occurring as they do, they acquire a certain significance as tending to accentuate the divergence of plan in the two parts of the work.

A similar addition, attributable to the same motives, would appear to exist in the last three chapters of the work. As already suggested, chapter 32 would bring the work to a satisfactory conclusion; however, the mediæval compiler was commonly a simple-minded person; for him, as for 'honest Diggory,' the 'old grouse in the gunroom' possessed an infinite variety which age could not wither, nor custom stale, and, like a child or peasant, he objected to a familiar tale being omitted in its usual place, or being shorn of its proper incidents. The picture of Enoch and Elijah beside the Tree of Life in Paradise, surrounded by the bird-flocks of the righteous to whom Elijah preached the Gospel, had become one of the most familiar and picturesque features of the Irish Paradise; therefore a place must be found for it. The most obvious place would be that part of Heaven where, as it is, the birds are described as singing the hours in the Divine Presence, and there, we can hardly doubt, the original author would have inserted it, had he chosen to make use of the familiar image. However, it must, I think, be admitted that he exercised a wise

discretion in omitting it, graceful and picturesque as it is; for he has constructed his scheme of Heaven after what must seem to us the most obvious and appropriate plan, though one which, strangely enough, found little favour with his compeers: he has made the enthroned Deity the centre of all, so that to have introduced a further group about a subordinate centre would have been to break into the design. We may therefore be grateful to the hypothetical redactor for appending the episode merely by way of a *coda*, without obtruding it into what would have been its proper place, but in which there was no room for it. In so doing, he may have desired to give the work a devout and edifying termination, and to close it, as it were, with a sacred voluntary.

We may now proceed to recapitulate some of the principal features of the *Fis*, even at the risk of a certain amount of repetition, in order to show at a glance the relation in which it stands to other writings of the same class, both native and foreign.

The work opens with an exordium in praise of the Creator, regarded chiefly in His capacity of Righteous Judge, and Dispenser of rewards and punishments, the aspect of Him most pertinent to the subject in hand. Already, in this formal opening, we seem to recognise the existence of a deliberate plan, whereby the present work is distinguished from others of its class, and this impression is strengthened as the author goes on to cite, by way of precedent or authority, similar revelations that had been vouchsafed to holy men of earlier date than Adamnán. These authorities have already been considered in Section 3 of the present part; apparently, however, the account of the vision which the Apostles beheld upon the death of the

Virgin Mary, to which the author had access, must have been more ample than in the group of apocryphal writings to which we have referred. We may note that the revelation in question was made by the Angel of the West, the conventional region of the departed. The citation of St. Paul probably refers to the apocryphal revelation which bears the Apostle's name, rather than to his own words in his Epistles, for these neither mention a visit to Hell, nor describe the state of the dead in either place; though, indeed, neither did such a revelation form part of St. Peter's vision, as described in the Acts, though our author's words appear to imply that such was the case. The mention of St. Peter's vision affords a curious instance of the manner in which the imagery belonging to the national literature was apt to give its own colour to an Irish writer's treatment of foreign matter. The musical properties with which the author, apparently on his own responsibility, has endowed the cords which let down the four-cornered vessel from Heaven, recall the musical stones of the *Tír na n-Óg*, of which further mention must be made later on.

It is noteworthy that the author, in his list of authorities, makes no mention of earlier Irish visions, or, indeed, of any source which was attributed to post-Apostolic times.

A similar vision, we are told, was vouchsafed to Adamnán on the Feast of St. John the Baptist, when his soul was parted from his body, and conducted by his guardian angel to view Heaven and Hell, with their respective inhabitants. Even such a pilgrimage was set before Dante by his guide,[1] and though Adamnán's chronicler does not here make

[1] Cp. *Inferno*, i. 144 *sqq.*: 'loco eterno Ove udirai le disperate strida Di quegli antichi spiriti dolenti, Che la seconda morte ciascun grida: E poi vedrai,' etc.

mention of a separate region devoted to *color che son contenti Nel fuoco, perchè speran di venire, Quando che sia, alle beate genti*, we have seen that the case of these spirits was dealt with by the Irish as by the Italian writer, though the extent to which the purgatorial theory was developed between their respective epochs caused them to treat the subject with very different degrees of precision.

The selection of Adamnán's guardian angel as *psychopompos*, rather than Michael, or some other of the Heavenly Host,[1] may possibly be ascribed to the preference which our author occasionally evinces of an ecclesiastical to a legendary treatment. On the other hand, we may note the analogy between the soul's guidance through the Otherworld by his guardian angel, and the like function ascribed by the Avesta to the beautiful maiden 'who was his own conscience,' and was probably an allegorising development

[1] In nearly all the visions the seer is provided with a guide or instructor, though there is a great variety in the persons invested with this office. The earliest of these is the Archangel Michael in the Book of Enoch, and he retains his functions in a large proportion of the subsequent visions, and even in the conventional relations of a visit to Hades in Renaissance and post-Renaissance literature. Dryden, indeed, in his Essay on Epic Poetry, complains of the unfair share of work in this department that is thrust upon him. In the Vision of Esdras he is associated with Gabriel and thirty-four other angels. In the Vision of Fursa he is conducted by three angels who represent the Trinity. In other narratives St. Paul or St. Peter figures. In the later mediæval visions the guardian angel appears in this capacity with increasing frequency, and in particular in the Irish legends from the time of St. Patrick, who received his revelations through the mouth of his angel Victor. In the Shepherd of Hermas, the apparition of the object of Hermas's affection, followed by that of the sibyl-like personification of the Church, is a very curious anticipation of Beatrice instigating Virgil to undertake Dante's guidance.

of the Fravashi, or spiritual *alter ego*, which was held to belong to every man.

We now begin to perceive the extent, hitherto unexampled, to which conscious design and literary form enter into our author's method. The celestial country, indeed, is described in general terms as 'a bright land of fair weather,' like Magh Mell, and all other pagan Elysiums; but, as the theme develops, we perceive a wide divergence alike from the material delights of the pagan Otherworld, and the conventional amenities described in ecclesiastical legends. As befits the Heaven of a creed which makes the *summum bonum* to consist in the enjoyment of the Beatific Vision, the Deity is represented as the centre of the whole, and all persons and accessories are grouped with direct reference to Him. In the Voyage of the Sons of Ua Corra, the Lord is introduced, seated on the Throne, and bird-flocks of angels making music to Him, and the idea as there presented might stand for a development of the Dagda myth, where the god sits beside his magic apple-trees and vat of ale, and the birds of the Tír Tairngire sing to him.[1] In the present case, however, it seems evident that the description contained in the Apocalypse was the author's source of inspiration.[2]

Here again the author's ecclesiastical proclivities appear in his description of the abode of the blest in a manner

[1] Cp. the manner in which the Dé Danann chiefs are often represented in the heroic romances, sitting in state in their dúns: *e.g.* Lugh Mac Cethlenn, in the story of Conn, thus enthroned, with a great tree in the doorway of his dún, and the birds singing on it.

[2] Revelation iv., xx., etc. Cp. the Book of Enoch, where One clad in white robes sits in glory in the crystal mansion, whence a river of fire issues.

recalling the interior of a church, with chancel rails, and choir stalls wherein the righteous stand, like monks, in cassocks and hoods of white,[1] while the place was illumined by seven thousand angels, who stood round about instead of candles. The separation from the Throne, by means of a portico, of the saints to whom their final seats had not yet been awarded, appears to have been suggested by the use in the early churches of the narthex as the station for neophytes.[2]

The floor of Heaven, like 'fair crystal, with the sun's countenance upon it,' seems to have been suggested by the 'sea of glass, mingled with fire,' in Rev. xv. 2, which, in turn, had been anticipated, in some sort, by the Pûitika sea in the Avesta, beside which the Tree of Life grew. The grouping of the saints about the Throne would likewise appear to be an amplification of the description in the Revelation.[3] The Apostles and the Blessed Virgin, we

[1] Revelation iv. 4; vi. 11, etc.

[2] A conception similar in kind, though different in form, is apparent in the dún with a hundred doors, and at each of them an altar, and a priest celebrating mass thereon, in the Voyage of Snedgus and Mac Ríagla. Cp. the Castle of the Graal in the Perceval romances. The accessories of Christian worship are frequently introduced into the Heaven of mediæval legends, though seldom with such minuteness as in our text. Cp. the seventh- or eighth-century legend of Saints Theophilus, Sergius, and Hyginus, who came to a church built of crystal and precious stones.—Ancona, *op. cit.*, p. 32. This church, indeed, was not meant to symbolise Heaven, but corresponds to the churches on the mystical islands of the Irish *Imrama*. Praise and psalmody, as among the joys of Heaven, of course have Scripture warrant; it remained for Swedenborg to crown the bliss of his elect, who in other respects *se réjouissent moult tristement*, with the privilege of listening to sermons through all eternity.

[3] Cp. the Vision of Esdras, where the Apostles and Patriarchs and all the righteous are arrayed about the Tree of Life.

are told, occupy a special place, next to the Lord Himself; the Apostles on His left hand, and next to them the patriarchs and prophets, and on His right the Virgin, and next to her holy maidens, 'and no great space between,' a graceful and kindly touch. About them are babes and striplings, and 'bird-choirs of the heavenly folk'; further on, others of the righteous stand 'in ranks and lofty coronals about the Throne, circling it in brightness and bliss, their faces all towards God.' Here we have, in essentials, the Celestial Rose of Dante's Paradise (canto 31); the bird-choir, and, a little later, the guardian angels that keep flitting to and fro among the several companies of the righteous, remind us of the spirits which flitted in and out of the petals of the Rose like bees.

Several other passages are impressed with the author's ecclesiastical turn of thought. The Throne stands in the south-east, probably because the direction of Jerusalem; reference is made to the nine degrees of Heaven, *i.e.* the Angels, Archangels, and Principalities; Powers, Virtues, and Dominations; Thrones, Cherubim, and Seraphim; the geographical distribution of the saints in accordance with the four quarters of the world—a distribution distinct from the fourfold division of mankind according to their merits, to which allusion has been made—is probably of the same character.

The sevenfold wall surrounding Heaven appears to contain a reference to the seven Heavens; the different colours of these walls may, as suggested, be a reminiscence of the walls of Ecbatana, as described by Herodotus, though it is quite possible that the idea may have occurred to the author spontaneously.

In our author's representation of the Court of Heaven

we already find, completely developed, that idea of the subject which was perpetuated long afterwards by the masters of Italian art. His picture of the enthroned Deity, with the Virgin beside Him, the Saints standing round about Him, and the celestial choirs surrounding the whole, might well be taken for the description of some painting by Fra Angelico; nor are the gem-like radiancy of the angelical painter's works, nor the august blitheness which pervades them, entirely absent. Indeed, writings of this class are not without value as a preface to the history of sacred art, as indicating the origin of the stereotyped fashion in which the masters treated certain religious subjects—which fashion was not created by the arbitrary choice of the primitives, and perpetuated through any want of inventive power on the part of their followers, but represented their attempt to portray these subjects in accordance with the traditional form with which legend had already invested them.

One very striking image, and, so far as I know, the offspring of our author's imagination, is the symbol whereby he has endeavoured to represent the Divine Omnipresence—'a majestic countenance, seven times as radiant as the sun,' gazing from out a fiery mass, and facing the spectator, from whatever side he might regard Him. The *naïveté* of this attempt to represent the Inconceivable reminds us of the triple orbs of iridescent fire in canto 33 of the *Paradiso*, whereby Dante symbolised the Trinity. For pictorial effect, however, the preference must, I think, be awarded to the Irish writer, whose image, at once quaint and grandiose, might be the subject of some design by Blake.

At the same time, the author does not neglect the stores of imagery contained in the national traditions, though he

does not conform blindly to his precedents; for he differs from the great majority of his predecessors and successors alike in selecting his materials from whatever source appears preferable to him, instead of heaping together a greater or less quantity of matter taken at haphazard from the common stock. The circle of fire which surrounds the midmost Heaven is a familiar object in both the celestial and the infernal regions, and is largely represented in Irish legends dealing with the Otherworld, or with occurrences of a supernatural order. Besides the striking instance in the Voyage of Maelduin, and other cases to which reference has already been made, legends of the Finn cycle mention wizard warriors who surrounded their camp every night with a rampart of fire.[1]

The crystal veil which partly hides the Throne in chapter 5 may be a modification of the veil which often enshrouds a mystical island in the *Imrama*; or, again, it may have been suggested by the veil hanging before a shrine in a Christian church, or by the veil of the Temple, which curtained off the Holy of Holies.

The Throne is supported by four pedestals, as was the island Paradise of Manannán Mac Lír in the *Imram Bráin*, in imitation of which an island supported upon a pedestal, or pedestals, is introduced into most of the Christian *Imrama*. The pedestals beneath the throne are of precious stone, and from them sweet music proceeds, as from the precious stones which separate the several companies of the celestial choir in chapter 13. Vocal or musical stones are common in Irish legend; instances occur in the description of Magh Mell, just quoted, and elsewhere in similar circumstances, and we may compare the Lia Fáil, which would

[1] *Acallam na Sénórach*, in *Irische Texte*, IV. i., ll. 6089 *sqq*.

shriek when pressed by the foot of a lawful king. Parallels occur in the legends of other Celtic nations: *e.g.* in the Breton story of the Groach (Irish *Gruagach*), it is said that every step leading to the palace of that fairy lady sang like a bird when trodden on.

The very words in which the *Fís* attempts to express the beauty of the celestial music are those of the old romances: 'Though one should hear no other minstrelsy besides, yet should he have his fill of melody and delight.'

The fiery arch above the Throne reminds us somewhat of the watery arch over the enchanted islands of the *Imrama*, in spite of all differences. Probably both were suggested by the rainbow, but it may be that the author of the present passage had in his mind the description in Rev. x. 1 of the 'mighty angel . . . and a rainbow upon his head.' In a note to the translation of this passage, we suggested that the comparison of the arch to 'a wrought helm, or royal diadem,' may contain a reference to the picturesque and chivalrous custom of the Irish Ardrí to wear his helmet on state occasions, reserving his crown for the day of battle.

The triple circle surrounding the Throne may be intended to symbolise the Trinity.[1] It is noteworthy that while the generality of mediæval legends describing the Otherworld give little prominence to the Triune nature of the Deity, the present Vision contains several references to the Trinity, as do the Vision of Fursa, and several of the later Visions composed by Irish writers or under Irish influences.

[1] Mr. Whitley Stokes aptly compares the three fiery orbs in *Paradiso*, xxxiii. 114 *sqq*. However, these orbs represent the visible manifestation of the Trinity, and do not appear as circles encompassing the Divine seat.

Our author does not fail to include among the delights of Heaven that bird-music which is so dear to Irish writers of all ages. The birds of Heaven are here presented in a twofold manner. In the first place, the 'bird-choirs of the heavenly folk,' who mingle with the multitudes who surround the chosen band standing about the Throne, correspond to the bird-souls whom the legends commonly place upon the Tree of Life, in attendance on Enoch and Elijah. There are also the three birds perched upon the Throne, where they sing the hours, after the usual fashion of their congeners, beginning with the birds of Magh Mell, in the *Voyage of Bran*, who, by the way, can only be made to discharge their pious function at the cost of an anachronism. The birds now in question would seem to occupy a middle place between the bird-choirs, of which we have just been speaking, and the great sacred bird which appears in the mythology of every race of mankind.[1] Similar birds are present in the earliest and latest stages of Irish myth, from the Dagda's palace in the Brug na Boinne to the adaptation of the Phœnix legend which figures in the Voyage of Maelduin. Probably our author's choice of the number three conveys another reference to the

[1] It is curious to note how Dante employs this symbol to represent the Imperial eagle, in *Purg.* xxxii. 125 *sqq.*, which, in its onslaught upon the car of the Church, reminds us how the bird Karshipta breaks off the branches of the Tree of Life in the Var of Yima. Surely this coincidence, and also the frequency of the culture bird in the myths of unconnected races, afford good examples of the independent origin of similar ideas. In the branch covered with life-giving berries, brought by the eagles in the Voyage of Maelduin, we may possibly have a modification of the popular Irish tradition, further influenced by the Phœnix legend, or, maybe, some Oriental tradition, derived through intercourse with the Eastern Churches.

Trinity; nevertheless, three was the number alike of the birds of Oengus in the Brug na Boinne, and of the eagles seen by Maelduin.

Certain features of our author's description of Paradise represent the final stage in the before-mentioned process of refining upon that conception of the happy Otherworld as a Land of Cockayne, which is the most conspicuous feature in the primitive Elysium of every race. In the fragrance of the heavenly land, upon which the blessed sate themselves while hearkening to the music, and in the sweet savour of the candles which illumine the city—the candles themselves being angels in that guise—the old materialistic dea appears to be refined and spiritualised almost beyond recognition; nevertheless every degree in the descent—or ascent—from the pigs and apple-trees and ale-vat of the Dagda can be distinctly traced.[1]

The present condition of the blessed, as manifested to the Seer, is intended, it is said, to last until the Day of Judgment only, when, and not before, their state will attain to its utmost perfection (ch. 6). Of like duration is

[1] In some Continental visions the Cockayne idea assumes a form more accordant with the Scriptural imagery, the inhabitants of Paradise renewing their youth by eating the fruit of the Tree of Life and drinking the Waters of Life (Ancona, *op. cit.*, p. 32). The last item is evidently suggested by Revelation xxii. 1, when the Waters of Life proceed from under the Throne, as in the Chaldæan myth. By a certain meeting of extremes the Cockayne idea passes over into asceticism; thus, in order to express the abundance and luxury of the mythical Elysium, it is said that a single loaf, or the very scent of the apple-trees, or the like, affords sufficient sustenance; in later developments we find in the Persian Paradise one loaf suffices for so many persons, Connla lives for a month on the apple brought him by the *Leanamhán Sidhe*, the fragrance of the candles in Adamnán's Heaven yields sustenance enough, and so on.

the 'restless and unstable habitation,' 'on hill-tops and in marshy places,' which is allotted, in ch. 14, to those who find no place in the City, 'after the words of Doom.' By these, apparently, the damned are not intended, or else the present passage would be in contradiction with the following chapters, which detail their progress to, and the manner of, their final doom, while the abyss to which they are consigned answers neither in kind nor in situation to the description of a wild and desolate region adjoining the celestial city; neither can we suppose that the reprobate, in their final abode, would continue to receive the ministrations of their guardian spirits, as do the denizens of the region in question.[1] It would rather seem that they are the mixed characters upon whom, at the individual judgment immediately following death, no final sentence has been passed. The reservation of a temporary abode for suchlike occurs in the Avestan books, in certain Hebrew speculations—as shown by the reference in the Book of Enoch to the mountain of Sheol in the west, and by the writings of several Rabbis—and in early Christian tradition. Several instances occur in the Irish legends already reported: *e.g.* in the islands where hermits, in company with the flocks of bird-souls, await the coming of Judgment, and the similar island inhabited by the men of Ross, who had been banished for justifiable homicide. The passage affords some confirmation of the view that the second part of the work is an interpolation, for in that part the sinners who are capable of redemption are dealt with in a different manner.

The veil of fire and the veil of ice, which separate this

[1] Thus, Tundale's guardian angel quits him temporarily as he enters into Hell. See *post*.

desolate region from the City, resemble the flame which surrounds the crystal mansion in the Book of Enoch, and is there said to be as hot as fire and as cold as ice.[1] The clashing together of these veils in the doorway which separates the two regions bears the appearance of a remnant of some Symplegades myth, but I am not aware that any myth of the kind exists in a form which could account for the image in question. The anguish with which the guilty are filled by the din of their collision is in keeping with that extreme susceptibility to musical sounds which is everywhere apparent. The effect of pleasure to the good and pain to the wicked proceeding from the same cause recurs in many subsequent passages.

In chs. 15-19 is traced the course along which the soul proceeds on its way from death to Judgment. The several stages of this journey are made to correspond with the seven Heavens through which the soul would naturally have to pass, each of those stages being attended with some kind of punishment or suffering, which causes intense pain to the wicked, while the good pass through it unharmed.

The theory of the Purgatorial fires, founded on 2 Peter iii. 7-13,[2] was held by the early fathers, though, at first, without defining the place or manner in which the purga-

[1] The Irish legends of the Otherworld, and the *Fis Adamnáin* in particular, offer so many points of resemblance to the Book of Enoch as to lead us to conclude that that work must have been known to the Irish Church. This is likely enough in itself, having regard to the close connection maintained by that Church with the Churches of Egypt and Syria, referred to in a previous section, where a parallel case was pointed out, viz. the preservation, in an Irish translation, of the Book of Adam and Eve, the original text of which disappeared.

[2] And compare St. Paul, 1 Corinthians iii. 13.

tion was effected. St. Augustine was the first to establish Purgatory in the intermediate state, and the doctrine was further developed by St. Gregory. The early fathers held that the good and bad alike must pass through this stage, and herein our author agrees with them; his theory, moreover, whencesoever derived, agrees closely with that held by certain of the Jewish Rabbis, who held that all, good and bad alike, must pass through the seven lodges of *Hell* —at least as appropriate a term as that of the seven *Heavens*, which our author applies to them, though the latter is better suited to cosmological requirements—with the concomitants of fire, scourging, hail-showers, the extremes of heat and cold, etc., through all of which the righteous passed unharmed;[1] all of which is reproduced in the present work. It is remarkable how little advance upon the early Chaldæan myth of the Otherworld is displayed by this part of the subject, so far as regards the machinery or material framework, so to speak, although, of course, the ideas of sin and redemption which lie at the root of the Jewish and Christian doctrines alike, constitute a fundamental difference between the two stages of thought. The resemblance between the Irish and Chaldæan narratives extends even to the porter who sat at each of the seven doors of the Chaldæan Hades, where the passenger had to leave some part of his earthly raiment; in the *Fis* his counterpart exists in the person of the angel who sits at the gate of each of the seven Heavens,[2] and chastises the souls as they enter.

The second of these Heavens is the only one which

[1] The close agreement of this theory with the Egyptian belief has been pointed out in Section 2 *ante*.

[2] Cp. the angel at the door of Purgatory (*Purg.* ix. 103-4).

appears to be endowed with distinctly purgatorial functions: here the angel Abersetus 'purges the souls of the righteous, and washes them in the [fiery river], according to the amount of guilt that cleaves to them.' Such, in substance, had been the teaching of the Church for some ages prior to Adamnán's day, and such, too, the teaching of some of the Rabbinical Schools—that of Shammai, for instance, which held that those in whom good and evil were mingled were cleansed by purgatorial pains; in like manner, the author of the Book of Enoch describes a fire wherein they who are capable of redemption are cleansed of their carnal lusts.[1]

The flowery spring in which the purified souls of the righteous are bathed for their solace, is a prototype, in some measure, of the flowery stream of Lethe, in which, according to Dante, the spirits whose purgation was accomplished were immersed in like manner.

Most of the trials endured in the first five Heavens have their counterparts in the general literature of the Otherworld, down to and including the *Commedia*.

The fiery river or moat before the gateways resembles the river of fire which encircles Heaven in the Book of Enoch, and the similar river about the infernal city in *Aeneid* vi. 549-50.

The fiery wall, of which many parallels have already been cited, again appears in this place, where it may be compared, more aptly, with the City of Dis, its iron walls and towers glowing red-hot, in c. viii. of the *Inferno*. The fiery arch also recurs, the passage through which, and through the fiery wall, is analogous to the similar trial for

[1] Cp. the fire through which Dante had to pass in the seventh circle of Purgatory (*Purg.* xxvii.).

the purgation of fleshly lusts in c. xxvii. of the *Purgatorio*. The scourging of the spirits by the angelic warders is like the punishment inflicted—though there by demons—in *Inf.* xviii.

The description of the whirlpool in the fiery river (ch. 18) is thoroughly Dantesque in style, though none of Dante's infernal rivers or whirlpools exactly corresponds to it in details; equally Dantesque is the realistic touch of the angel lifting out the souls on the end of his rod, 'hard as it were of stone.'

Hitherto all the souls, good and bad alike, have been conducted by their guardian spirits. At the door of the sixth Heaven Michael assumes his accustomed function of *psychopompos* for the remainder of the way. This Heaven is free from pain of any kind; apparently the author's intention is to convey the impression of a solemn pause, before the soul is ushered into the awful presence of the Creator. The manner of his reception there recalls the corresponding scene in the Avestan account. This reception, and the Divine Judgment, are described in the briefest possible terms, but not the less impressively for that.[1] The fate of the reprobate is depicted in a manner at once terse and complete, presenting a remarkable contrast to the rambling enumeration of horrors in which most of the vision writers indulge. One circumstance, indeed, is marked by the grotesque horror characteristic of mediæval and Oriental imagery; namely, the twelve fiery

[1] It is remarkable that several of the most impressive incidents in the Apocalyptic description of the Last Judgment are omitted from the present, as from most of the other mediæval visions; a circumstance which may cause us to hesitate before concluding positively that our author had as frequent recourse to the Book of Revelation as many analogies would suggest.

dragons which swallow the guilty soul in succession, until the lowest finally lands him in the Devil's maw, the destination reserved by Dante for the worst of sinners.[1]

Upon the whole, however, our author seems to dwell, by preference, upon the spiritual aspects of his subject. In his eyes, the essence of the punishment consists in the forfeiture of the Beatific Vision by those *chi hanno perduto il ben del intelletto*, a loss enhanced by the previous glimpse of it which has been vouchsafed to them. This, indeed, is a common feature of ecclesiastical pictures of the Inferno, where the idea, sufficiently obvious in itself, is sanctified by the parable of Dives and Lazarus, though there it is introduced with a special and different purpose. Commonly, however, it is used merely to intensify the sufferings of the lost by a Tantalus vision of the contrast between their own pains and the pleasures of the blest. Our author would seem to introduce it as essential for their full comprehension of the good, otherwise inconceivable, which they have forfeited by their own wilful default. Evidently he understood that in this life and the next—Dante notwithstanding—there is a *maggior dolore* than the remembrance, in time of sorrow, of past happiness, and that is the comprehension of the things that once might easily have been, but never have been, and never can be.

Finally, the lot of the sinner—'the perfection of all evil, in the Devil's own presence, throughout all ages,'—forms

[1] Mr. Whitley Stokes, in a note on this passage, aptly compares the Egyptian demon Apap, which devoured the souls of the wicked. He also cites an Old English homily, where a dragon swallows the wicked and discharges them into the Devil's maw. The fertile mediæval literature on the subject furnishes several parallels, more or less close, both of a serious and comic nature.

the exact correlative of the Beatific Vision enjoyed by the elect.

This climax leaves nothing to be desired for completeness, and it seems impossible to believe that the next ten chapters were the work of the same hand. Nevertheless, the author of this second part, whether he be the original author or a compiler, has treated his materials, trite as these are, with more than common skill.

The approach to the land of eternal pain, to which the Seer is now conveyed, leads across a desolate, fire-scathed region, on the farther side of which lies a glen, filled with 'flame, that extends beyond the margin on either hand.' Even this slight descriptive touch is an instance of the imaginative, or visualising, faculty which is often apparent throughout the work. This glen is spanned by the bridge which serves to separate the bad from the good, in a manner quite consistent with precedent, but entirely incon sistent with the earlier part of the present work.

The description of that incident, as here given, differs from other variants in several points of detail, and especially in the greater literary skill with which it is related; but as much has been said upon this subject as our present purpose demands. We have seen that the idea of such a bridge existed previously in Irish tradition, but the guise in which it appears in the present place leads us to suppose that the author's immediate source of inspiration was one of the ecclesiastical legends, though we find the usual difficulty of assigning any given item to some one specific source. It is possible that the author found his immediate prototype in the writings of St. Gregory, with which he was likely to be acquainted; equally possible that the idea was derived from the traditions of the Eastern Church, with

which it is probable, both on *à priori* grounds and from several internal indications, that he had come in contact; or, again, from some floating popular tradition, originally emanating from either of the above sources. However this may be, the present is probably the best-told version of the incident that we possess in any language; nevertheless, it fits in as badly with what follows as with what goes before. The good—both the more and the less good—pass over in safety, and the bad, of course, fall off, but there is nothing to show how either sort reach their ultimate habitations. The justified, in fact, are left to their own devices, and we hear no more of them; the reprobate, indeed, as they fall from the bridge, are received in the jaws of eight fiery dragons, which await them in the fiery gulf, but there is nothing to show by what means they are subjected to the specific torments mentioned further on, nor yet how the redeemable sinners are brought to their state of temporary punishment.

The classification of the three companies who attempt to cross the bridge is not without interest. The virtues of the righteous who pass with ease are the specially ecclesiastical virtues of martyrdom and asceticism. Immediate access to Heaven had been regarded as the peculiar reward of martyrdom so early, at least, as Tertullian, whose authority was Revelation vii. 14, 15; although in the fourfold classification in the Book of Enoch the like precedence is awarded to the martyrs.[1] The association of

[1] This is probably one of the additions made to the Book of Enoch in Christian times, cp. Rev. xx. 4-5, where precedence is given to the martyrs, the other righteous not being permitted to live again until after the lapse of one thousand years. Herein we have another form of the doctrine of postponed redemption in certain cases, though not here, to allow time for the purgation of sins.

the mortification of the flesh with the pains of martyrdom is easily explicable.

Sinners that have been induced to see the errors of their ways and to amend, find the bridge narrow and difficult at first, but easy afterwards, while those fall off who have persevered in evil. We thus have only three of the usual four categories which frequently occur in Irish eschatology, as in the Book of Enoch: the *boni valde*, the *boni sed non valde*, and the *mali valde*. However, the *mali sed non valde* are represented, approximately, by those spirits of mingled qualities, and those sinners that are redeemed by their good works, who are dealt with specially in the sequel.

The torments meted out to evildoers are of the usual description, though represented with that increasing fulness and terror which had been perceptible for some time previously in the Irish visions, or *Imrama*, the result, apparently, of increased familiarity with the Continental writers of this kind, who, so early as the Apocalypses of St. Peter and St. Paul, had devoted much ingenuity to this horrible branch of their subject. We may also perceive an attempt at a more accurate classification of crimes and punishments; in this respect, too, those Apocalypses display more method than the visions of subsequent writers. The classification adopted by our author, which would seem to be his own, contains indications both of his nationality, and of his acquaintance with foreign literature. Four categories of evildoers are enumerated, in which, although they exhibit nothing of Dante's scientific precision, a certain system is apparent, in spite of the several classes overlapping to a certain extent. In chapter 25 fratricides and sacrilegious persons

are dealt with, including fraudulent Erenachs — the guardians of the Church's temporalities—who had abused the considerable powers which the tribal constitution of the Irish Church had given them. The class described in chapter 27 comprises, for the most part, those guilty of various kinds of dishonesty or violence, though some of them, such as false judges, sorcerers, and teachers of heresy, would seem to belong rather to the two following classes, the one of which comprises renegade ecclesiastics and heresiarchs (chapter 28), while the other, and last, deals with an apparently heterogeneous collection of crimes, all of which, however, will be found to involve, somehow, a breach of faith on the part of the offender.

The punishments described contain many striking points of similarity to Dante, both in their kind, and in the vivid manner in which they are portrayed. Of such are the icy cowls in chapter 26, which recall the leaden copes worn by the hypocrites in *Inf.* xxiii. 61 *sqq.* The sinners stand in black mire, like the *beletta negra* where stand the gloomy-minded in *Inf.* vii. 124.[1] The scourging by demons occurs alike in the *Fis Adamnáin* (chapter 26), and in the *Inferno* (xviii. 35). A cold wind from the north blows upon the foreheads of the damned, as in the frozen regions of Dante's Tolommea.[2] The fiery rain, and the unavailing efforts of the sufferers to ward it off, anticipate

[1] Cp. the similar fate of the flatterers (*Inf.* xviii. 113), and the stinking Stygian lake in which the violent are immured (*Inf.* vii. 110).

[2] We have seen that in Persia, as in Ireland, the 'black north' was the region whence cold winds and malignant beings proceeded. It is a well-known fact that cold no less than heat entered into the Hell of the Irish, as of the Northern nations, wherein they are followed by Dante, who, indeed, makes the sufferings of the inmost circle, devoted

Dante's vivid picture.[1] With the throngs of demons in chapter 28, who assail the heresiarchs with flights of arrows, we may compare the Centaurs in *Inf.* xii. 56.

The pictures of the sinners fettered to fiery columns by means of fiery chains in the form of vipers (chapter 25), and of those clad in fiery mantles, are entirely Dantesque in spirit. In the punishment of those who are alternately borne up to Heaven, and then dashed down again to the depth of Hell, our author appears to typify the tumultuous distress and horrible restlessness which accompany hopeless suffering.

Two classes of sinners remain, who are dealt with in a manner wholly alien from Dante's scheme, though in accord with the earlier teaching of the Church. Reference has been made already to those in whom good and evil bear divided sway, and who, as in the Avesta, are reserved in a place apart until the Day of Doom, when 'judgment shall be passed between them, and their good shall quench their evil on that day, and then shall they be set in the Heaven of Life, in God's own presence, through ages everlasting.' This merciful solution of their case affords a strong contrast to the loathsome doom to which Dante

to the worst of sinners, to consist in intense cold. Cp. Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, III. i. :

> 'The delighted spirit
> To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
> In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice.'

So Milton: 'In fierce heat and in ice.'

[1] 'Senza riposo mai era la tresca Delle misere mani, or quindi or quinci Iscotendo da se l'arsura fresca' (*Inf.* xiv. 40-42); and in *Inf.* xvii. 47-48: 'Di quà di là soccorrien con le mani, Quando a' vapor, e quando al caldo suolo.'

consigns these Laodiceans.[1] One passage Dante himself might have been willing to own, had it not been so discordant with his doctrine: the picture of those charitable, but sensual, persons who are set upon islands—an echo of the *Imrama*—in the midst of a fiery sea, but protected from its waves by a silver bulwark, built of their own almsgiving, until Judgment, when they shall be delivered.

These two conceptions, though not peculiar to the Irish Church, having been often promulgated, in various forms, by Jewish and Christian doctors alike, are characteristic of that leaning towards mercy, which, in one form or other, often appears in Irish ecclesiastical legends.[2]

Our author declares that the state of the blest and of the reprobate alike, as revealed to him, is provisional only, and that after the Last Judgment the happiness of the righteous will be infinitely augmented, and the sufferings of the evil intensified in proportion,[3] when they shall be consigned to the fiery wall, which until then is inhabited by the demons only.[4]

[1] *Inf.* v., where Dante couples with them the angels who abstained from taking either part on Satan's revolt, but *per sè foro*. In like manner the Irish writers, as in the story of St. Brendan, extended their more merciful judgment to these spirits also. The popular traditions of modern times identify them with the *Daoine Sidhe*, but without agreeing as to their ultimate fate after the Judgment.

[2] Cp. the devices to which Christian redactors of Pagan legends had recourse, in order to bring the national heroes within the pale of salvation: *e.g.* Cuchulainn, Concobar, Finn Mac Cumhal, Caoilte, Cormac Mac Áirt, Fintan, Tuan Mac Cairill, etc. The early Christian writers dealt in like manner with Seneca, Trajan, Statius, Lucan, etc.; to whom Dante, apparently on his own responsibility, added Rhipeus.

[3] This is the doctrine of St. Augustine, which Dante followed in *Inf.* vi. 106 *sqq*.

[4] Cp. the brazen wall wrapped in flame in the Revelation of St. Paul.

Chapter 30 gives a vivid representation of the mental sufferings of the lost in their mournful habitation, their own sufferings being augmented by the company of others in like case, and by a restless longing for the coming of Doom to end their suspense. Herein the author recognises a truth, the opposite of that truth contained in Hamlet's dictum, though not less true; for often it is less tolerable to 'bear the ills we have, than fly to others that we know not of,' even though the change may surely be for the worse.[1]

Then follows a short description of the dolorous country, which is depicted as a waste and desolate region of the kind traversed by Cuchulainn on his journey to the realm of Scáthach, and by Art on his way to the Tír na n-Óg. The general character of this description is rather Miltonic than Dantesque.[2] Many instances appear to indicate that, to the northern spirit, the extreme of terror is suggested rather by the hauntings of wide and desolate spaces, than by the more realistic—we might almost say materialistic—imagination apparent in the intensive presentation of specific and concrete sufferings, which Dante was led to adopt, alike by his racial and personal temperament, and by his theory of the Otherworld.

[1] Cp. Revelation ix. 6, upon the authority of which text a similar passage is introduced into many of the mediæval descriptions of Hell. Cp. the Book of Adam, where the damned 'call aloud for the second death, and the second death is deaf to their prayer' (Ancona, *op. cit.* 107). So Dante, 'che la seconda morte ciascun gride' (*Inf.* i. 115). Cp. too Dante, *Inf.* iii. 124-6, where the guilty are eager to cross the river to their place of suffering: 'Chè la divina giustigia gli sprona Sì che la tema si volge in disio,' when, however, Dante was probably following Virgil, *Aeneid*, vi. 313-14.

[2] See, especially, *Paradise Lost*, ii. 587 *sqq.*

Precedents for the Devil's abode in the depths of the infernal seas are furnished alike by the Scriptural Leviathan, and by the *Piast*, which haunts almost every Irish loch of any depth, as also by the lake of fire and brimstone in Rev. xx. 10, into which Satan is to be cast at the end of the world.

The four rivers of Hell, which likewise occur in the Voyage of the Ui Corra and in several Continental visions, have been supposed by some authorities to be intended as a counterpart to the four rivers of Paradise in Genesis ii. 10 *sqq.*; this, however, seems doubtful, having regard to the absence of any mention of the suggested prototype, neither does it appear that the Scriptural Paradise was present to the author's mind. It seems more probable that the number has reference to the fourfold division of the upper world; indeed, in some later mediæval visions, these rivers are placed in accordance with the cardinal points. They may possibly be due to a reminiscence of the classical Styx, Acheron, Cocytus, and Phlegethon, as in Milton (*P. L.* ii. 575 *sqq.*), and Dante (*Inf.* xiv. 115 *sqq.*).

The tormenting of the spirits by the eager hosts of demons that infest the infernal lakes may be compared to the sportive malice of the fiends in *Inf.* xxii.-xxiii.

In chapter 31 Adamnán is re-conducted, by another skilfully managed transition, to the Land of Saints. He desired to tarry there, but like several of his predecessors, from Plato's Er downwards, he heard a voice which bade him return to earth and relate what had been revealed to him, for the instruction of his countrymen: he was then restored to the body.

Chapter 32 would provide the work with a symmetrical

conclusion. As in the exordium the author represents Adamnán as the last in a series of holy men to whom analogous revelations had been vouchsafed, so in this peroration he declares the identity of the doctrine preached by Adamnán, respecting the world to come, with the teaching of other saints and fathers of the Church. In designing his work with this structural completeness, the author stands alone, so far as I am aware, until Dante comes on the scene.

The episode of Enoch and Elijah standing under the Tree of Life, surrounded by the bird-flocks, though well told, adds nothing to the form in which it appears in other Irish legends of the period. We have already given reasons for supposing that it is an excrescence upon the original design.

The reflections there made upon the sorrow experienced by the righteous on hearing of the sorrows of Doomsday,[1] remind us of a similar passage in Dante:

> 'Se di là sempre ben per noi si dice,
> Di quà che dire e far per lor si puote,
> Da quei, ch'hanno al voler buona radice?'
> *Purg.* xi. 31-33.

The rhapsodical description of Heaven, which concludes the work as it now stands, is likewise a matter of 'common form.' It may possibly be an amplification of several passages in the Revelation (*e.g.* xxi. 4, etc.), though we

[1] 'Now seeing that they who make this moan are the Saints, to whom are allotted everlasting mansions in the heavenly Kingdom, how much more meet were it for men that are yet on earth,' etc., ch. 34. Cp. the similar passages in the *Félire Oengusa* and the *Scéla Lái Brátha* referred to in the preceding section.

have seen that something of the kind existed, in a rudimentary form, in some of the *Echtra*, when describing the Sidhe of a Dé Danann chief. The curiously close parallel in the Avesta has been noted already.

This chapter, as before mentioned, does not form part of the version preserved in the Leabhar Breac, and although that MS. is by far the more recent, it is quite possible that the scribe followed a version transcribed before the addition was made.[1]

6. Later Developments

The *Fis Adamnáin* represents the culminating point to which the Vision of the Otherworld was brought by writers of the Irish school: henceforth the achievements of that school are principally apparent in the influence which they exercised upon the course which the legend took upon the Continent, and thus, indirectly, upon the development of European literature. Enough has been said in an earlier part of this work to show that abundant means existed for familiarising Continental students with any branch of letters to which the Irish schools might be addicted, and accordingly we now find the Irish legend of the Otherworld disseminating itself through the medium as

[1] Verbal differences between the two versions are frequent throughout, though generally the later copy is the fuller, owing to the insertion of a certain amount of 'padding.' Far wider divergences exist between the different versions of most of the mediæval legends, *e.g.* the Vision of Paul, the Voyage of St. Brendan, and the Vision of Tundale. This circumstance strengthens the internal evidence of interpolations in the *Fis Adamnáin*. At the same time, it adds to the difficulty of determining the relative priority of the incidents contained in the several Visions.

well of works written upon Irish soil, as of the writings of Irish scholars in Continental foundations, and similar works composed by foreign authors more or less under Irish influences.

The first of these productions is the last of the great *Imrama*, and by far the most famous, though not the best from a literary point of view.[1] Not only did the legend of St. Brendan, of Clonfert, surnamed the Voyager (483-574), become one of the most widely diffused and most popular tales of the Middle Ages, but it even influenced, in some slight degree, the course of the world's history, for its account of a land beyond the Atlantic fired the imagination, and directed the course, of Spanish and Portuguese navigators many centuries after its own date.[2]

At one period of his labours, St. Brendan appears to have been seized with that *taedium vitae* which is apt, at times, to weigh with special force upon diligent workers

[1] The Acts of St. Brendan, and the accounts of his voyages, have often been translated by modern scholars. Besides the collections of hagiologists and Church historians, standard works on the subject are Jubinal, *La Légende latine de Saint Brendaines*, Paris, 1836; Schröder, *Sanct Brandan*, Erlangen, 1871; Moran, *Acta Sancti Brendani*, Dublin, 1872. The Irish Life is edited, with a translation and notes, by Mr. Whitley Stokes, in *Anecdota Oxoniensia* (*Mediæva and Modern Series*, pt. 5). In the Rev. Denis O'Donoghue's *Brendaniana* the subject is treated in an interesting and compendious manner. The summary of the principal incidents of the voyages given in the text, is taken, for the most part, from Mr. Stokes's edition of the Irish Life.

[2] The imaginary island of St. Brendan was delineated in the maps of the Middle Ages, and even of later periods. It was claimed by the Portuguese, but afterwards ceded to Spain. Many voyages were undertaken in quest of it, one so late as 1721.—Ancona, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

for righteousness. In his case it asserted itself, characteristically, in that impulse which even now urges so many of his countrymen to follow his course across the Atlantic, but on a voyage whence there is no return, and to another world which seldom affords a vision of Paradise, at any rate. In this frame of mind he prayed for a land, 'secret, hidden, secure, delightful, apart from men'; he then fell asleep, and, in a dream, was directed to repair to Sliabh Daidche (now Brandon Hill, in the Co. Kerry). This he did, and there met an angel, who bade him build three ships, and commit himself to the ocean. The building and manning of the ships, and the early stages of the voyage, wherein the old model of the *Imrama* is closely followed, are interesting, but cannot be given here. One day the voyagers landed upon the back of a sleeping whale, taking it for an island, until the monster, awaking, bore them off across the sea.[1] Thus they journeyed for five years, being sustained the while by food miraculously sent to them, as to the island hermits of the earlier *Imrama*. At length St. Brendan espied the Devil approaching them across the waves.[2] He hailed the demon, and questioned

[1] Father O'Donoghue points out that the whale episode appears too early in mediæval churches to be due to an imitation of Sinbad. It occurs in a mediæval life of St. Machutus, or Malo, which, however, Father O'Donoghue considers an imitation of St. Brendan, into whose legend the incident entered at a very early period, being mentioned in a poem by St. Cumin, who lived in the seventh century (*Brendaniana*, pp. 88-91), where the author refers to parallels occurring in the Mediæval Bestiaries. Signor D'Ancona (*op. cit.*) says that the episode occurs in the Romance of Alexander, which is likely to be the origin of the Western variants. However, the idea is one which may well have presented itself spontaneously in several distinct quarters.

[2] Apparently a travesty of Manannán Mac Lir as he appeared to

him, who replied that he had come to seek his punishment 'in the deep closes of the black, dark sea.' This roused the Saint's curiosity, but the Devil told him that none might see those things and live; he was prevailed on, however, to guide the Saint to the gate of Hell. Here Brendan saw 'a rough, hot prison, full of stench and filth and flame,' and 'the camps of poisonous demons'; here were wailing and 'handsmiting of the sinful folk';[1] and a gloomy, mournful life in cores of pain, in prisons of fire, in streams of the rows of eternal fire, in the cup of eternal sorrow and death' (tr. W. S.). The land was full of black swamps, surrounding fiery forts, and fiery mountains, over which demons were dragging the souls of the lost, without respite. Then follow long and gruesome descriptions of the sufferings endured in that place; these are of the usual type, including all the horrors of a wild and desolate region, with inclement weather, combining the extremes of heat and cold; foul, poisonous lakes; fierce winds; wild, rough brakes, and mountains haunted by monsters, etc., etc. Proceeding on their way, they visited various islands; round one of them, very lofty, they cruised for twelve days, without finding a spot where they might land, though they saw a noble church in it, and heard voices praising the Lord. After visiting several islands, the Saint returned to Ireland.[2]

Bran in the *Imram Bráin*, but *quantum mutatus*, or, literally, *diablement changé en route*. Already have the Celtic deities followed the Olympians, and become converted into demons.

[1] Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid*, vi. 557-8, and Dante, *Inferno*, iii. 22-28.

[2] We may note one curious incident which illustrates the sympathy, before mentioned, with which Irish Churchmen treated the beings who pertained to that older faith which it was their mission to destroy. One day St. Brendan came upon a maiden of vast stature and exceed-

However, the spirit of wandering was not yet laid, and St. Brendan set forth upon a second voyage. In this, as on the first voyage, the Otherworld type of the lands which he visited is evident. In one 'little, insignificant island,' the harbour was 'filled with devils in the shape of dwarfs and pygmies, with their faces as black as coal.' At length Brendan came to an island whereon was a pilgrim covered with white hair, who directed him to the Tír Tairngire. Here he found an old man, who bade him enter into possession of the land, for those were 'the plains of Paradise, and the delightful fields of the land, radiant, famous, loveable, profitable,' etc. 'A land of odorous flowers, smooth, bland. A land of many melodies, musical, shouts for joy, unmournful' (tr. W. S.). There were 'health without sickness, delight without quarrelling, union without wrangling, princedom without dissolution, rest without idleness, freedom without labour, luminous unity of angels, delights of Paradise, service of angels, feasting without extinction,' and so on, in the rhapsodical style of ch. 35 of the *Fis Adamnáin*. The old man was covered with white hair, like a dove or sea-mew,[1] and had 'almost the speech

ing beauty floating upon the sea, dead, and a spear through her. He restored her to life, and asked her who she was: she replied that she was one of the dwellers in the sea, who were praying for the Resurrection. He baptized her, and gave her the choice—to die, and go at once to Heaven, or to return to her own people. She chose to go direct to Heaven, so he administered to her the last Sacrament, and she died.

[1] Mr. Whitley Stokes suggests that 'his feathers may be a reminiscence of some hermit's dress of bird-skins' (*op. cit.*, p. 354). Or, maybe, of some anchorite who may have lived into extreme old age, as doubtless many did, in the condition of King Nebuchadnezzar after his fall, until his long white hair and beard suggested the

of an angel.' At the stroke of a bell tierce was celebrated, when 'they sing thanks to God, with their minds fixed on Him,' a repetition of the words of the *Fis Adamnáin*; indeed, a long passage at the conclusion of the voyage coincides almost word for word with the *Fis*, of which, according to Mr. Whitley Stokes, it is a copy, and not *vice versa*.[1]

The Latin narratives of St. Brendan's voyages[2] differ widely from the Irish account; on the whole, the Otherworld element is much less prominent in them, though they contain several details of the kind. Of such are the island standing on four pedestals, and an island with a tall column on it, from which a veil or canopy like silver hung; a volcanic isle with demon smiths at work, hammering upon their anvils the souls of the wicked, who threw masses of glowing metal after the ships; hermits fed with salmon by a cat, etc. There is also a variant of the story told in the Voyage of Maelduin about the Torach gravedigger.

The Paradise of Birds appears with a new significance. The birds are those angels who, upon the rebellion of Lucifer, *per sè foro*, and fell without active guilt on their part, and were relegated to this island, there to dwell until the general Resurrection, suffering no pain, and celebrating

plumage of a white bird. Or, again, it is just possible that this bird-like hermit, dwelling in an island Paradise, may be an attempt to euhemerise one of the many avatars of the sacred bird.

[1] The influence of the *Fis Adamnáin* likewise appears in the opening portion of the Life, which cites precedents for the Saint's devout and holy life among the worthies of the Old and New Testaments.

[2] The principal Latin Life of St. Brendan, though later than the Irish Life, was written in the eleventh century. Both Lives, however, contain elements which the Lives of other Irish saints prove to have been of much earlier date.

the canonical hours; a happier lot than that which Dante bestows upon them in canto iii. of the *Inferno*.

The story of Brendan, it will be seen, though somewhat later than the *Fis Adamnáin*, is but an *Imram* of the ordinary type, though containing several original features, and richer in incident than most of its predecessors. However, its chief claim to consideration rests upon the work which it effected in securing for Irish legend a permanent place in European literature.

With the Voyage of Brendan the *Imram* type of romance culminates, and ceases to occupy its former important place in Irish literature.[1] Henceforth, the Otherworld tradition, whether in Irish or foreign hands, is continued by means of the *Fis*, the form properly its own, from the time of Plato downwards.

In this form it inspired a work which almost rivalled the Voyage of Brendan in the popularity it achieved, and the influence it exercised upon later writers. This was the Vision of Tundale, written at Ratisbon by an Irish monk, a Munster man, named Marcus, apparently about the year 1149, in which the vision is dated. It was written in Latin, and immediately became widely popular, being translated in the course of its own century, and several centuries following, into the languages of most European countries, from Sweden to Spain and Italy.[2]

[1] *Imrama* still continued to be written, and the late mediæval story of Tadg Mac Céin (published, with a translation, in Mr. Standish Hayes O'Grady's *Silva Gadelica*), presents a very admirable specimen of its class. That work, however, is a more purely literary production, consciously imitative, and deliberately archaic in style.

[2] The summary in the text follows the Irish version contained in *La Vision de Tondale*, V. H. Friedel and Kuno Meyer (Paris, 1907),

This Tundale, so-called—whose proper name Professor Kuno Meyer conjectures to be Tnúthgal or Tnúdgal (*op. cit.*, p. 91)—was a knight of Cashel, said by the author to have been 'noble of blood, but bloody of deeds; fair as to body, but careless about his soul. Fierce and terrible towards the Church, for he would endure none of the poor folk of the Lord in his sight.' Once, when on a visit to a friend in Cork, he fell into a fit while sitting at table; he was taken up for dead, but was not buried, as a slight warmth was perceptible in his left side. He remained in a trance from the fourth hour on Wednesday until the same time on Saturday, when he recovered slowly, partook of the Sacrament, and gave thanks to God, after which he gave all his goods to the poor, assumed the cross, and 'turned his back on his former life.' It was during this trance that he beheld the vision which he related to Marcus.

Immediately after the departure of Tundale's soul from his body, his conscience expressed great dread by reason of the magnitude of his sins. Fain to re-enter his body, he could not, but flitted unsteadily, swiftly, to and fro, weeping and weary, in fear and lamentation. Great hordes of demons surrounded him, who welcomed him, terming his soul 'daughter of death and enemy of God, spouse of darkness and foe of light,' etc. They tore his face with

which also contains two French versions in prose, and a fragment of an Anglo-Norman version in verse. The Irish translation was made in 151–, by Muirgheas Mac Páidin in Maoilchanaire (*op. cit.*, Introduction). The original Latin has been edited by Scade, Halle, 1869, and A. Wagner (with an O. G. version), Erlangen, 1882. For translations into modern languages see *op. cit.*, Introduction, and Ancona, *op. cit.*, p. 53 *n.*

their talons, and taunted him with his sins. At length he saw a light, like a star, approaching; this was his guardian angel who bade him 'welcome from God.'

Tundale, between fear and joy, replied, 'A sorry case, my lord; the pains of Hell have surrounded me, and I am in the snare of death.'

The angel answered, 'I have ever been with thee, yet never until now hast thou called upon me thus.' Then, pointing to the ugliest of the demons, he added, 'That is the deed and the counsel [devised] independently of me.' However, he promised that Tundale should receive mercy, though he must suffer somewhat first. He then bade him follow, and retain firmly in his memory whatever he should see.

Upon seeing Tundale escape them, the demons began to blaspheme God, and to smite one another, and finally departed, leaving a foul smell behind.

For long Tundale journeyed on in darkness, lighted only by the radiant garments of his guide. At length they came to a glen 'darkened with the mist of death,' and filled with sparks of fire. An iron covering, six cubits thick, was on it, hotter than the sparks themselves, and a stench issued forth that was a more grievous torment than Tundale had ever known. A huge multitude of wretched souls were sitting on that lid, burning, 'till they were melted, like garlic in a pan, with the glow thereof.' Others were strained through the lid, like wax through a linen cloth, and then tempered in the sparks below for a repetition of the infliction. These were parricides and slayers of their kin.

There was a vast and hideous mountain, one side of it all sulphur and stench, fire and darkness, the other side

covered with snow, and a piercing wind blowing. Innumerable demons, armed with burning forks and sharp tridents, would hale the souls of them that had been false and treacherous from snow to fire and back again. Another glen was full of darkness and fœtor, and 'such was its depth that none could discern the bottom of it, though he could hear the sound of streams, and [perceive] the stench of ordure, and the outcry and wailing of the souls that were in torment there,' and a mist uprose from it. A plank stretched across between the mountains that bounded the glen, a thousand feet long and a single foot in breadth, and such as none would dare to tread unless driven thereto by force. Tundale saw many souls falling from the bridge, and a priest passing over it unscathed. Those who fell into the glen were the proud and arrogant; nevertheless the angel bade Tundale not to fear that trial, though he must bear other torments thereafter, and he bore him safe across. Again they went on through dark and tortuous ways, until, weary and wretched, Tundale espied an 'uncouth, intolerable monster,' greater than the mountains which they had crossed; his eyes were like hills of flame; his mouth, wide yawning, might contain a legion of armed men. Two giants stood therein, huge as the pillars of a church, reaching from the lower tooth to the upper. Flames issued from its mouth, into which crowds of souls were pressing, driven by the scourges of throngs of demons.[1] A sound of wailing could be heard

[1] In Christian art, Hell was often symbolised by a picture of the Dragon, his open mouth filled with flames, into which the wicked were impelled. This image survived in book illustrations into the eighteenth century at least. It occurs in many of the mediæval visions; possibly the Vision of St. Paul may have been the immediate authority. It appears so early as the Vision of Esdras, if not before.

proceeding from the monster's belly, for many thousands of souls were in there already.

Tundale, in dismay, asked why they approached so near; the angel told him that his visit was not complete unless he passed through the monster, for none but a chosen few escaped. Acheron was the monster's name; it devoured the covetous, and the giants standing in its jaws were they who had been false and without conscience. After bringing Tundale to the monster's mouth, the angel left him alone there, when a horde of demons surrounded him, scourged him, and drove him into the monster's belly. Here he found himself in company of many other souls, who were bitten by hounds, lions and vipers, scourged by demons, suffering the while from the extremes of heat and cold, foul stenches, etc. Here the soul accused himself of all the sins he had ever committed, in grief and lamentation, tearing his face with his nails.

At length Tundale found himself outside the monster, and languidly opening his eyes saw the angel, who bore him to a broad, stormy lake, wherein were monsters innumerable, seeking to devour the wretched souls.[1] A bridge spanned the lake, two thousand feet long by one palm in width, studded with iron nails.[2] The beasts sought to swallow and chew the souls that were on the bridge, each beast being as great as a chariot, and a fiery mist issuing from their jaws, till it seemed as though all the

[1] This lake corresponds to the sea haunted by strange monsters which swarm about the hero's curach in the early *Imrama* and in the modern romantic folk-tales.

[2] Signor D'Ancona (*op. cit.*) suggests that the apologue of the bridge in the *Fioretti* of St. Francis (cxxvii.) is an imperfect quotation from Tundale, as also a similar passage of Joachim of Flora.

lake were ablaze. Tundale saw a man attempting to cross with a burden on his back like a sheaf of corn. He was told that all had to cross that bridge who had stolen anything, great or small, bearing a burden proportionate to the magnitude of the theft. Tundale had once stolen a cow; he had, indeed, made restitution, but only because he had been forced to do so, therefore he had to cross the bridge, carrying a wild cow on his back. On reaching the other side, he pointed out to the angel that his feet were all bleeding from the spikes; this was because he had been one of 'those whose feet are swift to shed blood.'

They went on their way through rough and gloomy places, till they came to a house, great as a mountain, and round like an oven, whence flames arose to the height of a thousand feet, and souls were burning therein. On approaching, they saw executioners standing in the flames, armed with axes, sharp razors, scythes, sickles, augers, hooks, 'and all instruments beside, which might serve for wounding, flaying, beheading, or cutting.' Tundale begged hard to be let off, but the angel told him that he must endure it, and handed him over to the demons, who 'applied to him the instruments of torment we have before mentioned until they made small fragments of him.' 'In that house were much moaning and sighing, shrieking and wailing, weeping and gnashing of teeth, sharp fire scorching the souls.' At length Tundale confessed that he had but suffered his deserts, after which he found himself standing alone in a dark place free from pain.

Upon being rejoined by the angel, Tundale asked him—as well he might—what was the meaning of the saying, *Misericordia Domini plena est terra.* 'That sentence,' replied the angel, 'has puzzled many before you. Now thus

is my King: though He is beneficent, yet is He wont to do justice.' And he proceeded to expound the necessity for constraining man to follow his duty. None were entirely free from sin, but even the righteous were brought to see those sufferings, in order that they might see what they had escaped, and give thanks; so were sinners brought to see the joys of Heaven, that they might grieve the more for their loss.'[1]

Another hideous monster there was, with two feet and two wings, and many necks, beaks, and talons. An unquenchable fire issued from his mouth; he sat upon a lake of ice, and swallowed the wretched souls, melting them, and dipping them into the icy lake for a renewal of their pains.[2] The beast became pregnant with these souls, who kept biting and tearing him like a brood of mountain vipers, until the time for delivery came. This gruesome conception is elaborated with a number of fantastic details. Thus were punished monks, canons, nuns, etc., who had broken their vows, who had tongues sharp as of vipers, and refrained not themselves from evil speaking; also they who had defiled themselves with inordinate lust. This punishment too had to be endured by Tundale. After it their way led them by a dark and devious glen, descending from mountain-tops into deep abysses, their path lighted only by the radiance of the angel. Tundale asked whither their road led. The

[1] See the remarks in the preceding section upon a similar conception in the *Fis Adamnáin*, and contrast the treatment of it by the two authors.

[2] The destruction of the guilty soul, and its reintegration for a renewal of its suffering, dates back to Plutarch's Vision of Thespesios. See Sect. 1 *ante*.

angel replied, 'This is the road which leadeth unto death.' Tundale expressed surprise, for he had heard that that way was broad, and that many went by it; but the angel explained that the text referred to this life only.

After a weary journey, they came to a valley wherein were several smithies, and a great weeping and wailing in them. The smiths seized Tundale with their tongs, and cast him into a furnace, glowing fiery red; many souls were in it already, and the bellows were plied beneath 'as though they were iron on the hearth, until they were reduced to nought, until they were turned into water.' They were again uplifted with the tongs, and forged into one single mass, their pain exceeding all other pain, and they calling for death, which they could not obtain. After which they were passed on to the other smithies in succession.

The angel explained that all the souls whom Tundale had yet seen were destined finally to receive mercy; it still remained for them to see those that were in the nethermost Hell. Suddenly Tundale was seized with a great trembling, as he became aware of an intolerable cold and stench, dense darkness, tribulation and anguish, while he saw the foundations of the earth sinking. Turning to question his guide he found himself alone. He heard the wailing and howling of wretched souls, and terrible thunderings, but could perceive no face, nor distinguish any voice. At length he discerned a vast four-cornered cavern, in the midst of which a huge pillar towered up; fire and vapour rose up against the pillar, and in the midst of the flame many thousands of demons and souls flew up like sparks, and fell back. Tundale strove to turn away, but could not, for his feet clave to the floor; whereat, filled with frenzy, he

began to tear himself with his nails. Demons surrounded him, threatening and reviling, but the angel rescued him and brought him to the gate of Hell. Here, he told him, was no light small nor great, but he could see the inhabitants without their seeing him. Tundale looked, and saw the Prince of Darkness, black as a raven from head to foot, with more than a thousand hands on him, each two hundred cubits long, and every finger one hundred palms in length, with iron nails like warriors' spears, and toes to match; he had a long thick tail, covered with iron spikes. He lay on an iron hurdle over fiery gledes, a bellows on each side of him, and crowds of demons blowing it. Every limb was covered with chains of iron and bronze. As he lay there roasting, tossing from side to side, filled with rage and fury, he grasped the souls in his rough, thick hands, bruising and crushing them, as a man would crush grapes to squeeze out the wine. With his fiery, stinking breath he scattered the souls about Hell, and as he drew in his breath again he swallowed them down with it, and those whom his hands could not reach he lashed with his tail. This, the angel explained, was Lucifer, whom God had created first of all creatures, and of the rest some were angels of darkness, and some of the race of Adam; ever since their damnation they sought to lead others to deny Christ, and the greater the power of each, the greater was his punishment.

Here Tundale saw numbers of his friends and kin, whom he had ever rejoiced to see in this world, but now beheld with pain.

On leaving Hell, they entered into a great light, and came to a wall whereon were multitudes of men and women. Rain and wind were beating on them, but abundant light fell on them, and no foulness was there.

These had led a 'variegated' life, in which good and evil were equally commingled, therefore they were exposed to wind and rain, hunger and thirst, until the end, when they should enter into everlasting life.

They next came to a forest, and passing through an open door therein found themselves in a goodly plain, covered with flowers and fragrant herbs, and the Well of Life in the midst of it; here dwelt the good who were not yet permitted to join the heavenly host. Tundale recognised many whom he had known, including two Irish kings, Donnchad and Concobar, between whom a feud had subsisted, but they had repented and become reconciled. He also saw a house of stone, without door or window, yet all might enter in who would, and it seemed as though the sun were in every part of it. It had no foundations, but was all set about with precious stones. In it was a golden throne, set with jewels, and covered with fine silk, whereon a king sat, calm and mild, while great numbers approached him, in gladness and rejoicing, bearing jewels and great treasures. Tundale drew near to see, for in the king he recognised Cormac, whose subject he had been. Great numbers of priests and deacons were about him in rich vestments, as though for the mass. The house was hung with choice drapery, and tables were set out, covered with vessels of gold and silver and ivory, as though for a royal banquet, so that they who saw that house would think that even though there had been no glory nor wealth beside, this would suffice for delight. All present fell on their knees and repeated, *Labores manuum tuarum manducabis; beatus es, et bene tibi erit.* Tundale wondered to see that none of those who were serving Cormac were the king's own people, but the angel said that he was served by the

poor and pilgrims of the Lord whom he had relieved, so that God had delivered unto him the everlasting kingdom by their hands.[1]

Even as they watched, the house was suddenly darkened, and all within it were thrown to the ground, and, lifting up their hands, said, *Domine, Deus omnipotens, sicut vis, et sicut scis, miserere servi tui!* Then Cormac left the house, and Tundale, following, saw him enter into a fire up to the waist, and a hair-shirt on him from the waist upward. Thus he spent three hours of every day; the fire being the expiation of a breach of his marriage vow, and the hair-shirt, of the murder of a noble that was under the protection of Patrick, and of a false vow, all other sins being freely remitted.

Proceeding on his way, Tundale saw women, and men, and elders, in silken robes, and the countenance of each one was like the sun at midday. Their hair was like gold, they wore golden crowns covered with precious stones, and they sang *Alleluia*, giving praise, so that 'if one heard them but once, he would have no memory of the grief and care he had known before.' These were the saints 'who had macerated their bodies for God's sake, and washed their robes in the blood of the spotless Lamb, and turned their backs to the world, and crucified their will in the service of God while in the body.'

He also beheld many castles, and pavilions of purple and byssus, gold and silver, silk and other precious coverings, and in them organs and timpans and harps, and every kind of music, were playing. Therein were people of devotion, who had submitted their own will to God, and

[1] Cp. the analogous ideas in the Shepherd of Hermas, and the vision in St. Gregory's Epistle.

had taken upon them humility and lowliness, without pride or vainglory, and were submissive to their superiors, and found savour in spirituality, and had bridled their tongues, not only from evil-speaking, but even from good words.

A little further on they saw a wall, high and thick, all of silver, and no door in it. Choirs of saints were there, clad in white raiment, full of gladness and rejoicing, perpetually praising the Trinity. The radiance of their apparel was like the snow of a single night beneath the sun's brightness. These had been faithful in wedlock, had maintained their people after the will of God, and had distributed their goods among the poor and the Church; to them will Christ say, *Venite benedicti Patris mei, possidete regnum quod vobis partum est ab origine mundi.* Another wall was of gold, and within it golden seats innumerable, all set with precious stones—pearls and sapphires, sardius and topaz, etc. Then they saw that, the like of which eye had not seen, nor ear heard, neither had the heart of man conceived: namely, the glory which God had prepared for them that loved Him. The nine orders of angels, and the saints mingled with them, hearkened to words exceeding sweet which none might record. In the presence of that vision, Tundale could not only see the glory that was before him, but also all the pain that he had left behind, for 'to whomsoever God giveth power to behold Himself, to him is power to see all other creatures likewise.' 'From that time forth Tundale asked nothing of the Angel, for to himself was given from God knowledge of what he desired to know.'

He saw St. Patrick and several bishops, four of whom he had known: viz. Celestine, Malachi (the celebrated primate of Ireland, and friend of St. Bernard), Nemias

(Gilla na Naemh Ua Muirchertach, bishop of Cloyne and Ross), and Christian. He also saw a great tree laden with blossom, and with fruit of every kind. Vast flocks of birds of many hues were on the tree-tops, singing every kind of music, and no scent of fragrant herb is known that was not about that tree. All round the tree multitudes of men and women sat in chairs of gold and silver and ivory, with golden crowns on their heads, and golden wands in their hands, singing, and praising the King. This tree was the prop and stay of the Church, and the people about it were they who had united to support and defend the Church, turning their backs upon worldly things, and leading a devout life.

The vision over, Tundale begged to be allowed to stay, but the Angel told him that he must return to the body. He further bade him remember what he had seen, that he might deliver it to the people of the world. He engaged Tundale to eschew evil in future, and promised to protect and counsel him.

For several reasons, it seemed advisable to relate Tundale's vision with some fulness of detail. In the first place, it can hardly be that a work which so soon acquired, and long maintained, an immense popularity throughout all Western Christendom, failed to exercise great influence in the way of fixing, if not of determining, the views generally held concerning the Otherworld. Further, as the work of an Irish author, written in the centre of Europe, and almost immediately adopted throughout the West; embodying, moreover, while continuing and enlarging, the ideas currently held by members of the Christian Church respecting the future life, and, at the same time, containing many elements of distinctly Irish, and even pagan, origin,

it reveals beyond dispute the existence, the manner, and, partly, the extent of the contribution which the legend made to the development of modern literature, after quitting the soil upon which it had matured.

The Vision of Tundale has many points in common with the *Fis Adamnáin*, *e.g.* the preference accorded to the martyrs and ascetics, the special provision made for the charitable sinners, the nine orders of Heaven, the episodes of the bridges and the Tree of Life, etc. Like Adamnán, Tundale expressed a desire to remain in Paradise, but was bidden return, and relate what he had seen. From a literary point of view, the work is decidedly inferior to the *Fis*; it is retrograde, too, in the absence of a definite scheme of the Otherworld; historically, however, it marks a forward step in the development of the purgatorial idea, of which, perhaps, it affords the most complete example which religious fiction contains, prior to its final perfection by Dante. It also prepares the way for the group of legends associated with St. Patrick's Purgatory, for it introduces the idea of the Seer himself suffering the purgatorial pains, with a view to his own redemption; Tundale's vision, however, contains no suggestion of a local purgatory in this world. In both these respects, he is followed by Dante, to some extent, though the comparatively slight annoyances endured by the latter during his ascent of the purgatorial mount—with the exception of the fiery wall, for which there was a special reason—were rather, so to speak, incidents of travel, necessitated by the nature of the country through which he had to pass, than sufferings inflicted on him for his purgation. In one respect, Marcus merits to be raised to a bad eminence among his kind: we have marked already, in the develop-

ment of the Irish idea of the Otherworld, a growing tendency to accumulate horrors, and to elaborate and multiply painful details; but perhaps, in all the repulsive literature of the Christian Inferno,[1] there is no instance equal to the present of the length to which the mediæval imagination could go in its conception of the grotesque and horrible, the cruel and obscene. It displays nothing of the higher qualities which the author of the *Fis Adamnáin* possessed: his devout raptures, his sense of beauty, his strong moral feeling, and his pity for the reprobate. At the same time, it shows how far Dante was from deserving the reproach, so often made, of the wanton accumulation of horrors; how much of the kind, in which his predecessors revelled, he rejected, retaining only so much—and that, in all conscience, was no little—as was necessary to enable him to represent the grim theory of his day, in all the completeness and vividness with which it presented itself to his imagination.

It is difficult to avoid making some comparison of the present work with the *Commedia*, for of all the writings of its class it is, perhaps, that which we have most reason to assume must have been known to Dante, for not only does it seem improbable that so widely known a work on his own subject should have escaped his notice, but there are analogies between the two, deeper than mere similarities in detail. Tundale, for instance, frequently applied to his angelic guide for the interpretation of passages of Scripture which presented themselves to his recollection, even as Dante had frequent recourse to Virgil, and afterwards to

[1] It is said that the Hells of the Oriental religions even surpass those of mediæval Christendom in the morbid cruelty and obscenity, and in the childish extravagance of their descriptions.

Beatrice and Matilda, for the like purpose. So, too, the sentences of Scripture which Tundale heard repeated in the region of probation may be compared to the similar sentences which Dante heard floating along the air in Purgatory. Tundale, moreover, met and conversed in the world of shades not only with persons of his own acquaintance and kin, as Thespesios and others had done before him, but with a variety of historical personages of past and present times, including semi-mythical Irish heroes like Fergus Mac Róig and Conall Cernach, and sacred personages like St. Paul and St. Patrick. Like Dante, too, he introduced incidents of contemporary history in which he felt an interest, such as the strife between the princes Donnchad and Concobar, and passed his own judgment upon the actors. The reward bestowed upon King Cormac, in the shape of a little kingdom of his own, is a curious instance of the same kind; it was probably due to an excessively literal interpretation of the Scripture promises. It recalls the aristocratic type of the more primitive Elysium. The vision exhibits the usual agreement with Dante in the provision of a special treatment for the 'variegated,' or half-and-half sinners, and the usual contrast to him in the nature of that treatment. Marcus follows precedents which had become inconsistent with the design of his work, which expresses the more complete theory of Purgatory as a separate state. Dante, apparently, was guided in his mode of dealing with this class of persons by his own sense of moral and artistic fitness. Marcus, in giving the name of Acheron to the flaming mouth of the beast, betrays a slight tendency towards that importation of classical ideas into Christian eschatology which Dante afterwards developed to such an extent.

Coming to similarities existing between single incidents, there is, of course, a general resemblance between the penalties, etc., enumerated by both authors, as in the lakes of fire and ordure, the flames and ice, the piercing winds, the scourging by demons, etc. etc.; there is also a more special likeness in the nature of the conception, if not in the details, between the grotesque transformations undergone by the souls swallowed by Tundale's monster, and the terrible metamorphoses brought about by the serpents in cantos xxiii. and xxiv. of the *Inferno*. Again, the demon on the ice, in Tundale's Vision, devouring the souls, resembles Dante's Lucifer chewing the arch-traitors in the icy centre of Hell. Tundale's demon, indeed, is not Lucifer, who is described later on as being roasted on a gridiron. We may note in this place that the Irishman and the Italian have exchanged the ideas commonly accepted by their respective countrymen on the subject: Dante making the sufferings of the inmost core of Hell to consist in cold, Marcus in heat. There are various touches besides in which the one author reminds us of the other. Tundale's rescue by the angel from the demons,[1] and the strife between these in the fury of their disappointment, present a curiously close parallel to the similar incidents in *Inferno* xxii. Tundale and his guide, after their rude journey, looking down into the gulf of fire and ordure, recall Dante and Virgil pausing in

[1] The angel who came to Tundale's rescue may also be compared to the angel who came to the aid of Dante and Virgil when their entrance into the City of Dis was opposed by the demons (*Inf.* ix.). Signor D'Ancona (*op. cit.*, p. 55 *n.*) compares the approach of Tundale's angel, 'with a radiance as of a star,' to the approach of the angel in *Purgatorio* xii. 89 *sq.*, *nella faccia, quale Par tremolando mattutina stella*, citing the passage from the Latin Tundale, where the resemblance is still closer—*longe venientem velut stellam lucidam*.

like manner upon the steep and rugged causeways of the Inferno, to gaze into the abysses of the lower circles. As Tundale was abandoned by his guide before entering into Hell, so was Dante left to himself by Virgil upon reaching the Terrestrial Paradise.[1] To Tundale, when in Heaven, it was shown that he could look back, and view the regions through which he had passed; so Dante, in Paradise, was bidden to look downward toward this world and its ways.[2] Other resemblances exist, but these are the most striking.

Of course it is not to be supposed that the continuation and development of the Vision legend at this period of the Middle Ages was confined to the Irish school. It was still, and had been since the earliest days of the Church, a favourite topic with monastic homilists and biographers of the saints.[3] However, it has not been my object to compile a history, or a summary, of this branch of literature, but to select those examples of it which have either carried the subject to a further stage of development, or, by reason of their popularity, or of their accessibility to later writers, may have served as links in the chain of transmission.

[1] *Purg.* xxvii. 130 *sqq.*

[2] *Par.* xxii. 129 *sqq.* Dante evidently follows the corresponding passage in the *Somnium Scipionis*, or the derivative passage in Book ix. of Lucan's *Pharsalia*. The manner in which the idea appears in Tundale is not analogous. The doctrine—'to whomsoever God giveth power to behold Himself, to him is power to see all other creatures likewise'—is precisely that of Dante. See *Paradiso* ix. 61 *sq.*, and cp. viii. 90; ix. 73 *sq.*; xi. 19 *sq.*, etc.

[3] For many specimens of these visions, both of earlier and later dates, see Ozanam, *Dante et la Philosophie catholique au treizième Siècle*; Wright, *St. Patrick's Purgatory*, 1844; Ancona, *op. cit.* The learned author of the last-named work has recorded several curious and little-known examples, and, in his notes, gives references to many works upon special branches of the subject.

Few, indeed, out of the whole mass possess any interest either from originality of invention, or variety of treatment, still less from any literary merit, and it is more than probable that the vast majority of them never passed beyond the limits of the community to which their author belonged, until they were brought to light by the researches of modern antiquaries.

Nevertheless, of the Continental visions which belong to this epoch, there is one which demands further notice, as well by reason of the exceptionally elaborate manner in which it treats the subject, as of the recognition accorded to it by later writers. This is the Vision of Paul, or the Descent of Paul into Hell, a Latin work known in the South of France before the middle of the eleventh century, and translated into Anglo-Norman by Adam de Ros, and soon afterwards into several modern languages. We have seen that the early Church produced a work known as the Apocalypse of St. Paul, but this, apparently, was not known to the later Middle Ages, at any rate at first hand, though the terms in which St. Paul's Vision is mentioned at the opening of the *Fis Adamnáin* suggest that at least the tradition survived, and several passages in mediæval visions bear a strong resemblance to the earlier work. It is probably to the eleventh-century vision that Dante refers in *Inferno* ii. 28 *sqq.*;[1] evidently he does not refer to the Apostle's own words exclusively, for St. Paul in his Epistles makes no mention of a visit to Hell, though it is also possible that Dante had no other authority for this than the floating tradition.

In this Vision St. Paul was conducted by Michael to

[1] 'Andovvi poi lo Vas d'elezione, Per recarne conforto a quella fede,' etc. (*Inf.* ii. 28-9).

Hell, on the threshold whereof stood a fiery tree, from the branches of which were suspended by the tongue, leg, neck, or other peccant member, those who had been guilty of rapacity, or had given false judgment *por confundre la gente*. Near this was a fiery furnace, whereof *li feus est plus neirs que mors*, and in it were plunged they who had loved not God. They then came to a great and turbid river in which devils, in form of lions, swam about like fishes. The river was spanned by a bridge, the width of a single hair,[1] which had to be crossed in order to reach God's presence. The wicked fell off into the mouth of Beelzebub, which stood wide open, vomiting flame, ready to receive them. Upon issuing thence, all black and charred, they were plunged into the river, where they stood immersed to different depths—to the knees, navel, eyes, eyebrows, crown, etc.—in proportion to the degree of their guilt.[2] These were hypocrites, adulterers, envious persons who had exulted in the sight of others' sorrow—*por ceo sunt ore dolereux*, etc. Those who had made war upon the Church were submerged entirely. Faithless virgins who had violated their vow of chastity, and had destroyed their children, were clad in black garments smeared with pitch and sulphur, and aflame, while they endured the embraces of serpents and dragons.[3]

[1] For this extreme tenuity, cp. Al Sirât, the Muslim equivalent of the Chinvât Bridge, narrow as a razor's edge; also the souls' bridge of the Inoits of Aleutia, which, as in several mediæval visions, is of the thickness of a single thread.

[2] Cp. the fate of the violent in canto xii. of the *Inferno*. The traitors also stand more or less completely congealed in the ice, according to the circumstances of their treachery (*Inf.* xxxii.-xxxiv.).

[3] It is possible that this circumstance was suggested by similar travel tales told of the serpents of India, and preserved by the Greek naturalists. However, the idea is one which might well occur spon-

Corrupt judges, who had abused the widow and orphan, burnt like brushwood amid walls of ice. Priests who had known the law of God, but failed to keep it, wore heavy collars about their necks.

St. Paul, like Tundale, exclaimed, and asked why man should be born for such misery; but Michael replied that beneath those depths a still greater depth remained. This was a well, covered, and sealed with seven seals, whence proceeded such a stench that St. Paul started back. Here were imprisoned such as had denied the articles of the Christian faith.[1] These called upon St. Paul, St. Michael, *and the 'twelve peers,'* to pray for them, and that so loudly that their cry reached to Heaven; but God Himself replied that no pardon was possible for those that had rebelled against Him; howbeit, He was prevailed upon by the prayers of the Saints to grant them the usual Sunday respite, which was made to last from none on Saturday to prime on Monday.

The authorship of this Vision is unknown, so that there is no saying whether or not it was composed under the influence of the Irish Visions. The date and other circumstances would admit of this, and it has much in common with them; notably, the manner in which the familiar bridge episode is treated is very similar to that of the *Fis Adamnáin*; nevertheless, the greater part of it might quite as well have been derived from other sources, and it bears at least as strong a resemblance to the Apocalypses of St. Peter and St. Paul; like them, but to a greater

taneously, as one of the usual Otherworld applications of the *lex talionis*.

[1] Cp. the fiery sepulchres in *Inf.* canto xi., wherein, likewise, infidels were immured.

extent, it aims at the recompense of specific crimes by the appropriate punishments. However, there is a considerable group of Visions, the authors of which, though foreigners, have confessedly drawn from Irish sources. This series dates back at least as far as the time of Bede, to whom, likewise, we are indebted for the earliest account of the visions of St. Fursa, and for several particulars of the life of Adamnán. For Bede has recorded a vision seen by Drihthelm, a Northumbrian monk, who related it to one Haemgils, then a hermit in Ireland, from whom Bede received it.[1] The soul of Drihthelm, on parting from the body, was taken in charge by an angel, who brought him to a great valley in the north-east, which was Purgatory. One side of the valley was covered with flames, the other with ice, with the usual accompaniments of hail and snowstorms, filth, evil spirits, etc. They afterwards came to a great pit and a fiery plain, where they saw globes of fire rising and sinking, and in them the souls of men were imprisoned.[2] Here Drihthelm was assailed by demons armed with fiery forks, but the angel rescued him. They finally reached a wall in the south-east,[3] wherein was no opening. They were conveyed to the top of it, whence they could see a wide, flowery plain, and the light on it was brighter than the sun at noon. People in shining raiment were walking there; these were the *boni sed non valde*, who were to dwell there until Judgment. Beyond this could be

[1] Northumbria, it will be remembered, was Christianised by Irish monks, who planted monasteries at Lindisfarne and elsewhere, which long maintained the connection between the two countries.

[2] Cp. Plutarch, Vision of Thespesios, *ante*, Sec. 1, where the souls ascended contained in bubbles.

[3] In the *Fis Adamnáin* Paradise is placed in the south-east.

descried a yet brighter region, whence fragrant odours and the singing of the saintly choirs were borne to them. This narrative, commonplace as it is, proves the early date of several features of some of the principal visions, which were composed at a much later period.

By far the most famous of the present group of visions are those associated with St. Patrick's Purgatory, which attained to a popularity which almost surpassed that of the Vision of Tundale or the Voyage of St. Brendan.

It would seem that the earliest known version of this legend is the vision seen in 1153 by the knight Owen, and written soon after the middle of the twelfth century by Henry of Saltrey, a monk in the Benedictine monastery of Huntingdon, who received the story from Gilbert, Abbot of Louth. Owen was an Irishman in the service of King Stephen, from whom he received knighthood. Like Tundale, he was a brave soldier, but in the course of an ungoverned life had been guilty of rapine, lust, sacrilege, and other crimes. In the course of time he repented, and returned to Ireland, where he heard of an old tradition, to the effect that once St. Patrick, when his preaching had failed to move a pagan audience, wrought their conversion by causing a chasm to open, through which the next world became visible to them. Tradition gave out an island in Loch Derg, in the County Donegal, as the scene of this miracle, and there a religious house was established. Owen presented himself to the Abbot, and prevailed on him to allow him to enter the cavern, which he did after being duly prepared by fasting and prayer. He was conducted by a party of monks along a dark passage, and then through a brightly lighted cloister. After this he was left to himself, when he was assailed by a party of demons, from

whom he escaped by pronouncing the name of the Lord. Like Fursa, he was exposed to repeated attempts of the kind, but always extricated himself without need of angelic succour. He traversed various plains set apart for the purgation of different offences. Among other torments, mostly of the conventional kind, which seem to presuppose an acquaintance with the visions already related, he beheld sinners of various kinds suspended from trees by the members that had offended. Others were plunged in molten metal to a depth corresponding to the gravity of their offences,[1] while demons tore them with hooks whenever they attempted to raise themselves therefrom.[2] Others were congealed in ice,[3] buried in fiery trenches,[4] buffeted by violent winds,[5] gnawed by serpents,[6] etc. Although the Purgatory of Owen resembles the Inferno of Dante in so many respects, it differs from it, and, indeed, from most of its predecessors, in not distinguishing between the various crimes that are chastised there. One instance of an idea common to the author and to Dante is very suggestive: Owen passed several figures lying on the ground crucified, like Dante's Caiaphas.[7] Like Dante and Tundale, Owen recognised several of his friends.

He came to the mouth of Hell, which here, again, assumes the form of a demon's wide-opened mouth, into which, each time he draws in his breath, swarms of souls are drawn in with it, to be again puffed out as he respires—an image already occurring in the Vision of Esdras before referred to. There, too, was the usual bridge, spanning a

[1] Cp. *Inferno* xii. and xxxii.-xxxiv.
[2] *Inf.* xxi.-xxii.; and cp. the Centaurs in *Inf.* xii. 56.
[3] *Inf.* xxxii.-xxxiv. [4] *Inf.* ix. [5] *Inf.* v.
[6] *Inf.* xxiv.-xxv. [7] *Inf.* xxiii. 111 *sqq.*

foul flood, wherein condemned spirits wallowed. At the far end of it was a crystal wall, and in it a gate of gold and jewels, which led to the Terrestrial Paradise, the halting-place of the spirits that were cleansed of sin, and awaiting their final perfection; while, to render this anticipation of Dante yet more striking, a multitude of these passed before Owen, chanting psalms. Two archbishops met him, and conducted him to the top of a mountain, whence he obtained a Pisgah view of the gate of Paradise, 'like gold refining in a glowing furnace.' Then, with a flash of fire from Heaven, the vision ended.

Nothing certain is known concerning the origin of this legend, though it evidently existed long before Henry of Saltrey's day. As we have seen, it was accounted for by a legend connecting it with the Apostle of Ireland; it is referred to by Joscelin, also a twelfth-century writer, in his *Life of St. Patrick*, but there is no mention of it in any of the earlier writings concerning that Saint. Indeed, some chroniclers refer it to one Patrick, a hermit of the neighbourhood, and this origin is given in the popular story of Fortunatus; and it is unlikely that popular tradition would have had recourse to some obscure and even hypothetical Saint, if the connection with the Apostle had been generally recognised. Probably, the island may have been the scene of some local pagan cult, taken over, with the necessary modifications, by the Christian community established there, in something the same manner as St. Brigid's fire at Kildare. From the resemblance which the practices there observed bore to those connected with the Cave of Trophonius and the Eleusinian Mysteries, it seems not unlikely that if the origin of the rites could be traced, some analogies might be established between the ancient worship

of Ireland, and some of the more obscure Greek cults. However this may be, the legend of St. Patrick's Purgatory soon achieved an almost unexampled popularity, and was speedily adopted into the popular fictions of most European countries. Marie de France, in the early part of the thirteenth century, made it the subject of a long poem, and was closely followed by several Anglo-Norman writers, while it is recorded in the learned collections of Jean de Vitry, Vincent de Beauvais, and Caesar of Heisterbach, and by several of the leading chroniclers, such as Giraldus Cambrensis, Matthew Paris, and Froissart. Meanwhile, the island in Loch Derg became one of the recognised holy places to which pilgrims even from remote parts of Europe, such as Italy, Hungary, etc., resorted for the purpose of procuring the remission of past sins, by undergoing the purgatorial discipline in this life, and the English archives still contain records of certificates given by Edward III. and Richard II. to several illustrious foreigners, testifying to their due accomplishment of the pilgrimage and its attendant rites.[1] I do not know to what authority it was intended that these certificates should commend the recipients.

The institution never received the formal sanction, nor even the approbation, of the Church, and in the year 1497 the purgatorial cavern was closed by order of Pope Alexander VI. For some time to come, however, the tradition lived on in various forms: in hagiology, as in the *Aurea Legenda* of Jacobus de Voragine; in such specimens of popular literature as the story of Fortunatus; in Tassoni's burlesque poem, *La Secchia Rapita*, and in the tragedy of Calderon, to which it furnished both title and subject. The two points in connection with it that concern us, are the

[1] See a paper by M. Henri Gaidoz in *Revue Celtique*, ii. 482.

facts that the legend continued the Irish school of the *Fís*, and that it achieved a popularity so widespread and so enduring as to render it almost certain that it must, at least, have come to Dante's knowledge.

A few years before the Vision of Owen, a somewhat similar work had been produced in Italy—the Vision of Alberic, the son of a Campanian noble, and a monk of the famous Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino. For the most part, this vision is constructed on the conventional lines, but in several of its details it is in such close agreement with Dante's *Inferno* as to call for some remark.[1] The commencement, indeed, appears to be original. At the age of ten, Alberic fell into a trance, which lasted for nine days. While in this state he was visited by a dove, which put its bill within his mouth, and carried him to St. Peter, who, in company with two angels, conveyed him to the nether world. On his way thither he passed through the *Limbus infantium*, which also is an unusual feature in works of this class. Among the penalties of Hell which bear a more or less close resemblance to Dante's *Inferno*, are a valley where the unchaste stood in fire and ice to a greater or less depth according to the gravity of their offence; tyrants and infanticides were enclosed in masses of fire; homicides were plunged in a lake of fire, like blood; breakers of ecclesiastical vows were gnawed by serpents. One purgatorial infliction resembles the punish-

[1] Signor d'Ancona (*op. cit.*, pp. 62-3) doubts whether this work was ever known beyond its birthplace in the Abbey of Monte Cassino, until its discovery less than a century ago, where Dante was not likely to have seen it. In the absence of direct evidence on this point, I leave the passage in the text as it stands, for the reader to form his own conclusions.

ment of suicides in *Inferno* xiii.: the souls in question were hunted by a demon, mounted on a dragon, through plains full of thorns and briars, where they left scraps of their clothes and flesh upon the thorns, until, being lightened of their superfluous flesh, they escaped, and were thus purged. Several familiar features reappear, and are, in some measure, reduplicated; thus, besides the bridge, there is a red-hot ladder, which the wicked have to ascend until they drop off; Hell's mouth again appears as the mouth of a serpent, drawing in and ejecting the souls with his breath, to which are added a dog and a lion, who, by their breath, blow the souls to their allotted stations. Alberic, like several of his predecessors, and also like Dante, is assailed by demons armed with hooks. He crossed the bridge to the Terrestrial Paradise, where the purified spirits dwell until the Beatific Vision shall be revealed to them after Judgment. This place is a flowery plain, from out of which rises the Mountain of Paradise, surrounded by a wall, over which Alberic was permitted to look, though he might neither enter, nor repeat what he saw there. Alberic, too, received St. Peter's instructions in cosmology—of a very crude description—and as to the virtues of a monastic life, etc.; he was then bidden to return and relate his vision.

As the influence of the Irish school upon European letters waned, and gradually spent itself, a deterioration in the Vision literature became apparent; it lost what little method and symmetry that school had introduced into it, and reverted to the primitive amorphous type; we can no longer trace any indication of original thought or invention; little, even, of vividness or picturesque description is left. Not that this deterioration of quality is attended by any

diminution of quantity: on the contrary, several causes combined to render the output greater than ever. The rapid revival of ecclesiastical literature led, as one of its results, to increased activity in this long-worked field, and improved communications enabled the inmates of each monastery to study and imitate the works of their fellows in other countries and provinces. Moreover, the anticipation of a speedy end of this world, which prevailed towards the close of the tenth century, directed the trend of religious thought towards the world to come, and even after the cause had ceased to be operative, the effect remained. Then came the reform of several monastic orders, and the establishment of the friars, resulting in a renewed activity in preaching and teaching, which would naturally quicken the demand for subjects so well adapted to moving exhortation and edification; while the rise of pictorial art, which found attractive subjects in visions of Judgment, and representations of the Divine Glory, at once fostered, and was fostered by, the prevalence of those same subjects in popular literature. At the same time, the rise of a literature in the vernacular tongues would naturally co-operate with the development of a genuine theology to diminish the importance of the Visions of the Otherworld as works of imagination or vehicles of instruction, and to relegate them to the domain of the homilist and fabliast.

Accordingly, the literature of the Middle Ages teems with stories dealing with the Otherworld, and the lot of departed souls therein. Some of them occur in the lives of Saints and Martyrs; others describe a visit to Heaven or Hell, made either in vision, or *in propria persona*, or else record some traveller's temporary return from the bourne, charged with a message for the living. Many

were composed with some particular end in view, in order to convey a warning to some notorious sinner, or to instruct by the edifying fate of some one remarkable for virtue or vice; often, again, with the practical object of exacting restitution or reparation from the sinner or his heirs.

The subject was equally popular in sacred and profane literature, appearing in homily and apologue, folk-tale and fabliau, in poems serious and comic, tending to edification and otherwise.

In all this there was little enough of originality, or intrinsic merit of any kind, save only when some aspect of the subject happened to fall into the hands of a skilled *raconteur*. Nevertheless, it all served to keep the subject present to the public mind, and thus to afford that degree of preparation, which always appears necessary alike for the production and reception of any great and novel work of art, and likewise to amass a considerable store of material, ready for any hand capable of dealing with it. At length, in Dante, the one poet arose whose genius was sufficient to extricate from this heap of trivialities the great dogmas of the Christian faith which lay at the bottom, and, by his matchless constructive power, to give form and substance to the theme, to illustrate it with all that his age could afford of philosophy and learning, to animate it with the spirit of devotion and sublime human passion, and to enrich it with all the resources of the poetical imagination.[1]

[1] Perhaps a reference should be made to the Vision of the Other-world composed by Dante's friend, the learned Jew Immanuel ben Salamone, as the question might occur whether Dante may not, by his means, have arrived at such part of his subject as relates to Old Testament lore and Jewish tradition by a shorter cut than the usual channels, which it has been here attempted to trace. Immanuel was born at Rome in 1265, the year of Dante's birth, and, like his friend,

7. Conclusion

In the foregoing pages it has been attempted to trace, from its various sources, the progress of the legend which culminated in Dante's *Commedia*. It did not form a part of this design to collect the corresponding traditions which abound in the folklore of many times and peoples, nor even to give an exhaustive account of the forms which the legend assumed in the several fields which have come within our purview; rather to confine our examination to those examples which may be regarded as its sources, or may have contributed to its transmission, or determined the form which it assumed in later stages of its development. We have seen that Dante's poem had been led up to by a long series of predecessors, like it in theme, if in nothing else, and that it had already approved its fitness for a place in the world's literature, by the success which it had achieved, in countless forms, among peoples of widely diverse stages of culture. We have also seen how the Irish Church, in its palmy days, developed a highly characteristic treatment of the theme, and while following, in the main, the accepted traditions of the mediæval Church, introduced certain modifications of a strongly individual and national

was at once poet, scholar, theologian, philosopher, and exile, and, probably, one of the most learned men of his day. It is possible that Dante may have been indebted to him for stray pieces of information, scraps of Hebrew, and the like, but the debt can hardly go further than this. Immanuel's vision of Hell and Paradise was not completed till 1325, and is a manifest imitation of the *Commedia*; it has been conjectured, even, that by Daniel, who served as his guide, as Virgil did to Dante, he signified the latter. See Signor Seppelli's translation, with notes and introduction—*Inferno e Paradiso di Emanuele di Salamone*, Ancona, 1874.

type. Of this class the Vision of Adamnán has been selected for a specimen, as representing the highest level attained by the school to which it belonged, and as being the most important contribution made to the growth of the legend within the Christian Church prior to the advent of Dante.

I have purposely abstained from offering a conjecture as to any possible indebtedness on the part of Dante to the Visions of the Irish school, and to the *Fis Adamnáin* in particular, further than as these, by reviving, transmitting, and popularising the theme, placed ready to his hand the subject which was, of all others, best adapted to his genius, and, at the same time, best calculated to appeal to the public of his day. The various topics into which this examination has compelled the writer to enter—Dante literature, Celtic tradition, folklore, mythology—are all favourite subjects with that type of theorist who is wont to accompany a small modicum of the bread of fact with an intolerable deal of the sack of hypothesis, to the no small detriment of critical sobriety, so that one who approaches the subject with no preconceived theory of his own to prove—unless, like those present at a revival meeting, he be set a-prophesying by contagion—is apt to become almost as sick of these shadows as was the Lady of Shalott of those in her magic glass. I have therefore endeavoured to present the author of the *Fis Adamnáin* merely as a 'precursor' of Dante, without attempting to prove him Dante's 'progenitor.' All the same, I do not think I am transgressing these limits by suggesting the almost certainty that so omnivorous a reader as Dante must have been acquainted with works so generally known at and prior to his day as the Voyages of St. Brendan, the Vision of Tun-

dale, and the legends of St. Patrick's Purgatory, all of which were more or less influenced by the *Fis Adamnáin*, and were productions of the same school. There is no ground to imagine that Dante was acquainted with the *Fis Adamnáin*, nor can that supposition be entertained unless it can be shown that there existed in his day a translation of it into Latin, or one of the Romance languages, to which he might have had access. Indeed, pending the results of future research, it is impossible to put forward any work, or group of works, as the model which Dante followed. Probably no such model will ever be discovered, for the simple reason that none such ever existed. It is true that Dante availed himself freely of all that the previous Vision literature could give him, just as he drew copiously from every source at his command. But for the Latin classics, and Virgil in particular; but for the Latin Fathers, Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory; the Schoolmen, from Erigena to Thomas Aquinas; the Romance poets of France and Italy, it is certain that Dante's work, as we have it, could never have come into being. So much may be claimed for the Visions of the Irish school, and, apparently, no more, but even this much is enough to entitle them to a place in the history of modern literature. Indeed, independently of any such relation of cause and effect between the two, the writings of the Irish school would still constitute an interesting study, both as the fruits obtained by previous labours in the same field under widely different conditions, and even more for the light which they cast upon what is still one of the darkest places in the intellectual life of Europe.

We have had occasion to remark before upon several particulars wherein the analogy between the *Fis Adamnáin*

—and, to a less extent, others of the Irish Visions—and the *Commedia* would appear to go deeper than can be explained by their common subject, and their use in common of the same general stock of ideas. However, it does not appear that the influence exercised by the Irish school mainly consisted in the introduction of novel ideas and incidents, though even these were not entirely absent. Indeed, throughout the history of the Vision legend, we may observe a continual tendency to drop any national or personal characteristics which it may have acquired at a previous stage of its evolution. For instance, we have seen to how great an extent the popular Christian eschatology was modelled upon the classical Elysium and Tartarus, yet even the earlier Church works upon the subject contain no such references to classical personages and traditions as were employed so copiously by Dante, and, in a slight and tentative manner, by certain of his predecessors. The same may be said of the Oriental myths which formed part of the Hebrew contributions to the subject. So, in proportion as the late mediæval visions of the Otherworld recede in date from those of the Irish school, they tend to drop more and more of the structure and imagery which were peculiarly characteristic of the latter, as owing great part of their form or colour to the Irish national traditions. This process is carried still further by Dante, who rejected many of the most familiar incidents of the earlier visions: *e.g.* the bridge, the open mouth of the dragon as symbolising Hell, Enoch and Elijah beside the Tree of Life, and the bird-flocks about them, the special provisions for various kinds of the half-righteous, etc.

Thus, while exercising a secondary influence by further

enriching the stock of material already in existence, the main function of the Irish Visions was to set a literary fashion, so to speak, whereby the Vision of the Otherworld came to be regarded as the most natural vehicle for conveying men's thoughts and imaginations, as in other ages the epic, the drama, the dialogue, the pamphlet, the novel, and other forms of composition, have been specially affected for the like purpose.

It remains to say a few words respecting the literary merits of the *Fís Adamnáin*. Obviously there can be no rivalry, or even comparison, in this respect, between it and the poem which stands high among the supreme achievements of the human intellect. Noteworthy, rather, is the degree of excellence to which the earlier writer attains, when we consider what was the state of vernacular literature in the Europe of his day. His style, like the style of most Irish writers of the best period, is simple, picturesque, and forcible; the language is terse and pregnant, without being bald or meagre. There are certain writings of every age, differing much in merit, from which, as we read them, we seem to be hearing the author's voice proceeding; where this is so, the style can hardly be other than good of its kind, however simple, and even rude, it may be, and however little it may owe to technical skill. This characteristic, I think, the work in question possesses; but this is an evanescent quality which must needs disappear in translation, especially such a translation as the present, where the aim has chiefly been at literal accuracy.

Mention has been made already of the advantages which this Vision possesses over most others of its class, by reason of its superiority in construction, which is mani-

fested alike in the general design of the work, and in the superior grouping and visual presentment of certain portions, such as the description of Heaven, and the righteous assembled about the Throne. Our author, too, compares favourably with his fellows as regards his general cast of thought, as particularly in the stress which he lays upon the spiritual or emotional side of the sufferings of the lost, and the grave pity with which the contemplation of their fate repeatedly inspires him—a feeling wonderfully absent from the generality of his class.

Other characteristics are shared by him with the Irish romantic writers. One characteristic was common to both of them: there was *life* in what they wrote; the scene of their narrative became a veritable *Tír na mbeo.* They possessed, moreover, that sensibility to natural beauty, which is often, but most erroneously, assumed to be the peculiar property of modern times. They were keenly alive to the amenities of woods and meadows, flowers and birds, to the charm of colour, of brightness and light of every kind. Above all, they delighted in melodious sound, whether the music of strings or of the human voice, the note of birds and bees, the wind in the leaves, or the sound of falling water. Like Byron, they knew that 'there's music in all things, if men had ears.' Nor did this delight in Nature consist in sensuous pleasure merely. They too were aware of 'a something yet more deeply interfused'; it was 'the light of setting suns' across the ocean that wooed the Ui Corra to their quest of the Unknown; St. Brendan yearned for that retreat, 'secret, hidden, secure, delightful, apart from men,' which the ocean solitudes alone appeared to promise him.

This national susceptibility to beauty constantly asserts

itself in our author, in manner appropriate to his theme. He also manifests the no less national capacity for vivid and picturesque description, and this without being led into redundancy, or straining after effect, the leading characteristic of his narrative being a simple earnestness which is often very effective. It is needless to dwell upon individual descriptions, most of which have been dealt with in their place. It is enough just to refer in particular to the description of Heaven, of the Throne, and the celestial choirs; the naïve but striking symbol of Omnipresence; the waste and desolate places of Hell in c. 30; the various kinds of penalties in cc. 25-29; the picture of the generous but carnally minded souls protected from the fiery sea by a rampart of the alms they had bestowed.

In two respects our author differs both from Dante and from several writers of his own school. His work contains no dissertations upon theology, morals, nor natural science; neither does he hold intercourse in the world of spirits with his own contemporaries, or with historical or mythical personages; hence we do not find in it even an anticipation of the dramatic episodes, or the endless procession of life-like characters which render the *Commedia* a veritable microcosm. We are tempted to speculate upon the results which might have been obtained, had our author brought to the treatment of his subject the dramatic force, the vivid portraiture, and the narrative power, which are displayed in the great romantic cycles of Irish story.

Soon after the time when our author wrote, the development of the national literature, and, indeed, all other forms of national development, were brought, by pressure of circumstances, to a stand. Often since then the subjects and characters of Irish tradition have furnished themes for

masterpieces of European literature, but these intellectual triumphs have been like the victories which Irish arms have won for others, and under banners not their own. It is only in our own day that any serious and well-directed attempt has been made to resume the interrupted work upon truly national lines. Even within the last few years the results obtained, and the promise shown, warrant a belief that success may prove more speedy and complete than could have been deemed possible a single decade ago; and with success may come—who knows?—an infusion into modern literature of a new spirit and new methods, of which it stands so grievously in need. Καλὸν γὰρ τὸ ἆθλον, καὶ ἡ ἐλπὶς μεγάλη.

Sl éirioċ Ánnyo, buiðeaċaṫ le Dia.

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