EHISTORIC
ITH AND WORSHIP.
IPSES OF ANCIENT IRISH LIFE.

J. F. M. FFRENCH

PREHISTORIC FAITH AND WORSHIP

PREHISTORIC FAITH AND WORSHIP

GLIMPSES OF ANCIENT IRISH LIFE

BY THE

REV. CANON J. F. M. FFRENCH, M.R.I.A., F.R.S.A.I.

TREASURER OF THE CHAPTER OF FERNS, RECTOR OF CLONEGAL, 1868–1907,
VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES, IRELAND, 1897

LONDON
DAVID NUTT
17 GRAPE STREET, NEW OXFORD STREET, W.C.
1912

PREFACE

This little book is presented to the public without any controversial intention, and merely for the purpose of putting before its readers antiquarian views in the light that they appear to the writer. Subsequent to its publication in various journals, an able monograph was published by Mr. George Coffey,[1] M.R.I.A., in which he put forward very similar views to those of the writer, and nothing (that seems to be) contrary to his statements. The only part of the book that can be called controversial is where the writer treats the Tuatha Dé Danann as a real people. He knows that the younger school of antiquaries prefer to treat them as mythical; but

1 The book referred to by Mr. Coffey is *New Grange* (*Brough-na-Boinne*) *and other Inscribed Tumuli in Ireland.*

they are so interwoven with the prehistoric history of our race that without them it would be only a shadowy skeleton. The writer must leave it to further discoveries to solve the difficulties that now seem to exist. Professor MacNeill says these prehistoric races have no chronology, and we therefore have nothing to rest on in that way. Their so-called history seems very much like a bundle of undated detached notes, but we must remember that difficulties which seemed in the past to be insoluble, such as Belshazzar's place among the Persian kings, have subsequently been clearly explained, and writing, which at one time was said not to have existed before the time of Moses, was subsequently found to exist in abundant measure. Sir Robert Ball, the astronomer, is stated to have said that, however difficult the astronomers found their dates, they were in a better position than antiquaries, who seemed never sure whether a given event was B.C. or A.D. The article on 'Tribal Badges' was commented on in the *Ulster Journal of Archæology* by the Count de Tyrone, the principal officer in the King of

Portugal's household—a nobleman who claims to represent that ancient Irish title.

The writer has to express his grateful thanks for much encouragement to the Right Rev. Dr. D'Arcy, Lord Bishop of Down, Connor, and Dromore, without which this little book would probably never have been written. Bishop D'Arcy writes in his letter of March 12, 1910: 'To open up a new line of investigation is indeed delightful.' The President of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland (Robert Cochrane, Esq., LL.D., F.S.A., M.R.I.A., I.S.O.) writes: 'I was delighted to see in the *Gazette* your very valuable paper on "Bullans."' Thanks are also due to the many kind friends whose comments have been most encouraging, and to journals such as the *Witness*, a widely circulated and very influential Belfast newspaper.

J. F. M. FFRENCH,
CANON, M.R.I.A.

ROSTELLAN, GREYSTONES.

NOTE TO PREFACE

The writer of this book disclaims any responsibility for the spelling of proper names. When he makes a quotation, he gives an exact copy, without any corrections of any kind, believing, as the spelling of proper names was very variable, that the author had some good reason for spelling the name as he did. He has not even corrected the incorrect spelling of his own name, which occurs in a letter from a high authority in Scotland, although the writer had Canon ffrench's letter with his name correctly spelled before him when he wrote, and the spelling of names beginning with the letter 'F' with two small letters is not at all unusual. The writer at one time had a set of title deeds sent to him to purchase by a Dublin dealer. When he read them he saw that they were the title deeds of an estate in the County Galway, now owned by a French Count who generally resides in Paris, and who represents a branch of the family of ffrench. In these ancient legal documents he found his own name spelled in four different ways. He was very glad to be the means of restoring these deeds to their rightful owner.

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

FULL PAGE PLATES

ILLUSTRATIONS IN TEXT

PREHISTORIC FAITH AND WORSHIP

CHAPTER I

INSCRIBED STONES AND CUP MARKINGS[1]

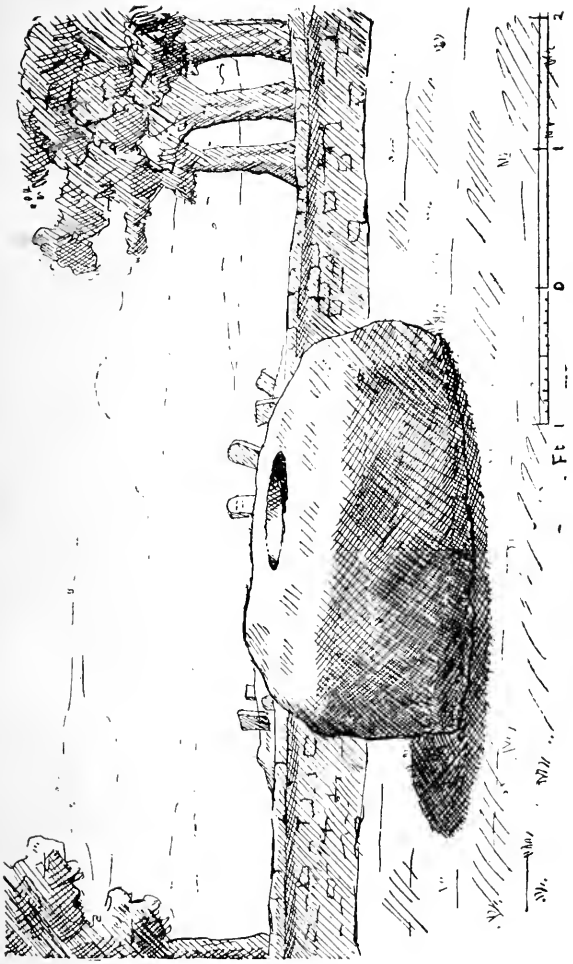
IRELAND abounds in the relics of prehistoric times. The student of prehistoric archæology will find them everywhere, and it seems likely that they will be more the objects of the study of the antiquary in the future than they have been in the past. In fact, we may say that many able men are devoting great care and attention to them at present. The most remarkable and the most usual of these antiquarian objects are undoubtedly and naturally of stone, for stone is not so perishable as other materials. Of these objects of

[1] Paper read at a Literary Meeting at Greystones on March 17, 1910, by the Rev. Canon ffrench, M.R.I.A., Treasurer of Ferns Cathedral.

stone we would ask particular attention to be given to Bullans or Rock Basins, which are found all through Ireland. Of these there are various types ; sometimes they are to be found cut into the undisturbed rock, or sunk in boulders or in the sides or shelving portions of natural caves. In size and section they vary, yet all are (as the name implies) basins ; some measure four feet or so, while others are not larger than an ordinary breakfast saucer ; the average diameter is about fourteen inches.

There are three different varieties of Bullans—an inverted cone, which is the most usual ; a bowl-shaped basin ; and also a shallow depression with vertical sides. Examples have been found on the perpendicular face of rocks and on the sides of boulders.

Wakeman tells us that there can be no doubt that they were in some way or other associated with Pagan sepulchral rites, and their constant presence near our very ancient Church sites seems to give much strength to this conclusion. For the early missionaries would naturally select for their sacred buildings, sites which were already held in much



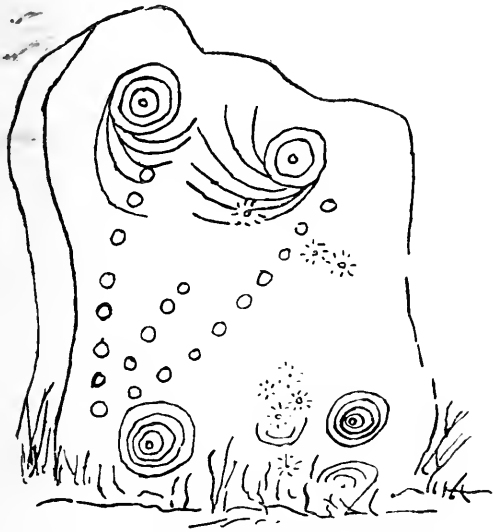
THE BUSHERSTOWN BULLAN STONE, CO. CARLOW.

esteem, in order that they might consecrate those sites to the worship of the true God, and the more effectually wean the worshippers from Pagan superstition. The difficulty now meets us, what were the Pagan rites with which Bullan stones were associated? We cannot fall back on records, for the times of which we treat are prehistoric; but we may fall back on the usages and beliefs of tribes who still hold the shadows and vestiges of the faith to which, before the dawn of history, the worship of the Creator had been degraded. The steps from the worship of the Creator down to idolatry seem plain enough. This primitive faith we now call 'Totemism' for want of a better name. Astley, in his lectures on 'Prehistoric Archæology,' tells us, writing of the Neolithic age:

> Another phase of Neolithic art is seen in the cup and ring markings on rocks and also on stones, pebbles, and shells, together with circular or spiral drawings, which are characteristic of the age all the world over, and are found among the natives of Australia to-day.

Judging by what we know of their present-

day significance, these seem to point to the arrangement of society on a Totemistic basis, and can be described, as I have



SKETCH OF A CUP MARKED AND TOTEM AND RING MARKED STONE AT SESKIN GREEN, BALLYGAWLEY, CO. TYRONE.
By Mrs. Ross, of 66 Fitzwilliam Square, and Dunmoyle, Co. Tyrone.

ventured to do elsewhere, as '*the heraldry of primitive man.*'

The Totem is an animal, plant, or insect representing the original ancestor of the human being, and this descent is derived, in the first instance, through the mother, and

only as a later development through the father. Spencer and Gillen tell us :

> The Arunta believe in re-incarnation from an ancestor who lived in 'Alcheringa' times—*i.e.* beyond which no tradition goes. Each, ere he or she died, deposited in the locality where death was expected to take place a 'Churinga.' The *Churinga* is a stone, or, more generally, a piece of wood ornamented with various designs in dots and rings, similar to the cup and ring markings found on rock surfaces all over the world, which marked the Totem to which the deceased belonged.[1]

Now I would place Bullan stones before cup and ring markings, before those family badges which differentiate between different families existing previous to the dawn of history.

Certainly one of the oldest records we have of sacrifices of any kind are the sacrifices of Cain and Abel : the sacrifice of the poured-out blood of the lamb made by Abel, and the sacrifice of the fruits of the ground made by Cain. These in some shape or form remain to the present hour, for as Christians

[1] Spencer and Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia.*

we hold the Holy Communion to be the living shadow and representation of the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ; and Professor Sayce tells us in the November number of the *Expository Times*, p. 88:

> The history of the Temple Hill thus offers a curious parallel to that of a rock shrine I once discovered near Dirr in Nubia. This was originally dedicated to the Ka of an Egyptian of the eighteenth dynasty (which flourished from 1500 to 1300 B.C.), to whom offerings were accordingly made. With the introduction of Christianity the Egyptian Ka became Isu or Jesus, to whom the old offerings continued to be presented, and after the triumph of Mohammedanism Isu passed into the Moslem Sheik Isu. The offerings and cult remained unchanged, and to this day the cup of water or beer, and the bowl filled with corn are duly laid on the ancient altar for the Mohammedan saint.

(The Mohammedan religion will not allow the use of wine.)

There we have the offering of the fruits of the ground at the present day; and might it not be held that our blessed Lord in His all-wisdom, when doing away with bloody sacrifices, which in themselves were but a shadow, combined both the old shadows in

one inclusive whole in the Holy Communion, which contained within itself in the bread and wine the shadow and Sacrament, not only of the poured-out blood, but also the shadow of His own body and of the fruits of the ground? But to return to our Bullan stones. It can hardly be questioned that these rock basins were used, in the first instance, for the purpose of having libations poured into them, and probably (like Abel's offering) a libation to the one and only true God. Boni, the celebrated Italian antiquary, in his account of the excavations of the Roman Forum, which dates back to the earliest times, and to a period when hut-shaped cinerary urns were in use, tells us:

> I was fully aware of the care necessary in analysing each stratum of the Forum, especially in the comitium, because here almost up to the fall of the Republic innumerable religious rites were performed, either beginning or ending with a libation or else with an offering of milk or wine. These rites were celebrated in cavities of every sort and size, dug out in effosa terra, or in the most ancient form cut in the tuffa itself.

The tuffa itself being the virgin rock. There then you have the Bullan or rock basin in full

work, used for the reception of libations, and you have the reason for having various cavities in the same place. The libations that were poured out were of various kinds, milk and wine, or oil and wine, which were merely symbolical representations of blood and fat. 'The blood which is the life thereof,' and the fat surrounding the vital parts (or semen). The cavities may, therefore, have contained blood, oil, wine, milk, or water, and the worship may not have been Pagan worship. It may have been the worship of the Creator, a worship similar to the worship of Cain and Abel. How soon the downward tendency in human nature began to develop itself we cannot say, but it is plainly evident that the next stage was ancestor worship. The family, instead of worshipping the common ancestor, creator and founder of the race, adopted as the object of worship the founder of their own particular family; and then necessity called in the family badge or Totem, by which it was possible to distinguish one family from another. It was a necessity of the same kind that called into existence the tribal badges in Ireland and Scotland in the early

ages, and it was a like necessity that called into being the crests and coats-of-arms at the time of the Crusades. We have here, then, at once a system of religion much the same as that of the Chinese, who fortunately did not adopt the Totem badges.

The next step downward was a very simple one. Instead of worshipping the thing symbolised, they worshipped the symbol itself, and became pure idolaters. Doubtless, the worship at the Bullan stone developed itself in various directions, and, once it ceased to be the worship of the Creator, became more or less a system of idolatry. It would readily become a worship of the stone itself. Nothing can be at greater variance than our idea of a stone and that held by the ancients. Smyth Palmer tells us, in his essay on 'Comparative Religion,' that the cult of stones goes back to the most primitive times, and is found in all parts of the world from China to Peru. It is not so long ago since a black stone was an object of veneration, in one of the islands off the western coast, where it was carefully supplied with warm blankets, and the Roman Catholic

clergyman of the district found no small trouble in getting rid of it.

The examples of stone veneration are much too numerous to be quoted; here we can only refer the reader to Smyth Palmer's book. He says that menhirs, or standing stones, were often conical and employed as emblems of the god presiding over fertility. The cup hollows were intended to contain the libations or unctions which were once poured upon them by the early worshippers. I think that we may, without straining a point, conclude that the object of the prayers of the worshippers who poured libations on these ancient stones was fertility, They prayed for fertility for members of their tribe, for their flocks and herds, and for the kindly fruits of the earth; and when we find small cup markings which could not have been intended to contain libations, owing to the position they occupy, combined with Totemistic rock scribings, I think we may conclude that they are to be understood as implying, or seeking, prayers for the families who are represented by the Totemistic scribings. In this article I have

made no reference to other religious cults which existed at the same time, such as the veneration of spirits that dwelt in trees, in wells, and in standing stones, and the particular worship that gathered around holed stones, and the worship of the host of heaven, all of which are worthy of notice.[1]

Astley tells us that

the Totemistic Tribes attribute a living soul to every object, making it to be what it is, and the trend of modern thought is to attribute life to every object, both to those which we describe as inanimate, as well as to those which we describe as animate.

[1] Since writing the foregoing the following note has been sent me by a friend: 'T. W. Y. E. Wentz, in his book on the *Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries*, published at Reimes, mentions on p. 218, writing of Ireland, "the ancient cult was one of *ancestor worship*," and on p. 228 he says, "Samain, as we already know, was the great Celtic feast for the dead, when offerings or sacrifice of various kinds were made to *ancestral* spirits and the Tuatha-de-Danaine and the spirit hosts under their control."'

CHAPTER II

PILLAR STONES AND HOLED STONES

We have now brought our prehistoric worshipper down to his first acts of worship, the presentation of votive sacrifices to God in testimony and acknowledgment of His gifts and seeking for further blessings for the family, the flock, and the herd, and the crops. Men then, just as we do now, required something symbolic to remind them of the great truths they were already in possession of, a point around which their religious beliefs could gather; something to remind them of God. Our requirements are exactly the same. If religion is to flourish among us we require a House of God to be set in every parish, a place where God's honour dwelleth, and where we expect in an especial manner to meet Him. On this House of God we erect a spire pointing to heaven.

The prehistoric worshipper had to meet his want in a simple way, suitable to the state of culture in which he lived. Mr. A. C. Haddon, in his preface to Major A. G. Leonard's work on the Lower Niger, tells us :

> We now know that our brethren most backward in material culture are imbued with ethical and religious ideas which do not materially differ from those inculcated by the teachers of the religions of civilised peoples.

This being the case, we may, I think, assume that the primary religious ethics and religious ideas of mankind were always the same, and are to be found now, as they were at the beginning, among races that remain still in their childhood. The simple way in which they met the difficulty was by erecting pillar stones, and calling them, as Jacob did, Bethels —Houses of God. These pillar stones are to be found all over Ireland ; the ordnance map is studded with them. There is one in the townland of Ardristan, in the County Carlow, and another on the side of Newry Hill, in the townland of the same name, in the County Wicklow ; there are numbers of them in the County Mayo ; there is one near

Moyne Abbey, and there is a range of them extending over the country for some miles in that county. There is a set of three in

SKETCH OF A TYPICAL PILLAR STONE.
By Miss M. J. Langhorn.

the North Arran Island, County Galway, at a considerable distance apart. The Gallauns in the County Kerry (as the standing or pillar stones are there named) are very numerous.

The tallest pillar stone in Ireland is to be found in the County Mayo, and is illustrated in vol. xv. pp. 754–5 of the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries* for the years 1879–82. This pillar stone was inscribed with a cross at its base in Christian times. There is a grand specimen standing amid a group of megalithic structures in the sand-hills of Finner, a wild district extending between Ballyshannon and Bundoran. They were used for the purpose of calling God to witness the making of covenants, and the marking out of boundaries, and the hallowing of burial sites, down to the time of the introduction of Christianity. Of this there can be no doubt, for we can date one of them.

MacFirbis tells us:

> The body of Dathi was brought to Cruachan and was interred at Relig-na-Riogh, where most of the kings of the race of Heremon were buried, and where to this date the red stone pillar remains on a stone monument over his grave near Rath Cruachan to this time (1666).

Dathi was the last Pagan monarch of Ireland. He died in the beginning of the fifth century

from the effects of lightning, somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Alps, while leading his army on a continental raid. We have nothing in Ireland that can be compared with Carnac in Brittany, which might be described as a vast prehistoric cathedral, but we have abundance for educational and illustrative purposes. Now, may I ask, why should the religion of these people be called heathen? Hard names are not hard arguments. I was present some years ago in the courthouse in Rathmines when this subject was very plainly illustrated. I was registering my vote for the County Dublin, and at the same time that nice little Indian gentleman, the Professor of Arabic and Persian in Trinity College, Dublin, came forward for the same purpose. The County Court Judge ordered him to be sworn, and he declined to be sworn on the New Testament; he said he was not a Christian. 'Oh,' said the Judge, 'you are a heathen, I suppose.' 'No, your Worship,' said the little gentleman, 'I am not a heathen; I worship the very same God that you do.' His Worship looked very puzzled, and said, 'I really do not know what to do with this

man. I think there is a precedent in the law books for swearing a person like this on a cracked saucer'; but our Indian friend indignantly refused to be sworn on a cracked saucer, and a compromise was made by allowing him to hold up his hand and affirm. We are told that during the Crimean War the Mohammedan officers told our officers that they could see no reason why they should not join with them in saying the Lord's Prayer. It is true that in the course of the centuries the worship at pillar stones became debased and degraded, and a form of idolatry became attached to it; but is that falling away unknown in the history of the Christian Church? A well-known writer tells us that 'the menhir is to be met with over the whole surface of the ancient world.' 'What is it but the monument of primitive humanity, a living witness of its faith in heaven?' In course of time, the libations that were at the first poured out before the pillar stone of testimony came to be poured on the stone itself and in that way it was consecrated to be a shrine in which there was believed to be a special indwelling of the Spirit of God. Jacob,

following the custom of his forefathers, anointed his pillar stone with oil in honour of the special disclosure of the Divine will that had been made to him. All our ritual ordinances were probably founded on practices already existing and widely dispersed among the nations of antiquity, and anointing with oil is still used by a large number of Christian people. E. B. Taylor, in his 'Primitive Culture,' tells us that the thoughts and principles of modern Christianity are attached to intellectual clues which run back far through pre-Christian ages to the very origin of human thought and human civilisation. The primitive law of sacrifice was that certain important parts of the animal were not consumed, but were set apart for God. The blood, which was the life, was poured out as an oblation, and the fat surrounding the vital organs was etherealised in the fire and ascended in fragrant smoke as an offering to God. This fat, which was accounted as equally propitiatory with blood, was used with blood as an offering to God. We consecrate our churches, they consecrated their pillar stones, to be shrines of God with oil

and blood. At a very early period men learned to idealise the blood and fat, and used in their room oil and wine. The least cultured races have degraded the symbolic offering down to the use of red paint, with which they even now daub their pillar stones. Probably at a very early date the worship attached to pillar stones began the process of deterioration, and the evil effects of localising the presence of God commenced to develop itself. The pillar stone which was at first the shrine of the Spirit of God became the shrine of a spirit, and as soon as ancestor worship came to the front it became the shrine of the spirit of an ancestor, a departed chief or mighty man, whose memory was venerated there, and sometimes several spirits were supposed to dwell in the one stone. We have been in the habit of looking on the worshippers who lived at a time when stone objects held the most prominent places in their ritual as gross materialists; but that seems to be the very opposite of what is the case, judging from what we learn from the races which are still in their childhood. In India, the belief of

these simple people was to the fullest extent ours. As the poet says :

> There is no death, what seems so is transition.

Or, as another of our poets tells us :

> A simple child that lightly draws its breath
> And feels its life in every limb,
> What can it know of death ?

They believed that what seems death is only a transference of life to another sphere, where the influence of the seeming dead is more powerful and more capable of being favourably invoked than ever it was in life. Is it not this faith that nerves the arm of the Japanese soldier at the present day and makes him rise altogether above the fear of death ? But, as time passed on, the idea seemed to have taken root that these stones might also be possessed by evil spirits whom it was necessary to propitiate, and then they became idols of an evil type. The most notable of these was Crom Cruach, which is situated in the plain of Mag Slecht, near Granard, and was destroyed by St. Patrick. It is described as ornamented with gold and silver, and having twelve other

idols ornamented with brass around it. My valued friend, the late Rev. Thomas Olden, LL.D., quotes a poem in his 'History,' which seems to say that children were offered to this idol at certain periods.

Once the worship of stone pillars or the spirits they were supposed to enshrine obtained a solid footing it lasted with great pertinacity, and we may be sure that St. Patrick's strong measures were not enough to dislodge it; the people clung to it with remarkable tenacity. Smyth Palmer tells us an old thirteenth-century Norse Church Balk ordains, 'that none shall to idols sacrifice and none shall on groves or stones believe.' In the same century Archbishop Theodore had to denounce the practice of stone worship in England, and even so late as 1656 the Presbytery of Dingwall (Ross) forbade the adoring of stones and wells. The hold that stone worship obtained on the human mind may be illustrated by a story told us by Sir A. Lyall in his 'Asiatic Studies,' who says that he knew

a Hindu officer of great shrewdness and very fair education, who devoted several hours daily to

the elaborate worship of five round pebbles which he had appointed to be his symbol of omnipotence. Although his general belief was in one all-pervading Divinity, he must have something symbolical to handle and address.

Perhaps in this story we may find an explanation of the use of those curious little oval pebbles with a track across them, known as tracked stones, which have been for such a lengthened period a puzzle to Irish antiquaries, and which are known among the peasantry as little idols. May they not have been household or pocket reminders or shrines of the god they were supposed to represent? and in this case these stones may be representations of the female principle, a cult which had a powerful following in Ireland.

CHAPTER III

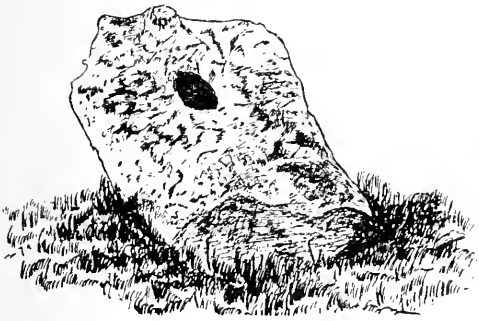
HOLED STONES

THE portion of the subject which I now take up is holed stones, a very fine specimen of which is to be found in the parish of Aghade, on the townland of Ardristan, in the County Carlow. It is called 'Cloch-a-Phoill.' It lies in a semi-recumbent position against the fence of the field, and is plainly visible from the public road. It rises 7 feet 6 inches above the ground, and is 5 feet 8 inches in width and 1 foot 6 inches in its thickest part, and it is pierced at a point nearly equally distant from its sides and top with a round hole 11½ inches in diameter.

There is an historical legend in the Book of Ballymote about this stone, which gives the name of the parish in which it is at present situated as Athfada, now Aghada or

Aghade (Long-ford). In this legend we are told that Eochaidh, the son of Enna Cennsealagh (King of Leinster), burned the house and killed the only son of the poet of Niall of the Nine Hostages because he was refused entertainment in the poet's house.

In consequence of this King Niall made



HOLED STONE, NEAR ARDRISTAN, CO. CARLOW.
By Miss M. J. Langhorne.

an expedition against Leinster, and obliged the Leinster men to give up Eochaidh as a hostage, and he carried him to Athfadat, in Fothartaibh, on the banks of the Slaine (now Slaney), where he left him chained to a rock and sent nine men to kill him; but, by a sudden jerk, the prisoner broke the chain, and taking in his hand the iron bar

that passed through the chain at the other side of the stone, he turned on them and slew them all. Tradition tells us that marks on the stone still show the friction of the chain. There are at present marks that may have been caused by a chain; but this, although interesting as a matter of history, and as a proof of the great antiquity of the stone, has no relation to its use for religious purposes. May I mention that it is only the amount of veneration that is paid to these ancient objects that has preserved this stone to the present time? for it has been several times proposed to split it up into gate-posts. We find that portion of the ritual use of this stone which has lasted down to our own days in Ryan's 'History of Carlow,' which is a very reliable book. The late Professor George Stokes once said to the writer of this article, 'If you want to take your history *neat*, read Ryan's "Carlow."' He tells us, on p. 338, that 'Cloch-a-Phoill' was used in his day to pass ill-thriven infants through the hole, in order to improve their health, and that his informant was a woman who had herself passed one of her infants through the

aperture, and that great numbers were formerly in the habit of doing so. A similar tradition is found attached to a holed stone near St. Madrous' Well, in Cornwall. There a block of granite, pierced in the centre by a hole, is called the 'Creeping Stone,' because sickly children were passed through it to effect a cure. This stone is called in Cornish, 'Maced,' or 'Men-an-Toll,' and, if a man crawls through it, he is believed to be for ever afterwards free from rheumatism. Children with the king's evil are passed naked through the hole three times, and then drawn three times along the grass against the sun; the same rites are practised for spine disease. Similar healing virtues are ascribed to a holed stone at Minchinhampton, in Gloucestershire, which is called the 'Long Stone.' At its lower end there is a perforation through which children were passed to be cured or to guard against ailments. At the parish of Fyvie, in Aberdeenshire, close to St. Paul's Well, there was a large stone supported by two others, leaving a space, between it and the ground, through which children were passed for

healing; and the Cloch-nave, Deglane, or St. Declane's stone, on which he is supposed to have sailed about on the ocean, has an aperture beneath it which is used in the same way. I have to thank a lady friend for a sketch, with measurements, of a holed stone which is to be found at St. Monachan's Oratory, near Ventry (not *in situ*). This stone is 33 inches in height, 26 inches in width at the top, and 15 inches at the base. In thickness it is about four inches. The hole is nine inches by four inches. There is a shallow channel at each side of the hole. This seems to be a newly discovered feature, and may be a more defined symbolism; perhaps the beginning or dawn of the runnels which pass through ring markings. It is quite unusual for a holed stone to be narrower at the bottom than at the top.

These holed stones are very numerous in Ireland, and although doubtless numbers of the minor ones have been destroyed, and numbers have not yet been recorded, numbers still remain, and we may take it that the symbolism is in all places the same. India supplies us with the best field of

research for interpreting this symbolism. Mr. Milford, in his work on 'Asiatic Researches,' in vol. vi. p. 502, tells us that in India devout people pass through these apertures, when the opening will admit, in order to be regenerated. If the hole be small they put the hand or the foot through it and, with a sufficient degree of faith, it answers nearly the same purpose. The necessity for regeneration seems to have been deeply impressed on the human race, and when our Lord said, 'Marvel not that I said unto you, ye must be born again,' He stated no unknown truth, even if His hearers were slow to believe it, and when the children or grown-up people were passed through the circle, they were supposed to be symbolically re-born, freed from the imperfections of the flesh with which they had been born or had acquired, and (as Professor Stephen has said, writing on 'Nature Worship') these circles may represent life transmitted from generation to generation, 'life out of death, life everlasting,' and by this symbolic action men were believed to be brought into powerful contact with the Spirit of God which

dwelt within the stone. In fact the act became a kind of sacrament.

There is another use attached to these stones which should also be mentioned, and that is the use which was made of them for the purpose of sanctifying an oath. Once granted that there was a Spirit of God dwelling within the stone, nothing could be more reasonable than that they should be used for sanctifying an oath, and particularly that most important of all oaths, the marriage covenant; and from these circles we probably derive the marriage ring. We make those who testify in our courts 'kiss the book,' which amounts to calling God to witness. They made them join hands through or around the sanctified stone, just for the same purpose. The holed stone in Castledermot Churchyard is called the 'Swearing Stone.' There is another of the same type in the County Kerry. Fergusson tells us of the celebrated holed stone of Stennus, near Kirkwall, in Orkney:

> It is quite certain that the oath of Woden or Odin was sworn by persons joining their hands through the hole in this stone, and that an oath so

taken, although by Christians, was deemed sacred and binding.

Wakeman tells us that:

> This ceremony was held to be so very sacred that anyone breaking it was accounted infamous and a person to be shunned.

This brings us down to the degradation of the worship offered at holed stones; for, when the spirit supposed to be residing in the 'holed stone' had ceased to be accounted to be the Spirit of God and had come to be accounted the spirits of other gods, the character of the worship was entirely changed.

We now come to the latest form of holed stones, when they came to be considered merely as the abode of spirits. These stones have been well described by Wakeman, who tells us that they have but small perforated holes. Their symbolic use had evidently ceased to exist. Wakeman considers the larger perforations to be prehistoric and the small perforations to date from anti-Christian times, but afterwards to have been consecrated to the religious services of a people recently won to Christianity, but who still

possessed some lingering reverence for the 'idols' of their forefathers. I quote Mr. Wakeman's words, but I do not consider these symbolic stones to have been idols. Two of the most important of these holed

KILMAKEDAR SECONDARY HOLED STONE.
From photo by Miss E. Warren.

stones are to be found in the Island of Innishmurray, and here the traditional use has descended from prayers for regeneration to prayers for the fruitfulness of women. One of these stones stands on the south side of 'The Church of the Men.' It measures 4 feet in height, 11½ inches in

breadth, 1 foot 1 inch at base, and is about 7 inches in thickness. A graceful cross has been incised on the western front. This face exhibits two holes of a size just large enough to admit the human thumb. These orifices extend through the adjoining angles of the stone, and open out at the sides into a space sufficient to receive the fingers of a hand. But, as I said before, these stones are not esteemed to be prehistoric, and as the worship attached to them had become degenerate, I must not dwell upon them beyond noting that the Australian natives consider these stones to be charged with spirit-children who look out through these holes for mothers, in whom to become incarnate. May I remark that it seems strange how the ancients, and the classes of humbler culture at the present day, seem to think it necessary that a door for exit and entrance should be provided for spirits? They seem to think the size of the aperture is of no consequence, but the passage out and in ought to be there. This is curiously illustrated by a letter which Colonel W. B. Digby received from one of his tenants in 1898:

MORANTOWN,
MOYVORE,
WESTMEATH.

Sir,—I hear that you are going to open the Forthe (*i.e.* Rath) and let out the Leprechauns to murther our cattle. I request that you will not do that; we won't allow it.

Your obedient servant,
CATHERINE MOORHEAD.

In conclusion, may I call attention to a rough cross at the eastern end of Ballycastle Church which has all the appearance of a holed stone roughly hewn into the shape of a cross, and may I suggest that it was from an adaptation of the holed stones that the Celtic Church derived the cross and circle with which we are so familiar? There has been always a difficulty in accounting for this cross, and the not impossible suggestion has been made that it may have had its origin in the Egyptian cross, which is a cross beneath a circle. There certainly is every reason to believe that at a very early period there was communication between Ireland and Egypt, but it is a long way to go for an explanation of this Irish cross. Would it not be more reasonable to suppose

that it found its origin at home in an adaptation of the holed stones which were at first roughly hewed into crosses, like the cross outside the east end of Ballycastle Church?

RUDE STONE CROSS AT THE OLD CHURCH OF BALLYCASTLE.
Taken from painting of J. S. Fleming, by Miss M. J. Langhorne.

In the Swearing Stone at Castledermot we have a holed stone on which was sculptured a Celtic cross, which takes the hole in the stone as its centre. But this stone must be very much later than the Ballycastle cross.[1]

[1] Since I wrote my article on Prehistoric Faith and Worship as illustrated by Bullans or Rock Basins, another curious type of Libation Stones has come under my notice. Antiquaries have been engaged in excavating prehistoric Sardinia, which has long been famous for its

nurages, which rise thirty or forty feet above the ground. At St. Vittoria, near Servi, they have unearthed the ruins of a prehistoric temple, the first sign of the find being the discovery of a circular well, the bottom of which was reached by means of a staircase. In front of the well is a forecourt paved with white limestone slabs, and containing at the head of the staircase an altar and a slab with a hole for holding or receiving libations. Here also was found a bronze statue of possibly a priest, attired in a short tunic and cloak, holding a staff in one hand, while the other is held up, apparently in the act of blessing, and around his neck there is hung a bag or pouch, from which projects one of these B.C. crosses, which are known to antiquaries.

CHAPTER IV

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE CROSS BEFORE CHRIST

THE Symbolism of the Cross before Christ can be studied both from an antiquarian and from a Christian point of view. Our God is holy and just and good, consequently our religion must have been, at its root, the same at all times.

Justin Martyr expresses the belief that what was true in ancient times was, all of it, of the Logos (of the Eternal Word). The Word of God was disseminated in the world like seed until the Lord Jesus was born, and then in Him we received no longer parts or fragments but the whole Word of God. If this is the case, can it be wondered at that the great *central* symbol of our holy religion should be found before Christ as well as after the coming of our blessed Redeemer? If

the great and wondrous sacrifice was foreordained in the eternal purposes of God before the foundation of the world, surely it is not surprising that it should be symbolised from the earliest times.

That there was a holy deposit of truth in the world, a deposit of a just and true religion, before the revelation that we *have* the great blessing and privilege to *possess*, can hardly be questioned, and that *that* religion was impressed by symbolic teaching, I think I may say we know. The only question is how far that symbolic teaching extended. Let us go back to the Garden of Eden. When Almighty God created human beings in His own image, when He gave them a dwelling-place on earth, He made intelligent creatures who were capable of understanding His laws and obeying them. Here, then, at once a revelation becomes necessary, for no man, or no race of men, could evolve the law of God out of their own inner consciousness. If there was no revealed law to sin against, my argument is that Adam and Eve could not have committed sin, for 'sin is the transgression of the law.' Now let

us look around and see what evidence we have that the religion that was taught to Adam and Eve was impressed by symbolic teaching. At once the sacrifices offered by *their sons* present themselves to our view. Both sacrifices showed a large amount of religious teaching, previously received. Whence did they derive that knowledge? Not certainly from any revelation that we possess. Then it must have been from a previous revelation. To suppose that there was no previous revelation is to suppose that when our God held communion with our first parents in the Garden of Eden it was a profitless communion, and that Enoch was able to walk perfectly with God without any Divine teaching or instruction, and that Melchisedek was able to occupy the high spiritual position in which we find him without any teaching from Almighty God. *Why then a new revelation?* My theory is that while the spring and source of religious teaching was pure at the fountain head, yet, during the centuries, so many impurities were poured into it that a great *Reformation* became necessary, a Reformation so thorough that a fresh and new

means was provided to convey the Divine Will to the knowledge of *man*.

Ancient truths had to be re-edified and built up again, the common things of life had to be re-consecrated to the service of God. The necessity for an atoning sacrifice as a doctrinal teaching seems never to have lost its hold on mankind, and the sacrificial types and shadows of it are all but universal. There was also a widespread conviction that a Virgin should conceive and bear a son.

The great historical truths that we have preserved for us in the Word of God, such as the stories of The Creation, The Fall, The Deluge, The Confusion of Tongues, are found in a more or less corrupted form among people that never could have learned them from *our* Holy Scripture. The idea that the *Old* Testament contains the oldest written records must be relegated to regions of exploded myths ; for in the British Museum there are letters deposited, which were written on tablets of baked clay long before the time of Abraham. It would be supposing a great deal to imagine that sacrificial rites were the

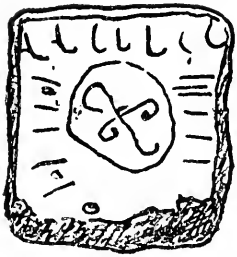
only remnant of the symbolical teaching of the older religion that survived to our own time. Would it be too much to suppose that a symbolism which pointed to the death of the great sacrificial victim on the Cross may also have come down to us from that early period? That the shadow of the Cross may have been cast back over the ages, as well as forward to the days in which we live? 'May it not be more than a coincidence,' as a well-known writer says, 'that Osiris by the cross should give life eternal to the spirits of the just? That, with the cross, Thor should smite the head of the great serpent and bring to life those that were slain?' That, with that symbol to protect them, the ancient peoples of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America laid them down in the dust and saw through it the life that is to come?' The world abounds in symbolic crosses that have existed and come down to us as religious symbols from ages long before the proclamation of Christian truth. Ireland abounds in these crosses, but in this respect Ireland is in nowise singular. Whether the worshippers were cave-men wending their way through the primeval

forests that covered the continent of Europe in the early days of the human race ; or wild hunters who built their refuges from beasts and men on piles in Swiss lakes, or Assyrians or Egyptians or Chinese, or Japanese or Hindoos or Scandinavian rovers, or Greeks or Britons or Gallic Celts, or Mexicans or Ancient Romans—the cross as a symbol was common to them all. It is the one and only inter-racial religious symbol, and we know of no form of cross, whether it be that of St. Andrew, or St. George, Maltese, Greek, or Latin, that has not existed from the remotest antiquity, and that cannot be actually looked on, in painted or sculptured form, as it has come down to us from times both before Christ and since the days of our Lord. The passing of the ages has made no changes worth mentioning in the forms of the symbolical crosses ; and that which the ancient Eygptian painted on the coffin or mummy-cloth of his sacred dead a thousand years before the birth of our Saviour is fashioned by the modern stonecutter to grace the gables of our Irish churches, and by the jewellers in Grafton Street to adorn our

ladies' garments. The symbol which the rude hunters scraped on the bones that were cast aside from their feasts is found rudely impressed on the bottoms of cinerary urns, where the ashes of the cremated dead were deposited long before the dawn of history. In the Far East this baptismal symbol was fashioned by the Hindu mother in rice around the baby in the form of the Swastica, and it is the symbol that the Buddhist priest impressed on the forehead of the neophyte 600 years before the birth of Christ, and that the Scandinavian rover placed in the hand of his god, which is now found on the bells of our churches in England and on the dinner napkins on our tables, while the Havasupai Indians in Western Arizona beat the same sign out in virgin silver. This cross is found on a fragment of an ancient Scandinavian sword from Northern Sweden. It is called by a variety of names by antiquaries, such as the Croix Grammee, Swastica or Fylfot (many-footed), Hammer of Thor, &c. It is said by

SWASTICA (USUAL).

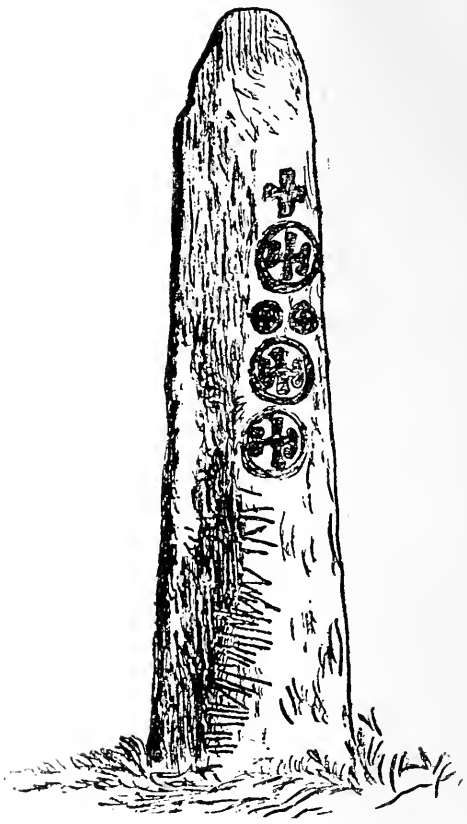
trustworthy travellers and writers to be found cut on rocks in the remote parts of India, and it is found on the mitre of Thomas à Becket, and on a coin of Granada, which is held to be the oldest Indian coin. It is to be seen on Indo-Bactrian coins, and on coins preserved in the museum of Copenhagen supposed to be of Byzantine origin. It was also found on spindle whorls and on fragments of pottery discovered at great depths below the surface of Hissarlik and at Mycenae, by Dr. Schliemann, and it appears on coins of Palestine, Greece, and Sicily. Dr. Ferdinand Keller, in his 'Lake Dwellings of Switzerland and other Parts of Europe,' gives illustrations of this symbol from the Lake of Bourget, where it was found on an object of clay said to have been portion of a hut covering. In the same work (on p. 339) is an illustration of a seal or stamp which was evidently used



TERRA-COTTA OBJECT FROM FOURTH CITY OF TROY ABOUT TWO THOUSAND YEARS B.C.
By Miss E. Warren.

for making the impression. This cross also appears on Roman altars found in Britain, and on the elaborate tesselated pavement of a Roman villa which was discovered in the Isle of Wight. It was found engraved on a counter or roundlet, either of bone or horn, in one of the low mounds at St. Louis, United States of America, and it was also found in more southern districts of that continent. *In Ireland* it has been found on monumental stones, accompanied by ogham inscriptions, and also it forms part of the decorative design impressed upon other crosses (such as the Pillar Stone at Kilnasaggart).

Among the Bantu negroes, several missionaries who are authorities attest that before Christianity was introduced the cross was used as a mystic symbol by the priests who directed the worship of the spirits. We also find that, in the practice of the sacred ceremonies among the aboriginal Australians, a Swastica somewhat in the form of a St. Andrew's Cross was used; and may not much be said in favour of the St. Andrew's Cross being the true cross, and the Australian type being the original form of the Swastica?



KILNASAGGART PILLAR STONE WITH SWASTICA CROSSES, LATIN CROSS, AND OGHAM INSCRIPTION. ON THE OTHER SIDE IS A PLAINER SWASTICA OR FYLFOT AND LATIN CROSS, AND AN IRISH INSCRIPTION.

A recent writer on this subject (Mr. Albert Churchward) says :

> Its constant presence on altars, tombstones, sepulchral urns, and priestly vestments, and the nature of the symbols with which it is found associated, afford more than sufficient proof that it partook everywhere of the nature of the amulet, the talisman, and the phylactery.

And, strange to say, just at the present time, a strong effort is being made to revive its use as a charm. The same writer, treating of the figure of the Swastica within a triangle, which we gather from him is found in West Africa, says :

> The figure of the Swastica in the centre of the Sacred Triangle may be said to represent the highest and greatest of the Christian doctrines of the present day. That the spirit must be born again and will be everlasting, and that we can only attain this by believing in the Cross and in Christ and the Holy Trinity. The Swastica here represents the regeneration of the life to come, as evinced by its position in the centre of the Sacred Triangle, which is here the representation of the first Holy Trinity. It shows that the beliefs and the original doctrines of these ancient people were identically the same as what we now use, time and evolution having altered them very little.

May we not hope that our readers will see in the Swastica not only the sign of blessings obtained, but also, in its first use, the symbol of a predicted benefit? The word Swastica is the Sanskrit name for this cross, and may be comparatively modern and tinged with Buddhist ideas. My friend, Mr. E. Stanley Robertson, late of the Indian Civil Service, tells me that in India it is believed to be a monogram taken from two Devanagri letters which mean *su* ('well') and *asi* ('is'), and that it appears probable that it is taken from the letters of some older and simpler Sanskrit alphabet. The Devanagri letters are extremely complex, while the symbol itself is very simple. The *su* is of course cognate with the Greek *eu*, and *asti* with *esti*. The final *ka* is a formative termination implying that the word is a noun. May I say in conclusion that the 'Fire Stick' suggestion with regard to the Swastica does not seem to rest on any evidence?

SWASTICA FROM AUSTRALIA.

CHAPTER V.

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE CROSS BEFORE CHRIST—*continued*

AFTER the Swastica, the next in importance among the B.C. crosses is the Egyptian Cross (Ansata, or Cross and Circle), which may have been the prototype of our Celtic Christian cross. The late Professor Stokes and others have conclusively shown the influence exercised by the Christian Church in Egypt on early Christianity in Ireland, and what more natural than that the sacred pre-Christian cross of the Egyptians should be adopted by the early converts to the Christian faith, and that with other customs of the Egyptian Church it should find its way into Ireland?

The A.D. cross numbered I. may be considered the transition stage to the Celtic cross of our own times. The cross with a

handle, or, more properly speaking, the cross and circle, is a common symbol upon the monuments of Egypt.

A prominent English canon, rector of an important parish, who has lately returned

I.

EGYPTIAN CROSS, OR CRUX ANSATA.

II.

CROSS ON OLD CHURCH AT INISMURRAY.

from a tour in Egypt, writes, in a letter which I have now before me:

> The commonest of all sculptured symbols, generally held in the hand of the god or king, was what they called 'The Key of Life,' which is a cross with a loop on top wherewith to hold it.

It was the key of life to the ancients, and it is the key of life to Christian people now.

I have suggested elsewhere that the cross

and circle may very possibly have found an origin in holed stones rudely hewn into a cross, as illustrated by the Ballycastle cross in my article on 'Holed Stones.'

The meaning of the Egyptian Cross has for ages supplied food for the exercise of the ingenuity of scholars. The ancient Egyptians described it as a divine mystery. It is constantly seen in the hands of Isis, Osiris, and other Egyptian divinities. You will find it figured in such popular and easily to be procured books as 'Stones Crying Out,' where there is a picture of an Egyptian winged figure or cherubim, worshipping before an Egyptian deity and offering up to him the cross and circle. The same emblem is seen on a staff fixed in the ground before the deity, and yet again it seems to be represented over the worshipper's head. On p. 192 of 'Echoes of Bible History' there is a representation of Thoth, the Egyptian 'god of wisdom'—an Ibis-headed deity, with the sun and moon upon its head, and the cross and circle in its hand. Socrates Scholasticus explained the symbol, and declared (on the authority of converts to Christianity) that it

signified the 'life to come.' Rufinus said the same thing. The figure varies somewhat in different localities. It was borne as an ensign by the Egyptians; and just as the first Christian Emperor led his soldiers to victory under the banner of the Cross, so did the ancient kings of Egypt. With the lower limb extended it served as a support for the crest or device of their various cities, as a lion for Leonopolis, as a goat for Panopolis.

It was figured on the gigantic emerald or glass statue of Serapis, which was transported, B.C. 293, by order of Ptolemy Soter, from Sinope, on the shores of the Black Sea, and re-erected within the labyrinth on the banks of Lake Maris; and which was destroyed by the victorious army of Theodosius, in A.D. 389, despite the earnest entreaties of the Egyptian priesthood to spare it because it was the emblem of their god and of the 'life to come.'

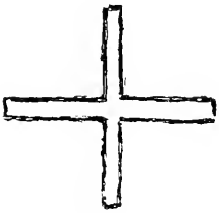
I would now say a word or two about the circle. With us it signifies eternity, but I think I may say that, outside the Christian Church, it always signified a new birth. This subject I have referred to under the heading

of 'Holed Stones.' The circle as an emblem of regeneration is found everywhere; and so lately as October, 1892, the *Graphic* illustrated paper had a picture of a Moorish woman passing her hand into a circular hole to obtain cleansing or forgiveness of sins, *i.e.* 'a new birth.' The circle also came to represent the transmission of life from generation to generation through the female power, which was such a prevailing cult in Ireland when religion became degraded and before the veneration of the male power came into prominence. The Cross Ansata, or Cross and Circle, was certainly a sacred symbol among the Babylonians. Among their many representations of it is a standing figure between two stars, beneath which are 'handled crosses,' and above the head of the deity is the Triangle, or symbol of the Trinity.

We now take up cross No. III., the ordinary Chinese Cross, which from time immemorial has been used by them to symbolise the universe (the 'Four Points,' as it is called). It answers in form exactly to the crosses called Greek Crosses, so frequently

found in Ireland. Cross No. IV. is of the type that we call a Latin Cross, and is copied from a rock that is decorated with cup markings and circles, at Mevagh, Rossquile, Co. Donegal. Cup markings are, undoubtedly, a pre-Christian type of decoration. A modern

CUP MARKING.



III.

CHINESE CROSS, OFTEN FOUND IN IRELAND.

IV.

CROSS—IRISH MEVAGH INSCRIBED, CO. DONEGAL.

writer tells us that, long before the Romans and the Etruscans, there lived, in the plains of Northern Italy, a people to whom the cross was a religious symbol—the sign beneath which they laid their dead to rest. A people of whom history tells us nothing, knowing not their name, but of whom antiquarian research has learned that they lived in ignorance of the arts of civilisation, that they dwelt in villages built on platforms over

lakes (which we in Ireland call *crannogs*), and that they trusted in the cross to guard (and maybe to revive) their loved ones whom they committed to the dust. Through Emilia are found the dust-heaps of these people, which form quarries, whence manure is taken by the peasants of the present day. These quarries go by the name of terramaris. They are vast accumulations of cinders, bones, fragments of pottery, and other remains of human industry, similar to those which have been discovered in Denmark and in Switzerland. The pottery found is mostly fragments, and sometimes the bottoms of the vessels are rudely engraved with crosses.

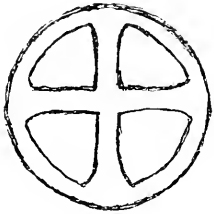
In the County of Donegal, at a place called Barnesbeg, near Kilmacrenan, there is a dallan or standing stone deeply cup marked, and on it there is a Latin cross, three of the arms of which end in cup markings; nor are these by any means the only pre-Christian crosses of the Latin type found in Ireland. At a place called Clanfinlough, in the King's County, there is a stone, known as the 'Fairy Stone,' which is covered with

Latin crosses and representations of the ancient Irish ring brooch; also, at a place called Cranna, in County Galway, there is a stone called the 'Stone of the Fruitful Fairy,' on which there are inscribed a number of Latin crosses and two well-marked representations of daggers. Cross No. V. is copied from the scribblings within the great mound at Dowth, in County Louth.

The great tumuli of New Grange and Dowth are believed to have been erected by the Dé Dananns, a race who are said to have lived in Ireland before the Milesians and the conversion of the inhabitants of this country to the Christian faith, but who by many are now believed to be a mythical people. You will observe the resemblance that it bears to the cross copied from the Church of St. Fechan, at Fore, in County Westmeath, and the resemblance that both these crosses bear to the wheel cross of the Assyrians, a cross that was always present whenever they pictured their great god Asshur, in whose name they carried on all their wars and won all their victories. This wheel cross of the Assyrians bears a

V.

CROSS FROM TUMULI AT DOWTH.



VI.

CROSS ON THE CHURCH OF ST. FECHAN, AT FORE, WESTMEATH. ASSYRIAN TYPE.

VII.

REASK CROSS NEAR VENTRY, CO. KERRY. ASSYRIAN TYPE.

From Miss E. Warren.

resemblance to the cross that we find on Anglo-Norman coins in Ireland.

The most ancient coins of the Gauls were circular with a cross in the middle (little wheels, as it were). That they were not designed to represent wheels is apparent from there being only four spokes placed at right angles. When coins of the Greek type took their place, the cross was continued as the ornamentation of the coin. Some Gaulish coins bear the cross on both obverse and reverse ; in the year 1835 about two hundred of this description were found near Quimper, in a brown earth urn, with ashes and charcoal which had been placed in a rude kistvaen of stone blocks. Thus proving that the cross was introduced into England with the Anglo-Norman kings.

We have an almost exact reproduction of the Assyrian cross in Killaghter churchyard, in County Donegal, and at Reask, near Ventry, in County Kerry. This Reask cross is of very early type, and seems to mark the transition stage when the most cultured emblem of pre-Christian symbolism (the *Sun*) was giving way before Him whom we know as the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person—the Sun of Righteousness.

Now let us turn from the East to the

West, and we meet with the fact that when the Spaniards invaded America they were overwhelmed with surprise to find the sign of the cross in common use by men whom they considered to be in every respect heathen; and by pointing to that sacred symbol, emblazoned on their standards, they received a more cordial reception from the natives than they had any reason to expect.

So great was the respect paid by these natives to the sign of the cross that they treated it with Divine honours. We are told by travellers that it is exceedingly difficult to distinguish between the ancient crosses of America and those set up by the invaders. Mr. Stephens, in his work on Central America, bears witness to this, and gives a representation of one of the finest of these crosses that he met with. He found it carved on the wall of the ruined temple at Palenque, and it was about nine or ten feet high. One of the most remarkable of the American pre-Christian crosses was one that was made at the festivals by the Mexican priests, of corn flour consisting of maize and the blood of the victims offered in sacrifice. After this cross was worshipped

it was broken up and distributed to the people, who ate it as a bond of union and brotherhood. What a strange resemblance this bears to the sacramental bread and wine! Surely the idea of safety through the blood of the Cross could not have been far distant from these people.

Now let me point to Ezekiel ix. 6, which, while recounting the awful judgments to be poured forth, says, 'Come not near any man upon whom is the mark,' or, according to the Vulgate of St. Jerome (which in the opinion of Bishop Lowth is correct), upon whom is the Tau Cross. This would seem to be a foreshadowing of our custom in Holy Baptism in which, as Wheatley says, our Church has ordained 'that all her children should be signed with the cross on their foreheads, signifying thereby their consignment up to Christ, whence it is often called by the Fathers, "The Lord's Signet," and "Christ's Seal."'

We have now, we trust not unsuccessfully, striven to show that prehistoric symbolism was the same all over the world, and consequently that those symbols may be

presumed to teach the same truths (however subsequently degraded) as those in which we believe. The gold in the sovereign of to-day may have first circulated in 'the new-coined Stater of Croesus'; and if this is the case, does it not present to us a wider and more extended sense of the grace and mercy of God overshadowing the earth from the beginning, and does it not seem that the great miracle of the atoning sacrifice through the death of the Lord Jesus was impressed on the earth by sign and symbol from the birth of our race? We may differ about minor details and statements conveyed to us through languages that have long since passed away, and by signs that must remain of doubtful signification, yet may we not thank God for every new proof that we obtain of the eternal value of the great atonement, and of salvation through the blood of the Cross? 'He that steals my purse steals trash,' but he that weakens my faith in salvation through the blood of the Cross 'enriches not himself, but makes me poor indeed.'

In conclusion, may I say that the origin of symbolic or sign writing, and the reasons

that called it into existence, would naturally present themselves for consideration? I am well aware of many theories which seem to me like pyramids resting on their apex. I would suggest the very commonplace reason of necessity—the need for finding some easy way of signalling when no writing was in existence.

A line perpendicular or horizontal would tell of a deposit of food placed in the spot, or that a party had passed that way, and some of our rock scribings, which are a mere combination of two straight lines, may have thus arisen; but to suppose that at an early period, when the struggle for existence was severe, those who lived then spent their time decorating rocks or inscribing them with a combination of more or less elaborate figures for ornament only, seems to me scarcely reasonable. I know of no motive but a religious one that would have sufficient power to cause men to do so, and when we find that a symbol such as the cross has had all the world over a religious association attached to it, I think it not unreasonable to infer that a religious motive was its primary cause.

CHAPTER VI

THE USE OF SUN AND FIRE SYMBOLS IN PREHISTORIC TIMES

ALTHOUGH the cross was a symbol, it was not in prehistoric times the symbol of an object. It was the representation or sign of an accepted belief, and not the sign of an object around which worship could centre. But human nature always craved for more than that, it craved for something on which faith could lean, and which would represent the great invisible one ; and the swastica was made to lend itself to satisfying that purpose.[1]

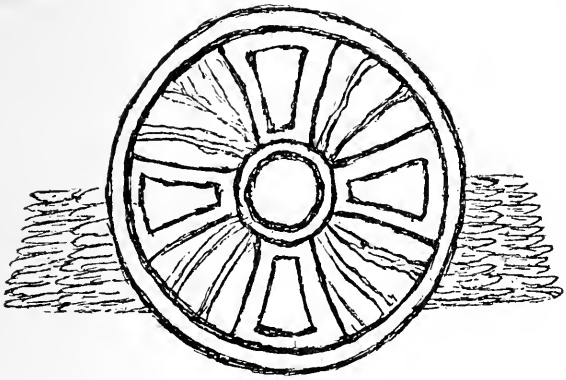
1 A recent writer tells us 'that among the symbols accompanying the gamnadion there is none so frequent as the solar disk. The two signs are in a manner counterparts not only among the Greeks, the Romans, and the Celts, but also with the Hindus, the Japanese, and the Chinese.'—The Count Goblet D'Alviella, *The Migration of Symbols*, 1894, p. 56. This shows us how completely the swastica had degenerated into a mere sun symbol.—*Ibid.* p. 67.

A revolving swastica could be made to represent either the circular disk of the sun or a sun cross. Numbers of these sun crosses are to be found in Ireland, such as the cross at Inismurray, the cross at

REASK CROSS, NEAR VENTRY, CO. KERRY.

Dowth, the cross at St. Fechan's of Fore, and the cross at Reask, near Ventry. This Reask cross we reproduce, as it is such an excellent illustration of the sun cross of a very early type. We give also illustrations of the Assyrian cross and the cross on the standing stone at Killaghter and the

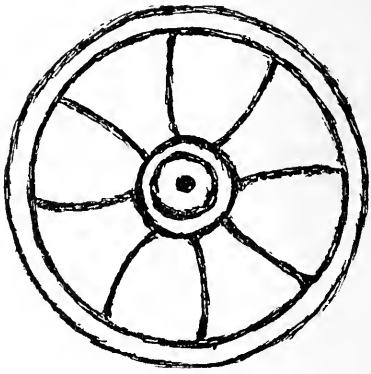
sun-marked stone at New Grange ; also the Chincana symbol. The Assyrian winged cross usually accompanied the presence of Assur, their chief god, and it may be considered as marking out the figure represented as that of their god. That this cross is not



ASSYRIAN WINGED CROSS.

a wheel is easily seen from the fact that it had only four arms radiating from the one centre, and no one ever tried to construct a wheel with four spokes. That the trend of human nature is to accept the host of heaven as the symbol required is plainly to be gathered from the Old Testament Scripture, and this seems to be the degradation of

worship that some of the oldest written documents in the world tell us had first of all to be guarded against ; for the Bible, although not the oldest written record, is one of the oldest. The first 'Thou shalt not' in the Bible is found in the twentieth chapter of



FROM KILLAGHTER CHURCHYARD, CO. DONEGAL.

Exodus : 'Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor the likeness of any form that is in heaven above. . . . Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them' ; and in Deuteronomy xvii. 3 the wicked who have served other gods and worshipped them are described as those who have worshipped either 'the sun, or the moon,

or any of the host of heaven.' We have it there plainly stated that one of the earliest forms of idolatry was the worship of the sun, which I would say became a form of idolatry when, as invariably happened, the thing symbolised was forgotten, and the symbol itself was allowed to take its place. Consequently, the necessity for the command against symbolic worship arose. In Deuteronomy iv. 19 we have the warning, 'Lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun and the moon and the stars, even all the host of heaven, thou be drawn away and worship them and serve them.' Certainly if any definite object was allowed to be taken as a symbol of God, none could be more suitable than the sun. It is God's agency for supplying the world with light and heat, and much of the very comfort of existence depends on the sun. Where there is no sunlight there is practically no life, or life of only the most feeble and unhealthy kind. We have an excellent example of how readily the untaught man turns to the heavenly host as the representative of God in the case of a deaf-mute who had never

been instructed, and yet who was often seen engaged in prayer. After he was instructed he was asked to whom did he pray, and he replied 'to the heavenly host' (the stars). The worship of the sun symbol had undoubtedly a great hold on the world, and it remains in existence still among the descendants of the ancient Persians. It was the only cult that was able to make a stand against Christianity when it became the religion of the Roman Empire. The cultured gentlemen of Greece and Rome were not the stupid idolaters that ill-instructed people seem to think. A well-known writer regarded their religion as of such a high and cultured type that if Christianity had developed any mortal weakness, the religion of cultivated Rome would have been the religion of the Western world. It was practically a return to Patriarchal Religion.

The human spirit instinctively turned with reverence to the Father of all spirits, and in its helplessness sought utterance for its yearnings in symbolism of word or act.[1]

1 S. Dill, *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire* (London, 1910), p. 9.

The cultured men of those early days sought an image of the infinite God in the sun. Other worshippers sought it under other names, and thus attempted to realise faint shadows of the Infinite. One of their philosophers, Longinianus, a correspondent of St. Augustine, while he believed that the ancient sacred rites had a real value, also believed that the one 'great ineffable Creator' was to be approached only by the way of piety and truth in word and deed. Professor Samuel Dill tells us that in the fourth century

> the ancient God of Light had become in public opinion the Supreme Power who is all-seeing and all-pervading, who is Lord and giver of life, the cleanser from sin, the protector of the miserable, the conqueror of evil demons and death, who assures to his faithful worshippers the hope of immortality.[1]

Even in its ritual there was a strong resemblance to the Christian faith:

> Its expiation for sins by bloody baptism; its ascetic preparation for the Holy Mysteries; its oblation of the consecrated bread; its symbolic teaching of the resurrection—all so strongly resemble

[1] Dill, p. 81.

Christianity that it was not surprising that Christians should consider it a cunning device of the evil one.[1]

May we not see in it the remains of the original teaching from which all knowledge of true religion comes? 'The mystery of the death of a Divine being, His descent to the under world, and His joyful restoration, which was the central idea of many of the cults which most influenced the religious feeling of Antiquity,'[2] may well seem to us the remains of the original deposit of truth which man received from his Maker. Even barbarous religious symbols have often sloughed off their baser elements with the development of a purer morality. Be this as it may, Christianity had no mean foe to contend with before it could plant the Cross on the ruins of pre-existing faiths, backed up as these old beliefs were by memories of the past and by patriotism and love of country, which always make the votaries of any faith formidable. We know little of the faith of the Druids, but there is every reason to think that it was largely

[1] Dill, p. 84. [2] *Ibid.* p. 85.

leavened with sun and fire worship; for the two forms of worship seem so mingled together that practically they were the same thing, and the remnants of that worship are abundantly to be found among us from that time to the present. In St. Patrick's Hymn, as translated by the Rev. Thomas Olden, he not only binds to himself Christian doctrines, but he also claims the very elements worshipped by his opponents. He says:

> I bind myself to the virtue of heaven;
> In light of the sun;
> In brightness of snow;
> In splendour of fire;
> In speed of lightning;
> In swiftness of wind;
> In depth of sea;
> In stability of earth.

These separate symbols might be worshipped as separate gods, but far more likely as symbols of the attributes of the one God.

Astley tells us:

> The great temples which they erected at Stonehenge, Avebury, and Carnac, in Brittany, which are the primeval models of the Egyptian Karnac, of the Mycenean Baitlyon, of the Parthenon, of Baalbec, and of the medieval cathedral in all its

glory, were for the worship of the mighty sun, the Lord and life-giver to all things.[1]

The Rev. Dr. Olden, in his 'History of the Church of Ireland,' tells us:

> The worship of the sun is referred to by Saint Patrick as practised in his time,[2]

and one of the customs connected with it and still retained in Ireland was the lighting of bonfires (once common throughout Europe). The first day of May was known in the Irish language as the Day of Bealltaine (either the fire of Baal or the fire of the Lord); these fires are now transferred to the 23rd of June (the Eve of St. John the Baptist's Day), and this seems to indicate a connexion with the summer solstice. On the Continent the practice survived the Roman occupation and the Teutonic conquest, which survival attests the extraordinary vitality of Celtic tradition. In the Bavarian highlands they are known as *sonnen-wend-feuer* (solstice fires), and a capitular of Charlemagne condemns them as a remnant of paganism.

1 H. J. D. Astley, *The Historic Archæology and the Old Testament*, 1908, p. 151.

2 P. 6.

We have before noticed the Assyrian sun symbol, and Bunsen notes that the Sun God of Heliopolis in Syria (Baalbec), came from Assyria, and quotes from Macrobius ('Saturn,' i. 23): 'The Assyrians celebrate with great ceremony in the city of Heliopolis the worship of the sun under the name of Jove.' Lanigan, in his 'Ecclesiastical History,' tells us:

> That fire was in pagan times an object of worship, or at least great veneration in Ireland, and particularly the sun, which was the greatest of all fires, is an indubitable fact.[1]

The so-called sun worshippers and the so-called fire worshippers were one and the same, and in both cases they themselves said they did not worship either the sun or the fire, but God in the fire. Lanigan says that:

> Zoroaster, the reformer of fire worship among the Persians, directed that wherever altars on which their sacred fire was kept were erected on the tops of hills and high places in the open air, temples should be built over them to prevent the sacred fire being extinguished and the holy offices of their religion being interrupted and disturbed, for all parts of their public worship were performed before these public sacred fires, as all their private

[1] J. Lanigan, *Ecclesiastical History* (Dublin, 1822), p. 407.

devotions were before private fires in their own houses, not that they worshipped the fire, for this they always disowned, but God in the fire,

or, as we would put it, God as symbolised by fire. He adds in a footnote :

> There seem to have been in Ireland, as there were in Persia, two sects of fire worshippers—one that lighted their fires in the open air, and performed their religious ceremonies on hills and high places ; and a second who kept the sacred fire in the sacred temples.[1]

This last statement of our writer I think we can only receive in a very modified degree. After the introduction of Christianity, the sacred fire of St. Brigid was probably called into existence to turn a pre-existing fire worship to Christian uses. Nor was the instance of Kildare the only instance of perpetual sacred fires kept burning, for there was one at Inismurray and another at Cloyne. There is also an instance where a newly-converted chief erected an altar at one end of his place of worship to the glory of God, and an altar at the other end to the object of his pre-Christian worship. Keating, in his

[1] J. Lanigan, *Ecclesiastical History* (Dublin, 1822), p. 409.

'History of Ireland,' explains the change of name of three of the chiefs of the Tuatha Dé Danann by telling us that they changed their names to the name of the god that they worshipped. Thus one of them changed his name to MacGreine, because he worshipped Grian, the sun.

The alarm of the so-called Druids when they saw St. Patrick's fire at his first Easter celebrations, shows that Druidism was in Ireland probably a form of sun and fire worship; and so great was their fear that they fled to the head king at Tara, requesting him to have it extinguished, lest it would get the mastery of their fire and bring the downfall of the kingdom. There is every reason to believe that, whatever Druidism was in Ireland, it was free from the cruel and bloody rites that were associated with it elsewhere, and was of the mild and gentle type that sun worship might be expected to be. That sun worship was a prevailing cult in Ireland cannot be disputed; for St. Patrick in his 'Confessions,' alluding to it, says:

> For that sun which we behold, by the command

of God, rises daily for our sakes ; but it will never reign, nor will its splendour endure ; but all those who worship it shall go in misery to sore punishment. We, on the other hand, believe in and worship the true sun, Christ, who will never perish, nor will anyone who doeth His will ; but he will abide for ever, as Christ will abide for ever, who reigneth with God the Father Almighty and with the Holy Spirit, before the worlds, and now, and for ever and ever. Amen.[1]

The strong conservative instinct of the Celt is nowhere more clearly exhibited than in the fact that after the passing of the centuries the sun cult has left its impress on our customs.

I have already mentioned that the first day of May was known in the Irish language as the Day of Bealltaine, but that these fires were transferred to the 23rd of June. In old times mysterious virtues were supposed to be possessed by dew gathered on May Morning :

> The fair maid who the first of May
> Goes to the field at break of day,
> And washes in dew from the hawthorn tree,
> Will ever after handsome be.[2]

1 *Conf.* 60, White's translation.

2 Wood-Martin, *Traces of the Elder Faiths of Ireland*, 1902, p. 176.

A peasant always approaches a holy place from the north side, and he must move from east to west in imitation of the supposed motion of the sun. In the same way a corpse must be carried to its last resting-place, a bride should approach her husband, an infant should be carried to the baptismal font, and the glass should be circulated at the festive board. Even now it is believed that every movement of persons or things should be with the course of the sun. To move against the sun was productive of evil consequences, and was called 'withershins.' Witches in their dances always went withershins. Mr. Simpson, in his work, 'Meeting the Sun,' [1] says :

> The Lama monk whirls his praying cylinder in the way of the sun, and fears lest a stranger should get at it and turn it contrary, which would take from it all the virtue it had acquired. They build piles of stone, and always pass them on one side and return on the other, so as to make a circuit with the sun.

Mohammedans make the circuit of the Caaba in the same way. To move 'with the sun'

[1] Quoted by Wood-Martin, *op. cit.* p. 57.

is *desiul,* a Gaelic word akin to *dextra.* Withershins ('contrary ways') is German—*Wilder Sinn.* The adoption of a foreign form for the ill-omened words is curiously significant.

The ancient dagobas of India and Ceylon were also walked around in the same way. The old Irish and Scotch custom is to make all movements *desiul* or sun-wise. To go withershins and to read prayers or the creed backwards were great evils, and pointed to connexion with the devil.[1]

Pennant refers to these and similar practices in Scotland, such as kindling a fire

1 'An ancient rite occurring in different branches of the Indo-European family consisted in making the circuit of the object intended to be honoured or sanctified, keeping meanwhile the right side turned towards it, that is to say, following the apparent direction of the sun, known in India by the name of pradakshina, and still practised by the Buddhists of Tibet round their sacred stones. This custom has survived to our own times in different parts of Europe. Dr. MacLeod relates that the Highlanders of Scotland, when they came to wish his father a Happy New Year, made in this manner the circuit of the house in order to ensure its prosperity during the year. At St. Fillans, by Comrie in Perthshire, this circumambulation, called deasil (deisul), was performed round a miraculous well, to which people came in search of health. A similar custom seems to have existed in the Jura Mountains.'

and the people joining hands and dancing three times around it southways, according to the course of the sun ; indeed, he tells us all public matters were done according to certain fixed ideas in relation to the sun, ' all pointing to a lingering ray of sun worship.' As I said before, the Bealltaine festival seems to have moved about from May Day to the Eve of St. John the Baptist's Day, the time when the sun is visible for the longest period. The Bealltaine (the Lord's festival fires) were kindled on the hills or at cross-roads and other convenient places. The writer remembers seeing the bonfires lighting all along the sides of the hills on St. John's Eve, and the young people dancing around them, always following the course of the sun. The writer has also seen brands taken from the fire and carried around the houses three times to keep away evil spirits. In some places the young people are feasted on cakes made with milk and eggs, and the cakes are called Bealltaine cakes, and in many places it is believed that on this night many who rest in their graves arise and may be met with at the church. Children and cattle are

also passed through the bonfires. A gentleman who was standing by these fires in the County Cork told the writer that on the night of celebration he saw little children and cattle passed through the fires. The little children, very sparsely clothed, were made to draw up their legs under them, and two young men would each catch the child by an arm, and whisk it so briskly through the flames that the fire would not rest upon it or the child be in any way injured. The young people of both sexes also jumped through the fire. But the cattle were not so tenderly treated, for although they were sometimes driven between two fires, they were often driven through the fires, and consequently often scorched, and their feet burned by the glowing embers. We have here apparently an exact repetition of the worship described in the Old Testament and an explanation of it ; for there the idolatrous Israelites are described as passing their sons and their daughters through the fire. This the writer always thought was some fearfully cruel observance, but it seems that it could be done without in any way hurting the

children. There are many other still remaining traces of fire worship, such as the treating of cattle by the ' need fire ' when they were sick. This method of healing survived to very nearly our own time. In case of sickness every fire on the townland was put out, and no fire was allowed to be kindled until it had been produced by two men rubbing sticks together ; and a fire was lit in that way, the smoke of which the cattle were compelled to inhale. This was plainly a following of the old pre-Christian custom that, under given circumstances, all fire should be put out, and only lighted again by brands from a sacred fire. Once the sun, the great producer of light and heat, was accepted as the symbol or image of God, bearing within it a presence of God, then it necessarily followed that all flames were regarded in a like way, and nothing can exceed the respect with which present-day sun worshippers treat the flame and light of the fire. So much is this the case that the Parsees for a long time looked on lucifer matches with great doubt as an unlawful method of producing fire, and it was only necessity that at last compelled

them to use them. Prideaux, quoted by Lanigan, tells us that, when they came before these holy fires to worship, they always approached them on the left side, so that, having their faces towards them and also towards the rising sun, they might direct their worship towards both.

It would seem that the highest worship was reserved for the rising sun. There is a well-known stone at Clogher which, before the writer visited that place, had been brought to the Church or Cathedral and laid up against the outside of the north wall. This stone was said to be none other than the *Clogh-or*, or 'stone of gold,' from which the whole place derived its name; and the stone was called the stone of gold because a panel of burnished gold was said to be inserted in it, and the stone itself was said to be placed in such a way that the beams of the morning sun, when it first arose above the horizon, would light upon it, and cause it to shine with great brilliancy and splendour. There is plainly visible on this stone a depression which seems to have been made to hold this panel of gold. It can scarcely be doubted that this stone was

a remnant of sun worship. The celebrated stone known as Crom Cruach, which stood near the river Gathard, in the plain of Magh Sleacht, in the Barony of Tullyhaw and County of Cavan, seems to have been of a like character ; for we are told it was ornamented with gold and silver, and in the ' Tripartite Life of St. Patrick,' published by Colgan, part ii. chap. xxxi. it is called the chief idol of all the Irish.

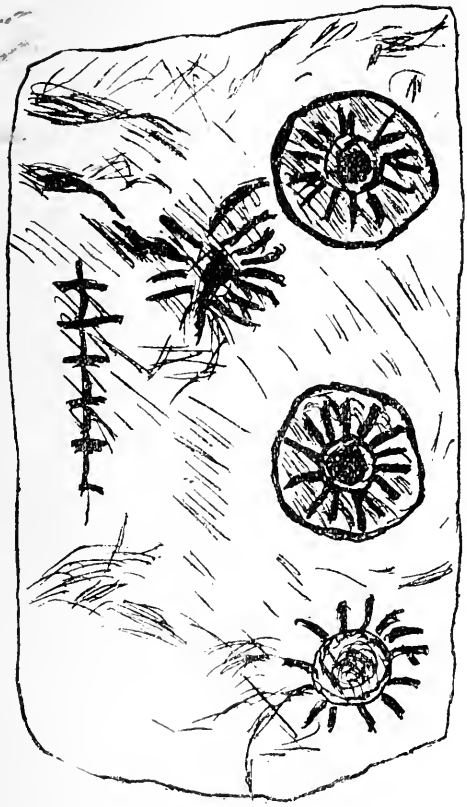
Doubtless, in St. Patrick's time, the thing symbolised had been entirely lost sight of, and the symbol was worshipped in its stead. Even to our own days the shadow of the sun cult remains with us in our everyday life. We still call the first day of the week Sunday, and Lady Wilde was of opinion that in the May Day processions the sun was figured by a hoop wreathed with rowan berries and marsh marigolds.

The late Rev. Doctor George Stokes mentions an incident in the life of St. Ciaran of Saiger (who, according to tradition, was a Bishop before St. Patrick) which goes to prove that it was believed that fire was originally divinely kindled, and could only

be renewed in the same way. A sacred fire was allowed to go out by the carelessness of the person in charge, and there was consternation in the monastery, for it was from this fire all the other fires were kindled. Still more, the weather was cold, and there were visitors in the guest-house. In this emergency St. Ciaran went forth, spread abroad his hands, and prayed, whereupon a thunderbolt fell, which he wrapped up in his robe and took home, and was thus enabled to rekindle the fire. The most recent prehistoric sun symbol that has been discovered has been illustrated in the last issue of the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*. Mr. George Coffey, in his 'Memoir of New Grange and Dowth,' mentions as exceptional a stone which is to be found on the east side of the mound.[1] Only the upper surface of this stone, which is covered with a leaf-like figure, was visible at the time the memoir was written. Mr. Coffey tells us that when this stone was modelled for the Museum in July 1901, the lower portion, with incised crest-markings on it, was brought

1 *Trans., R.I.A.* xxx. 61.

to light. These markings, which are of much interest and importance, evidently represent



NEW GRANGE SUN-MARKED STONE.

three suns, two of which have their outer rays enclosed in a circle; there is a fourth rougher figure above these, which also appears

to be a sun. Since writing this article, I have read a most interesting paper on ' Mithraism,' which was published in a former number of the *Irish Church Quarterly*[1] by Mr. E. H. Alton. I was very glad to find that it was written on the same lines, and came to very much the same conclusion that I did. In some unaccountable way I had missed seeing it. The sun symbols which we have may easily have sprung from a misuse of the swastica, and thus may symbolise a religion which is not in many ways wholly unworthy of the great Patriarchal Religions that existed before Christ. For I think we must take sun worship, or the worship of the sun symbol, as reformed in the last century of the Western Roman Empire, as a fair representative of the sun cult as it originally existed. The following extract, made from one of our daily papers,[2] illustrates how the sun cult, like the swastica, was a symbol which is found all over the world :

Mr. Clement Wragge paid a visit last week to what are known as the tattooed rocks on the coast near Raglan, New Zealand ; and as a result he

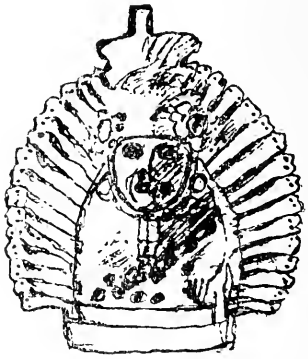
1 *I. C. Q.*, vol. lv.
2 Dublin *Daily Express*, February 11, 1910.

is distinctly of opinion that they are the work of neither Tamil nor Maori, but are the inscriptions of a very ancient race of sun-worshipping people, antedating the advent of the Maori by untold centuries. The spiral circles, ovals, crosses, and squares, he says, are most significant, and confirm his opinion that New Zealand has been inhabited by early man. He considers the inscriptions are probably connected with those at Easter Island and Central and South America, and are 'Atlantican' or Lemurian in origin. Further, the Maori copied the spiral from the relics of those ancient people, and did not initiate it.

Everywhere we turn we find the shadow of the sun cult. Professor Ridgeway, in his 'Origin of Tragedy,'[1] tells us the people of Cleonae, like the Athenians, had suffered from the pestilence, and in obedience to an 'oracle from Delphi, sacrificed a he-goat to the rising sun.' While even Dante refers to it; for in Canto vii. of the 'Purgatorio' he makes Sordello say: 'Not for doing, but for not doing, have I lost the vision of the high sun.' As in the Old World, so also in the New World. Among the wonderful discoveries made by Mr. T. Hewitt Myring in the Chincana Valley of Peru, which are believed to date from

[1] P. 80.

many thousand years B.C., we find very remarkable traces of the worship of the sun symbol. When the grave of an ancient chieftain was opened, the body was found stretched at full length, with the head raised



CHIMU SUN SYMBOL, PERU.

so that the sightless eye-balls might catch the first gleam of the rising sun, and we have also a representation of the sun symbol itself, with a widely-extended nimbus around it, which we engrave.[1]

It is well worthy of remark how deeply impressed on primitive religion was the teaching that without shedding of blood there was no remission of sin. The most impressive

[1] *Illustrated London News*, December 4, 1909.

rite in the worship of the sun symbol was the baptism of blood called the Taurobolium. The ceremonial has been described in a well-known passage of Prudentius, in which we are told that a cist was made in the earth, in which the penitent was laid, which was covered with planks, having apertures between them. A bull was led on the platform, and, with due ceremonial conducted by the priests, was slaughtered, so that the blood streaming from his throat might bathe the votary below. It was esteemed a matter of great importance that not a drop should be wasted, and the subject of the rite used all his efforts to enjoy the full benefits of the sacred blood. The ceremony was a long and costly one, attended by great crowds, with the magistrate at their head, and the man who had enjoyed such a blessing left the record of it on stone, often concluding with the striking phrase, '*In aeternum renatus*.'[1] This supposed new birth to eternal life through the cleansing rites of the Taurobolium seems to have been the acting motive of those who offered oblations of blood at the burying-places of the dead.

1 Dill, p. 82 f.

A singular mode of cist burial was in existence both in Ireland and Scotland to within comparatively modern times. In many places there was a parish coffin, which was used for all those who were to be buried, and in which the corpse was borne to its last resting-place. When it arrived there the body was taken out of the coffin, and interred in a cist prepared in the manner I have described as in use for those who received blood baptism in the days of the sun symbol. Could this have been a ray of sun worship from those far-off days? Blood baptism seems to have been in use not only for the living, but for the dead. Professor Ridgeway gives us a graphic description of it. He says:

> The old chief within his grave now thinks of his family and his people, and if they in their turn think of him, and nourish his spirit with offerings, and keep his vital element strengthened with libations of freshly shed blood, then will he keep them in the hour of peril, and he will use his influence with the earth beneath to make her yield her increase and to make fruitful the herds and flocks and women of his tribe.[1]

In offerings at the grave of a notable, no fire was employed, for the blood (or *pelanos*) was

1 W. Ridgeway, *Origin of Tragedy*, 1910, p. 30.

poured into a *bothros* or hole beside the grave, or even, as at Tronis, through an aperture reaching right down to the dead inside.[1] We gather from the same source that the offerings in kind presented at this time were of barley meal, honey, and oil—an offering, as we would describe it, of the first-fruits. But eventually all offerings to God were burned that the essence might ascend to heaven. This offering of barley meal and oil, usually made into cakes, will help us to understand the offerings that were made to God in rock basins before hero and ancestor worship had superseded the worship of God, and also the shew-bread in the temple. Several pierced stones having the bothros (hole), which may at one time have been placed over pre-Christian graves, have been sketched and measured. When considering this subject we must not forget the orientation of churches and prehistoric erections, which may be considered as inspired by reverence for the rising sun as a living symbol of Him who enlightens our darkness, the Sun of Righteousness.

[1] Ridgeway, p. 38.

CHAPTER VII

PREHISTORIC ARCHITECTURE

When colonists from foreign countries first landed on our coasts and sought to make a home for themselves in this island, the first of their wants that had to be supplied was food, and when that was supplied a scarcely less pressing want was shelter from the elements. Ireland is essentially a country where shelter from the elements is needed, and wet as it is now, the climate was probably even more humid then ; for the face of the country was covered by vast forests, the presence of which would increase the rainfall.

The new colonists would first of all seek out the shelters which nature has provided, natural caves from which they were in the first instance obliged to expel the wild beasts who would assert their prior right of possession. These inhabited caves have supplied us with

some most interesting specimens of the implements then in use, rude and primitive as they were, and of the first dawn of the artistic idea, in the rough and yet truthful sketches of then existing animals. The caves which come most prominently before my mind are those of Ballinamintra and others in that neighbourhood in the County Waterford. From these caves were procured objects of stone, bronze and jet, flint scrapers, rings of slate, stone beads, whetstones, fragments of jet, amulets, objects of stone, worked articles of bone and horn, such as piercers, scoops, beads, whorls, a bronze pin and a gilt-bronze clasp, very numerous objects of iron, such as a small curved knife, blades thick at the back, pins, buckles, spear heads, and a saw, the boss of a shield, a ploughshare, a stone hatchet, and many other articles, all showing that these caves had been inhabited for centuries. As a matter of fact, there are caves used as dwelling-places in Europe and Asia up to the present hour. The late Theodore Bent, the well-known traveller, in his very interesting account of his and Mrs. Bent's exploration of the frankincense

country, Southern Arabia, published in the *Geographical Journal* for August 1895, gives on p. 14 a description of these earth-dwellings belonging to the Gara tribe. He says:

> We constantly come across their homesteads, which consisted of deep caves in the hillside in which the families and flocks lived together in happy union. The calves and kids were penned in holes in the rocks, the milk is churned in a skin attached to a tripod and all their instruments are of the rudest kind.

And in a note he tells us:

> It is interesting to read in 'Periplus' a description of this coast and of the high mountains behind 'where men dwell in holes.'

I would here wish to remark that the rudeness of the construction of implements cannot be taken as a proof of the antiquity of the people who used them. That a people should use stone implements does not seem to me to prove anything except that they had not metal within their reach. If a colony of people of our time were cast on a desert island where they had flint and had no metal, they would think themselves fortunate if they were able to construct implements out of the flint. I

know of an instance where a gentleman saw a stone axe in actual use in an island off our own coast. We generally associate caves with the seashore, where they have been formed by the washing of the waves; but there are numerous caves to be found inland, particularly in limestone districts, and these Co. Waterford caves are in the limestone rock many miles from the sea, and entered from limestone knolls which crop up from the surface. The oldest of the objects found are undoubtedly those of bone. I was present when the gentleman who excavated these caves was exhibiting his finds, and among them he exhibited two chicken bones which had been formed into delicately constructed little scoops, such as we sometimes see in silver. These bone scoops may have been for the purpose of extracting the marrow from bones, and at all events must have been of fabulous antiquity, and were of great interest to me.

As illustrating the varied points of view from which different people see the same thing, I may mention that a very cultivated lady who was also present turned to me and said :

'Really, Mr. ffrench, I *do* take an interest in these things, but I have not been educated up to chicken bones yet.'

Next in order to the natural caves as dwellings, I think we may place the artificial caves, which are even yet very numerous in Ireland. These earth-houses are of two classes, one of which we may call regular residences and occasional hiding-places, and the other class seem to have been used both as hidden storehouses for corn and valuables and as occasional places of refuge for their owners. The Irish name for these stores in the earth is the 'hole of plenty'; and that, I think, affords us a graphic description of the uses to which they were often applied. Some of these earth-houses could have been held by a few determined men against an army, so skilfully were they fortified. The way in which these places were made seems to have been this. A deep trench or passage was dug, widening out at one end into a chamber. These sides were lined with walls of unhewn and unmortared stone; and the roof was formed by gradually approaching the upper tiers of the walls together until they almost met,

when large slabs, placed above them, completed the whole. In some cases there was only a narrow passage, the walls rose up perpendicularly, and the roof was made by placing broad slabs horizontally across. At other times a row of tall upright stones was placed on either side of the passage, and these inclined together at the top, so as to render any superimposed flagstones almost or altogether unnecessary. But where the gallery widened into the chamber, which was always circular, such methods as the two last indicated could not be followed, and the only available plan left to those primitive builders was to bring the opposite sides gradually together, so as to form a beehive-shaped room covered by a kind of irregular arch called the 'Cyclopean Arch.'

The appearance of these earth-houses overground, when they could be discerned at all, was that of slight green eminences; and so well hidden were they that it was necessary to have a secret sign by which they might be discovered by the initiated. One of these signs we learn from a tenth-century Saga was a withered sapling, which, when

pulled up by the roots, disclosed the entrance to the hidden dwelling-place; of course there were skilfully devised and carefully hidden arrangements for ventilation. Nor were these earth-houses peculiar to Ireland. Tacitus, in his description of the manners of the Germans,[1] tells us:

> Subterraneous caves, also, they are in the habit of digging, which they cover over with dung, forming in winter the double purpose of a retreat and a granary for corn. By this process also a regular temperature is preserved, and if on an invasion the country shall be laid waste, they retreat into this hidden fosse and escape through the ignorance or the want of search of the invader.

In Ireland the inhabitants of the earth-houses were not able to escape from the so-called Danes, who had discovered the symbols which told of the hidden dwelling-places. These they plundered. We are also told in the 'Annals':

> Never was there a dun or diongna but it was taken by that howling, furious, loathsome crew, and plundered; neither was there concealment underground in Erin, for they slaughtered those who had taken refuge in them ruthlessly.

[1] *Germania*, chap. xvi.

O'Curry tells us that in old Irish MSS. there are a whole class of tales devoted to recounting the adventures of those who lived in earth-houses or artificial caves. One of them is a story relating to Cuglas, a Prince of Leinster, in the first century, who one day, while hunting, disappeared into a cave called ever since after him, Belach Conglais (now Baltinglass), and was never heard of afterwards. One of these earth-houses was explored during a visit of the Royal Society of Antiquaries to Killala Cathedral, having been discovered when digging a grave. It so happened that the entrance was made into the circular chamber of the earth-house, which is six feet in diameter, with a roof of the usual beehive form. To this circular chamber large additions were subsequently made, and the passage to the earth-house became a whole series of underground chambers rectangular in plan.

The most remarkable earth-house in Ireland, which was probably both a palace and a tomb, is New Grange. It was not at all unusual for a departed chieftain to be buried in the house that he had lived in. This house is described by Mr. George Coffey in the

monograph that he has written on the subject which was published by the Royal Irish Academy. He tells us the mound or tumulus itself consists of an enormous cairn of loose stones heaped within a curb of great stones 8 to 10 feet long, laid on edge and touching end to end, over which a thin covering of grass has grown. In plan the tumulus is circular, and covers an area of about one acre, or taking the circle of the standing stones nearly two acres. The greatest diameter of the mound measures 280 feet. Its present height is 44 feet. The somewhat flattened top, also found at Knowth, is not an unusual feature in such structures. A retaining wall or revetment of dry rubble some 5 or 6 feet high is built immediately on the base stones and is deserving of notice. It is, again,

hard to say whether this is an original feature. It is difficult to believe that anyone should have taken the trouble to build this wall at a later time. It is not necessary for stability, any more than at Dowth and Knowth, and must have involved considerable labour, and though an exceptional feature it may be urged that the tumulus is exceptional in other respects. On the other hand, this wall partakes of the character of masonry; it is microlithic as distinguished from the general megalithic or rude

stone construction of the tumulus, and presumably later. The absence of masonry in the construction of the interior of the monument also tells against the age of the wall; but against this we have the fact that dry masonry is found at the back of the chambers of one of the cairns on the Loughcrew Hills, in other respects of rude stone construction. Moreover, in estimating the period to which sepulchral monuments of this class are to be ascribed, we must not leave out of account the effects of tradition and conservative feeling. It is not improbable that rude stone construction was felt to be appropriate to, and employed in the erection of, tumuli, even after dry masonry was understood. I find it hard to believe that the builders of New Grange, who, as we shall see, were not devoid of structural enterprise, and not without some skill in the working of stone, as shown in the carefully wrought stone basin in the centre of the chamber, were still wholly within the Stone age. On the whole, taking into consideration the architectural and other features of the tumulus, on which I shall dwell later, which tend to place it towards the close of the series of that class of monuments in Ireland, it is possible, although first impressions are against the wall, that it is part of the original structure.

The entrance, it will be noticed, is clearly marked by the curving inwards of the curb-stones. The same feature is strongly marked in the larger cairns on the Loughcrew Hills. We usually think of the entrance of a tumulus as concealed when the chamber was covered in. This is evident, from the manner

in which it is marked by the curving inwards of the curb-stones.

In the *Christian Examiner* of December 1853, p. 282, the following account of earth-dwellers in the island of Omey, off the west coast of Ireland, will be found:

This island—the name of which in Irish signifies forlorn or desolate—is situated off the coast of Sellerna, in the County of Galway, about seven miles from Clifden. It contains an area of three hundred acres, with a population of two hundred, whose sole subsistence consists in shellfish, seaweed, and potatoes. The waves of the broad Atlantic dash against its rocky shore, and the roar of the ocean billow reverberates along its beach; although, when the tide is out, it is easy of access, not being more than a hundred yards from the mainland. Nothing can be more wretched than the temporal condition of its inhabitants. Their huts are merely excavations in the sand, covered over with sods and seaweed, and might, indeed, easily escape the notice of a casual observer. I went into one of them, which could not certainly have been more than six feet in diameter, and five or six feet in height. A small portion of dried grass for a bed, a pot for boiling seaweed collected on the shore, and a few potatoes, was all that appeared in this miserable hovel, the entrance to which answered the purpose of a window, a chimney, and a door.

A Co. Mayo Resident Magistrate recently

told a relative of mine that cave-dwellers frequently come before his Court. They seem to be a strange wild people, and do not speak one word of English; consequently, they always bring an interpreter with them. The disputes they bring before him are nearly always about the ownership of cattle.

History tells us that this country of ours received three successive great colonies, or was under the dominion of three successive tribes who all seem to have spoken the same language, and were all probably Celts. These, each in their turn, ruled over the land. First came the Firbolgs, a small swarthy dark race; then the Dananns, a large, fair, light-haired people; and lastly, the Milesians.

The Firbolgs formed as it were the foundation stones on which the Irish nation is built. They were the people who used the stone implements which are to be found all over the land, and the use of which has survived in some rare instances even to the present time; but they were not allowed an undisputed predominance. For a superior nation of the same race, and speaking the same language, arrived to dispute with them

their pre-eminence. Tradition, which in this country never dies, has at all times connected the land we live in with Greece, one of the most cultured, learned, and bravest of ancient nations; and it was probably through Greece the next great Celtic wave came before it broke upon our rocky shores. The Tuatha Dé Danann ('people of the god of skill') were a very remarkable race, and bore with them to us a higher civilisation than had yet reached us. They were warlike, energetic, progressive, skilled in metal work, musical, poetical, acquainted with the healing art, skilled in Druidism, and believed by their ignorant neighbours to be adepts in necromancy and magic.

It is against the general and universally received creed of the human race to confess ignorance. If anyone knows anything that those about him do not know, the way to account for it is to say that they are not right, they have dealings with the evil one. As for the Tuatha Dé Danann, their reputation as necromancers never left them. When they had landed, they burned their boats, marched into the country hidden by a favouring mist,

and took the Firbolgs by surprise (this mist the Firbolgs thought to be a magic fog); but it was not the right thing in those days to take an enemy by surprise—you should give him notice, and not come on until he was ready. Now the Firbolgs were not ready, so the Danann had to wait until they were ready, and during the interval the two armies agreed on a game of skill and manly prowess; twenty-seven youths from each army engaged in a game of hurling, now called hockey, on a plain which is called to this day 'The Plain of the Hurlers.' The game ended in the defeat and death of the twenty-seven Danann, over whom a great cairn or monument of heaped stones was erected, called, in the MS. 'Account of the Battle of Moytura,' *The Monument of the Game.* This mound exists to the present day. On June 11, in the Year of the World 3303, the battle of Moytura is said to have commenced; 100,000 men were said to have been engaged in it. It lasted four days, and ended in the defeat of the Firbolgs, over whom the Danann obtained the mastery. It was a regular hand-to-hand fight. There is one incident worth recording. Before the second

day's fight, Eochy, King of the Firbolgs, went in the morning to perform his ablutions down to a well in a chasm in the limestone rock deep under the surface. While there, he was surprised by a party of Danann, and only saved from death by the bravery and courage of his companion, who slew the invaders, and lost his life in saving the life of the King.

That well can easily be found, for it is the only well in the valley, and close to it is 'the cairn of the one man,' where the hero was buried. This cairn was opened some years ago and a beautiful little urn containing his ashes taken from it. This urn is now in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy. There can be little doubt that it was the Tuatha Dé Danann who practised burial by cremation, which custom they brought with them to Ireland from the shores of the Mediterranean, so that when you meet with one of the little urns of red earth carefully closed up in a little chamber built of dry stones, which are so often met with all through Ireland, you need have little doubt that they contain the ashes of one of that weird old romantic race that once held dominion over the land. Portions of

two of these urns which were found at Adamstown, in the County Wexford, are now in my collection, and a beautiful specimen which was found at Captain Walker's of Tykillen is now in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin. One is also, I believe, in the Museum of the College in Wexford. Some years ago I stood on the grand old battlefield of Moytura, and everywhere around me, as far as the eye could see, there were the monuments of the mighty dead who had fallen in that great prehistoric battle. The cromlechs, the pillar stones, the sepulchral mounds were all around in rich profusion. I would advise anyone who wishes to study the methods and forms of prehistoric burial, and particularly cromlech burial, to visit the battlefields of Upper and Lower Moytura. But the Tuatha Dé Danann had, in their turn, to submit to less civilised and, at the same time, stronger-handed foes; men who were better soldiers and worse scholars, the brave and chivalrous Milesians. This Celtic wave is said to have reached us from the coast of Spain, and from them some of the best families in Ireland, particularly

those whose names begin with an 'O' or a 'Mac,' are said to derive. True to the old chivalrous spirit, when they heard that the Tuatha Dé Dananns were not ready to fight, they returned to their ships to give them time, and by doing so encountered a storm which nearly put an end to that invasion of Ireland; but eventually they deposed the last of the Danann Kings, and ruled over the land. MacFirbis thus described them:

> Everyone who is white of skin, brown of hair, bold, honourable, daring, prosperous, bountiful in the bestowal of property, and who is not afraid of battle or combat, they are the descendants of the Sons of Milesius in Erin.

But the Tuatha Dé Danann, although conquered, would not submit, nor mingle with their conquerors. These tall, flaxen-haired men, with melancholy blue eyes, were conquered, but they would not submit to a tribe, who, although stronger of arm and mightier in valour, were inferior in culture at that period of history. They withdrew into the depths of the forests, that, at the time in which they lived, covered so large a portion of the country. They went down beneath the surface and lived in their skilfully

constructed earth-houses from which they probably seldom issued, except at night.

The Milesians looked on them first as gods, and then as fairies. The prevalent idea was that they lived in splendid palaces in the interior of the *Green Hills.* These hills were called 'Sidh,' pronounced *Shee,* and the Danann were called 'Daoine Sidhe,' pronounced *Deena Shee,* 'the people of the fairy hills.' And doubtless it was no mere fancy, it was absolute fact, that often, during their residence in earth-houses, music might have been heard issuing from the 'green hills,' and men and women might have been seen dancing around them in the moonlight. Here, then, you have the actual facts on which the fairy-tales of Ireland were founded as well as much of the borrowed legendary lore of England.

In course of time the Danann became absolutely extinct. At the present day many ancient Celtic families claim to be descended from the Firbolgs, but not one family in the country claims to be descended from the Danann. Yet this romantic race did not pass away without leaving an impress on the

country. Sir William Wilde held that from them was derived all that superior skill in the smelting of metals and the manufacture of tools and implements that is so much to be admired in those relics which have come down to us to the present day. Among them are to be found swords as perfect in their Grecian outline as if they had just left the hands of the heroes of ancient Greece. Sir William Wilde tells us that some of them are of pure Grecian type. From them also came the dawning of the architectural idea in Ireland; they were our first builders, and the Pelasgic and Etruscan tumuli were repeated by them with but slight variation in the mounds at New Grange and Dowth. It has been suggested that those two notable monuments of the building skill of the Danann were first used as earth-houses, and afterwards as the tombs of their royal owners. To them Wilde ascribes the construction of the duns, cashels, and caves all through Ireland, and so great was the impression that their power of construction made on the inhabitants of this country that popular parlance has made them the builders of all the ancient forts in

the land. Every rath is called a Danish fort which is a Danann fort, just in the same way as every piece of demolished stonework and every ruined church and tower and hall is said to be the work of Oliver Cromwell. There is no such word as 'Dane' in the Irish language. The Scandinavian rovers that we call Danes were called by the ancient Irish either 'black strangers' or 'white strangers,' and strange to say, at the battle of Clontarf, they are called 'green strangers,' but never Danes. It is the Danann forts that we have corrupted into 'Danes' Forts.' We may take New Grange as a specimen of Danann building for one reason if there was no other, and that reason is that there is hardly any doubt that it is the workmanship of the Danann. The usual earth-houses were intended to be hidden, yet were more or less built in the same way, and down in these underground houses the ancient earth-dwellers lived and worked at their trades as manufacturers of the metals. And we learn much about them from the Northern Sagas that tell of their being plundered by the old sea rovers. Among them we read of the sword which Thorgils wore ever after he

had obtained it as part of the booty he got in an Irish earth-house. Another story tells us of a knight who entered an earth-house and found a party of smiths at work inside. Some time or other we will probably know much more of this underground life, for there still remains (O'Curry tells us) untranslated a whole section of Irish tales relating to adventures in caves.

But let us return to the surface. When we went underground, we left our first builders living in natural caves and building artificial ones, but we did not speak of their houses in the open, which must have been quickly constructed, and which were usually, for purposes of defence, erected on natural islands, or perhaps, still oftener, on artificial islands which could be easily isolated from the mainland. These we call *crannogs*. A description of these crannogs does not come within the scope of this chapter, but a description of the wattled houses does, which were undoubtedly the first residences overground.

The ancient Irish houses were of two forms, one a long quadrilateral[1] building, built of

1 See the banqueting hall at Tara, the outline of which is quadrilateral.

felled trees and covered with thatch. The other, circular houses made of wicker-work, and having cup-shaped roofs and circular-headed doorways. The vast majority of the early Irish houses were circular and made of wattle-work, plastered and then whitewashed, and as long as they lasted they were very comfortable. Wattle-work walls were to be found in Ireland all through the centuries, and came down from the dawn of history, and the earliest settlements of our race, to a period well within my own recollection. In my young days plastered wattle-work was often to be seen in the partition walls of farm buildings, and I feel quite sure that some of the old hooded chimneys are to be found, even now, where wattle-work is still used. I know that they existed in several of my workmen's cottages. A respectable residence in those old days consisted of a group of these circular chambers separated one from the other, devoted to different objects, and treated as we treat the different rooms in the same house now. The bedrooms were recesses separated by pillars and curtains from the sitting-room; each couch had its head

to the wall and the foot directed to the fire, which was always in the centre of the room; beneath the foot of each bed there was a long footstool extending the whole width of the bed, called the foot-bank, on which people sitting on the foot of the couch rested their feet. In addition to the living house there was the back-house or kitchen—the women's house—the weaving-house, the barn, the granary, the sheds, and the cellars, all wicker-work. Now wattle-work is very perishable; yet, strange to say, the ruins of a wattle-work city of those old, old days remain down to our own times; but to find it we must go across the Channel and seek for the remains of the ancient Britons, who, like the Irish, were Celts, and whose civilisation and culture were almost identical with ours. There we seek out Glastonbury, and not far from the Glastonbury of to-day we find the Glastonbury of the past, where the first Christians erected a church of wattle-work, a church which survived the violent changes that swept over the land when heathen Angles and Saxons conquered it with fire and sword, and drove the Christian Britons to take refuge in the

fastnesses of the Welsh mountains: a church which survived when the English (like the Irish) were conquered by the Normans, until at last it was burned by an accident. Mr. Freeman is willing to accept it as a fact that Glastonbury was the one place outside the fastnesses of the Britons where Christian worship was never interrupted. In the low ground now occupying the place of the impenetrable marshes which gave the name of the Isle of Acalan to the higher ground, the eye of a local antiquary had long noticed a mass of dome-shaped hillocks clustered together, about seventy in number. Not so long ago excavations were made, and these hillocks proved to be the remains of the houses of the old British Celts, who were so closely connected with Ireland that Cormac in his 'Glossary' calls it 'Glastonbury of the Irish.' It was a true Irish city, built on *crannogs*, or ground made solid in the midst of the water, with causeways for approach from the land. The faces of the island and the sides of the causeways were found to be riveted with wattle-work, strong and well made, which was preserved by the peat that had gathered

around it; and the wattles, when first uncovered, were as good to all appearance as the day they were made. The houses were all oval or circular; one of them covers 450 square feet, and a larger one still remains to be opened. All had a circular area of white stones in the middle for a hearth, and all had been destroyed by fire; but the fire that burned the wattle-work had baked the clay mortar with which they were covered so that every line of the wattle-work could be distinguished in it; just as you can see, in the old crypt in Waterford Cathedral, the impress of the wattle-work which the old Danish builders used as scaffolding on which to erect the crypt, and the wattle-work impressed in the mortar used as centring by the old Norman builders who erected Kilkenny Castle. Let us bear in mind that they did not use wattles because they were unacquainted with the use of timber; for in other parts of this old Celtic fortress carpenter-work of extreme neatness of fit and finish is found in use. In the MS. Register of Lanercost Priory mention is made of a chapel of wattle-work at Triermain, in which Divine Service was celebrated by consent of

Egelwin, the last Anglo-Saxon Bishop of Durham.

When King Henry II spent a Christmas in Dublin, he could not find a hall there large enough to entertain the Irish lords and princes, so he had a great hall made of wattle-work, after the fashion of the country, in which to entertain them, which Hovenden calls a 'royal palace, constructed for the occasion, with wonderful skill, of peeled osiers.' These wattle-houses were, when in the possession of princes and wealthy owners, most richly adorned, bronze and gold and silver being freely used. The fronts of the recesses in which the couches were placed were ornamented with carved yew; they had canopies, and pillars of silver and bronze in use. The walls at the back of the recesses were fully wainscoted, but sometimes they were only covered with hangings or curtains made of matting or woollen stuff. In fact the fitting up of the inside of the dwelling-room depended on the wealth of the owners. Such, then, were the earliest houses; and the *clochauns*, or beehive-shaped stone houses, which exist in considerable numbers in the

West of Ireland, seem to me to be simply the wattle-house, as it were, turned into stone; or I might call them a stone version of wattle-houses made where wood was scarce, which is eminently the case in the West. Stone forts of uncemented masonry, some of them most beautifully constructed, are principally to be found in Kerry, Clare, Galway, and Sligo; but they are also found elsewhere. There is one of ruder workmanship not far from my old residence in the County Carlow. Twenty-four of these buildings were examined by Lord Dunraven on the west coast of Ireland, built without mortar of any kind; they are raised in such compact and close-fitting masses that they have been enabled to endure the wind and rain of many centuries. Their walls (usually of twenty feet in height and eighteen feet in thickness) are really three walls compacted together and faced in dry walling. The doorways of these forts are all formed with inclining sides and horizontal lintels, such as we invariably see in the very early Christian churches. In some of them we find provision made for furnishing them with double doors, which were secured with

bars of wood shot into the stonework. Platforms and offsets ran along the inner sides of the walls, access to which was obtained by flights of stone steps, from four to ten of which were sometimes found in the same building. Passages and dome-roofed chambers occur in the thickness of the walls; and in the inner area little round huts with conical roofs, or long huts like upturned boats, are found constructed in clusters. These domes are formed by the projection of one stone above the other until the aperture is so narrowed that it can be closed by one flag at the top. The oldest church in this island is shaped just like an upturned boat, and is known as the Oratory of Gallarus. Many of these structures are attributed to the Firbolgs race. We find a reference to these boat-shaped buildings in Sallust, who, in his 'History of the War of Jugurtha,' tells us:

The Persians were nearest to the sea, and they used their boats turned upside down as dwellings; because they found no timber growing in the country and could procure none from the Spaniards. By degrees they, by intermarriages, mixed with the Getulians; and because they were often shifting about from place to place, to try the goodness of

the soil, they called themselves Numidians. To this day the cottages of the Numidians, which they call *naupalia*, are of an oblong form, with the sides bending out like the hulls of ships.[1]

In the overlapping or cyclopean arch, and in the doorways with inclining sides, we pick up again a link that unites our old colonists with their old home on the shores of the Mediterranean. Just as our metal work points to Greece, so in like manner, if we desire to find the prototypes of our early masonry, we must go back to the ancient races who inhabited Greece and Italy before Hellenic and Latin nations existed. Just as the Pelasgic and Etruscan sepulchral tumuli are repeated with but slight variation in our own tumuli at New Grange and Dowth, so do we find, in the architectural remains of the Pelasgic and Etruscan peoples, doorways shaped exactly like those in our prehistoric forts. I now quote from a paper that I wrote on this subject in the *New Ireland Review*.[2]

The language of the Pelasgi has perished; the remnants or fragments of their history are few and unsatisfactory. But the testimony of

[1] *Jugurthine War*, chap. xviii.

[2] *New Ireland Review*, vol. iii. No. 2, March 1895, p. 14.

their architecture is clear and distinct, and from that, I think, we can learn the secret of the inclining jamb. Nowadays we would consider a doorway that was narrower at the top than at the bottom a most unsatisfactory arrangement, and we should not like to have to fit a door in it. We must remember, however, what the force of custom is, and if our forefathers always constructed doorways in this manner we would find it difficult to persuade ourselves that it should be done otherwise. I have in my collection of architectural sketches two doorways which were probably erected 800 or 1,000 years before the birth of Christ, and from them we learn how the inclining jamb originated. The idea which seems to have been in the mind of the first builder was to copy the door of a tent. Is it not just the kind of design that we might expect would suggest itself to a migratory people when first beginning to settle down, and to find out that substantial dwelling-places were necessary? The next stage in the construction of a doorway shows us that those ancient builders inserted a lintel at a certain height and made

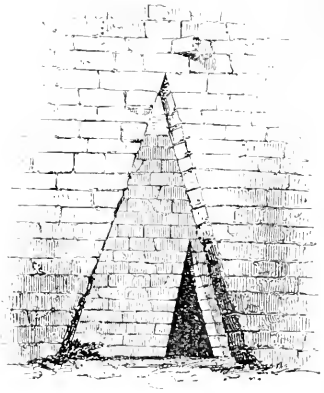
the jambs more perpendicular below and more sloping above; the second sketch (which has been copied from the 'Gate of Lions' at Mycenæ) shows further progress. But even there, although the jambs are single stones, they incline, and an effort has been made to preserve the old shape above the lintel, so that its ancient tent-like character may be kept. Our third engraving shows the fully developed and inclined Celtic jamb.

The traditional connexion of our country with Greece has lasted through the centuries, and was referred to by the celebrated Florence McCarthy in a letter which he wrote in the time of Queen Elizabeth, and in which he says:

> For all our ancient books and writers do conclude that these three kingdoms were first peopled by the colony that was brought out of Greece about 300 years after the universal flood.

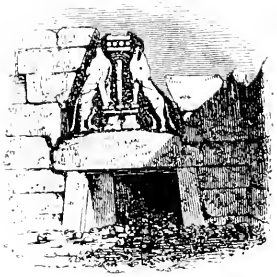
In referring the origin of our architecture back to the shores of the Mediterranean, I feel supported by an expression of opinion given by that eminent authority Fergusson, who says:

> We must not look for the origin of her architectural styles, either in England or in France, but to some more remote locality, whose antiquities have



DOORWAY AT MISSOLONGHI.

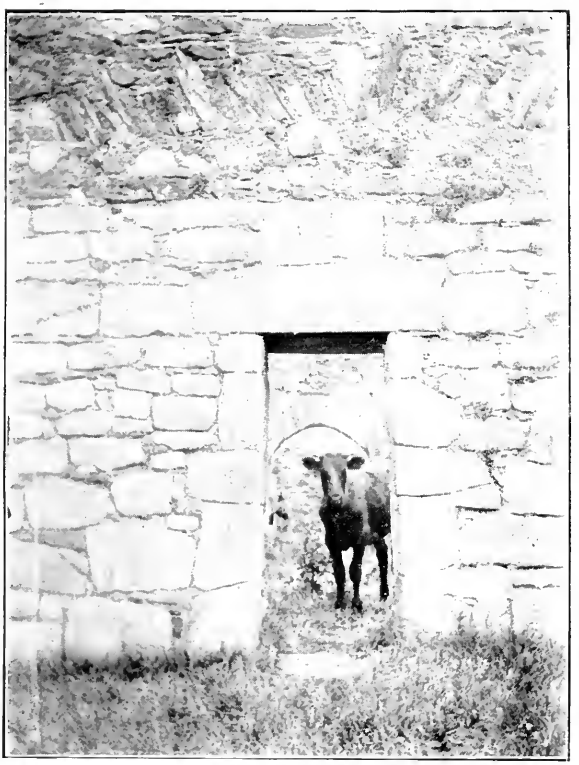
From Fergusson's 'Handbook of Architecture.'



THE GATE OF LIONS, MYCENÆ.

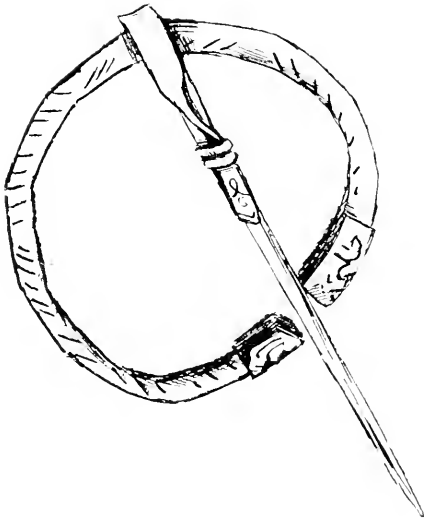
From Fergusson's 'Handbook of Architecture.'

TO ILLUSTRATE THE DEVELOPMENT



DOORWAY OF AN EARLY CELTIC CHURCH, SHOWING THE INCLINED JAMBS.

From a photograph, taken by Lord Walter FitzGerald in 1897, of the west doorway of the Clonamery Church ruins, Co. Kilkenny.



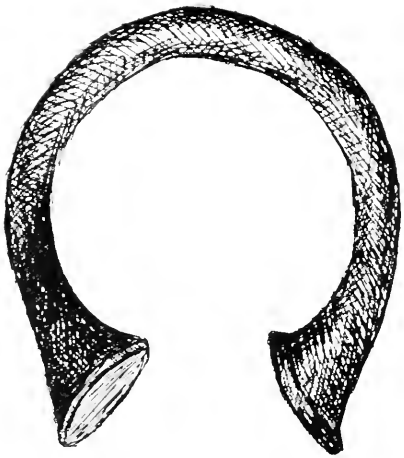
SILVER BROOCH (TARA TYPE).

From North Africa.

not yet been so investigated as to enable us to point it out as the source whence they were derived.

For general purposes of convenience we may divide the peopling of Ireland into three periods, for which we adopt the names established by tradition—the Firbolgs, the Tuatha Dé Danann, and the Milesians. We would suggest that the Danann reached our shores from the Eastern birthplace of the Celts (wherever that may be) through Greece; and this can be proved by their sepulchral mounds, their architecture, and their weapons of warfare; we would further suggest that the third wave of Celts came from the same source along the north coast of Africa and up through Spain, and possibly reached Brittany in their wanderings on their way to Ireland. We trace them on their journey by finding, on their route along the north coast of Africa, cromlechs of the same type as those so abundantly found in Ireland; silver brooches of the Tara Brooch type—one of which I have in my collection, which was purchased for me off the person of an Arab chief in Tunis by a lady who is the wife of the British Consul

there; also bronze fibulæ, of the same type as the gold ones so well known in Ireland, which a missionary told me are so well known in some places that silver specimens are often used as napkin rings by the whites. The same missionary told me that bronze celts are very well known in China, where they are called 'thunderbolts,' and perhaps this may help to point back to the Turanian origin of the Firbolgs. The existence of the Tuatha Dé Danann tribe has been called in question on chronological grounds; but have we any data which will enable us to fix a chronological plan or scheme for this period? must it not be pure guess-work? As Professor MacNeill says, the writer 'had in his mind the traditional or legendary epochs of Prehistoric Ireland. These latter had no chronology, no trace of a native Irish chronology has anywhere been found'; or, as Mr. Thomas Johnson Westropp tells us, in his monograph on 'The Types of the Ring-forts remaining in Eastern Clare: Killaloe, its Royal Forts and their History,' published by the Royal Irish Academy, it is probable (as Professor MacNeill has noted, and as I long ventured to



BRONZE FIBULA (*full size*)

From North Africa.

assert), that 'we have little original matter relating to the history of Co. Clare earlier than the ninth century. Our detailed knowledge possibly begins with the collections of the poet, Flann MacLonain, in the latter half of that period.'

I venture to suggest that when the Irish learned classes endeavoured to recover what was left after the fearful ravages of the Norse and Danes, they found probably lists of kings, fragmentary genealogies, and certain old accounts of heroes of outstanding importance, which Sagas (early forerunners of the 'Wars of the Gaedhill' and the 'Triumphs of the Torlough') gave only patches of light in the gloom of the earlier centuries. The tribal genealogists endeavoured to connect the pedigrees of the chiefs with these, partly by genuine descents; partly by, wrongly or rightly, embodying early lists; partly, it may be, by unfounded guess-work. Tribes recognised as of equal standing and rights, or conscious of ancestral ties, gave a further clue, and their rulers were traced to common ancestors. Therefore, while believing that some (perhaps much) truth lies in what has

come down to us, I do not commit myself or my readers to any belief in the full correctness of the alleged pedigrees. If this be true of Clare, there is no reason to suppose that it is not equally true of all Ireland, and I think we had better leave conjectural history out of account as far as dates are concerned, and satisfy ourselves as far as we are able with those glimpses of truth that come to us through the clouds and mists of ages, and avail ourselves of the visible remains of the architecture and art of those remote and distant periods that rest on the horizon of history.

Note.—Mr. E. S. Robertson, late B.C.S., tells me that he considers that Tuatha Dé Danann means 'People of the God of Skill,' but once the name is given in full he thinks that 'Danann the skilful one' may be used for shortness. See page 104.

CHAPTER VIII

CLONEGAL: ITS VALLEY AND ITS BATTLE

CLONEGAL is not only the name of a valley and a parish,[1] but it is also the name of a considerable village, that once was a fair- and market-town, boasting its distillery, brewery, tan-yards, and a notable market for the sale of woollen stuffs. This village is built near the head of the valley, and almost under the shadow of Mount Leinster, which lifts up its giant head through the blue haze in the background. Its broad street of comfortable slated houses and neat shops, adorned with a double row of forest trees that cast their shadows over its pathways, extends down the side of the hill until it meets the River Derry, which is spanned by an ancient bridge, and then it runs for a short distance up the hill on the opposite side of the river. At the head of the village, the towers of the

[1] The parish is also known by the name of Moyacomb.

Protestant and Roman Catholic places of worship are visible through their surrounding trees ; and at a short distance, the old grey ivy-covered castle of the Esmonds (now the residence of H. Robertson, Esq., M.P.)—a most picturesque old castle with immensely thick walls built of small stones. It has a well in the vaults to provide against a siege, and a strong iron gate between the double doors of the entrance still remaining, all reminding us of the time when massive walls and battlemented towers and strong arms within them were needed for the protection of those of whom it has been said :

> . . . . . the good old rule
> Sufficeth them : the simple plan
> That they should take who have the power,
> And they should keep who can.

Some hundreds of years ago there were two other buildings, which must have added greatly to the beauty of the scene. Not far from the village at one side were the ruins of the Augustinian Abbey, and at the opposite side of the village there then existed the Castle of Clonogan. Of the Augustinian Abbey of Doune, or Abbey Down, but few

HUNTINGTON CASTLE, CLONEGAL.

vestiges are now to be met with. It is said to have been founded by the Danes, who perhaps at one time extended their dominion inland from the coast as far as Clonegal, and possibly it may be from them that the valley derives its name of 'The Meadow of the Gaul, or Stranger.'

In the older editions of 'Ware,' this ecclesiastical foundation was called Dun Abbey, or the Abbey by the Dun; and the outline of the dun, or fort, under whose protecting shadow the abbey was erected, is still plainly visible. The few remaining cut stones have been placed for preservation in the Rector's lawn. One of them seems part of the groining of an arch, and another was evidently the centre stone, from which sprung the two Romanesque openings of the east window of the abbey. The other ecclesiastical remains in the valley are but few. Two or three cut stones are the only vestiges of the oratory of Ard Britain (the height of the Britain), on the townland of Orchard, where at one time some ancient ecclesiastic from Wales devoted himself to prayer. The church of Clonegal is modern, but the site is most interesting.

It was appropriated to sacred purposes so long ago as the time of St. Patrick, and the original church was built on a dun, or mound, which formed the base of a small fortress, and was surrounded by a deep moat enclosed by a rath, evidently the gift of some ancient chieftain, who had devoted his residence to God.

This churchyard contains the stone socket of an ancient Irish stone cross ; and in 1902, at a depth of about ten feet below the present surface, an ancient quern or hand corn-mill (now in the vestry of the church) was found on digging a grave. Possibly the very quern used by St. Fiacc, the first Rector of the Parish, who was set apart by St. Patrick to be one of the first Bishops of the Irish Church. The prehistoric and pre-Christian remains in the valley are not numerous. On the side of Newry Hill there is a pillar-stone, under which probably the native Irish judge at one time sat to hear cases, as a little beneath it there is the remains of an ancient Irish residence, still called Rath-na-Doran, and we know that the Dorans were the Brehons, the hereditary judges of Leinster.

On the townland of Militia there is a grave known as *lob in a sigh*, 'the stone of the fairy,' where doubtless one of that weird race who pass like a shadow across the pages of Irish history was laid to rest—the Tuatha Dé Dananns, who retreated before the more muscular Milesians into the depths of the forest, or into earth-houses, and who are handed down to us as fairies living in the 'green hills.' I once tried to excavate this grave, and at considerable expense employed two men to undertake the work. They worked away under my supervision until the shades of night compelled them to desist. I returned the next morning to find the place all filled in again. In the night two of the neighbours who knew their fears howled at the back of the house where they were sleeping, until they frightened them to such a degree that they were seen rushing from their house in their night garments with shovels in their hands, with which they quickly undid all that I had got them to do the day before. In the grounds of Huntington Castle there is an interesting bullan, or rock-basin, with which we must conclude our list of

prehistoric remains. Now let us return to Clonogan Castle.

Clonogan Castle, of which nothing now remains but the site, was once a place of considerable importance, and must have dominated over the valley No doubt it was originally a Kavanagh castle; for, in a lease of the Abbey of Doune, granted in 1567 to that strange adventurer, Thomas Stuckley (then Seneschal of the County Wexford), the lands are styled the 'Lands of the Abbey of Doune, in the O'Morrow's Country.' Consequently, Clonogan Castle must have been in the O'Morrow's country also, as it was not far distant from the Abbey of Doune; and situated as it was in the midst of the Kavanagh strongholds, it would have been impossible for any sept but the Clan Kavanagh to have held it. Yet the valley was not originally theirs—it was the patrimony of the O'Neils of Leinster. In 'a Deveyse for the reformatyon of Laynster,' presented to the king in 1540, this castle is called 'The Castell of Clonogan, the Kinge's Castell,' so that it seems probable that the Crown obliged the Kavanaghs to give it up when taking from them the Castles

of Clohamon and Clonmullen, which were made royal castles, although the latter castle —that of Clonmullen—remained practically in the Kavanaghs' hands, as they were appointed its hereditary constables.

Quiet and peaceful-looking as the valley is now, it was not always so; for at one time the northern pass into Wexford was through it. Poulmounty at one end of the Leinster range, and the valley of Clonegal at the other, formed the two passes from the north into the County Wexford; and consequently, in the convulsions that followed the Insurrection of 1641, it was the theatre of much military activity; and when Lord Ormond left Dublin, in 1642, at the head of an army of 2,500 foot and 800 horse, with 'two brasse culverines and four brasse field pieces,' for the purpose of opposing the Confederates, he rested his troops at Clonegal, and doubtless felt more sure of a friendly reception there than he would elsewhere, as it was situated on the estate of Lord Esmond, the founder of Huntington Castle, an old and trusted military commander, who was as strong a supporter of the unfortunate King Charles I as he was

himself, and who was at that very time commanding the royal troops at Duncannon Fort. This confidence seems to have led to a certain amount of carelessness on the part of his following, who forgot that, whoever might be the owner of Clonegal, they were in the immediate neighbourhood of a strong Confederate leader, Sir Morgan Kavanagh, of Clonmullen (also known as Sir Murragh MacMurragh), eighteenth in descent from Dermott MacMurrough, King of Leinster, and doubtless his scouts were in all the neighbouring woods; and when the head of Lord Ormond's medical staff, 'Chiefe Chirurgeon Mr. Coddell,' lagged behind, they pounced on him, and carried him off, carriage and horses, drugs, and all. Knowing, as we do now, the ideas then in existence as to medical treatment, we must say that they conferred an unintentional benefit on the Royalist troops, and, perhaps, materially aided in bringing about the defeat of the Confederates; for certain it is, whether owing to the unwonted supply of drugs, or from some other cause, they were defeated, and Sir Morgan Kavanagh lost his life at the battle of Ballinvegga shortly

afterwards. But a very different visit from the friendly one of Lord Ormond and his army was paid eight years after—in 1650—to the village of Clonegal. The military usurper, Cromwell, who, in order to reform the monarchy, cut off the king's head and established a military despotism that recognised no authority but his own ; who, in order to reform the churches, turned out all the Protestant clergy ; and who, as an old writer quaintly says, beheaded the churches and 'stripped them clean bare,' was about to make himself felt there as he did to the remotest corners of the country. His troops, under Colonels Reynolds and Hewson, having taken Tullow Castle, which was then commanded by Colonel Butler, a detachment of them marched from that to Clonegal, into the very heart of the country held by the hill tribes ; and there, tradition tells us, these tribes made a last and desperate stand, a brave but fruitless effort to withstand the invader. Nothing seems to the writer of this sketch more remarkable than the feebleness of the opposition that was, as a general rule, offered to Cromwell. It can only be

compared to that offered to King Henry II when engaged in a similar enterprise ; and, in both instances, the ease with which the conquerors took possession of the country may be attributed to the same cause.

The inhabitants of Ireland were so deeply engaged in their never-ending quarrels with one another that they had no energies left to devote to repelling an invader, and numbers were longing for any strong hand which would have power enough to give peace to the land. Doubtless, also, many thought that Cromwell, like others, would have been satisfied with an empty conquest, and would have returned to England, leaving things to go on much as they did before. But, however the dwellers in the valleys may have failed to realise the situation, the Kavanaghs, the O'Byrnes, and the O'Tooles of the hills seem to have foreseen what was coming, and determined to make, at all events, a stand before the Cromwellian roller passed over them. For that purpose they mustered in force in Clonegal. Tradition does not tell us who commanded them ; but, in all probability, it was Colonel Daniel, or Donnell, Kavanagh, the last of

the chieftains of Clonmullen, who was called after his grandfather, the well-known Donnell Spaineach, and who himself, after the defeat, escaped to Spain, and died unmarried there. The traditional account of this forlorn hope of the hill tribes, which is still green in the memories of the older inhabitants, tells us that the Cromwellian troops marched from Tullow along the old road through Orchard (a place where one of the last of the Bards, 'Fleming,' once gathered his pupils around him, and the site of whose residence is still known as the 'Schoolhouse Field'), and, passing from that over the hill of Monaughrim, found the village of Clonegal lying at their feet. The mountain men lay in ambuscade behind the houses at either side of the street, hoping to take the Cromwellians by surprise, and to throw them into disorder; as soon as the advancing troops had passed into the street, they rushed upon them. The Cromwellians received them with perfect coolness, and instantly formed so as to present an unbroken front to the enemy as they poured in at either side of the street, and then opened on them, at close quarters, a deadly

fire of musketry. The carnage was dreadful ; and when the mountain men found that the surprise was a failure, they fled ; discipline prevailed against courage, as it has often done before and since. The remains of one division attempted to cross the Derry, but the Cromwellian vanguard, which had previously passed over the bridge, lined the banks, and the Derry was soon 'red with blood and choked with dead.' The remains of another division fled to Kilcarry, which was then a little village adjoining Clonegal. It was immediately surrounded, and it is believed that not one escaped ; and, doubtless, it was the feeling of bitterness caused by this attempted surprise that led the Cromwellians to treat with such severity the Clonmullen sept, and to so strongly garrison all the surrounding castles.

They placed a garrison at Clonegal, doubtless in the Castle of Clonogan ; for we find, three years after the battle of Clonegal, in 1653, Dudley Colclough, Esq., petitioned the government for payment for the goods and provisions made use of by the garrison at Clonegal. They had also garrisons at Carnew

and Clohamon, and 'other places in the counties of Wicklow and Wexford.' There can be little doubt that, if the lines of the Cromwellians had been broken, the mountain men would have exterminated them; but the long street of Clonegal was not a suitable place, even for an attempted surprise. We must suppose that the width of the street was always much the same as it is at present, and it was too wide to make the attempt to throw the Cromwellians into confusion likely to be successful. There is room enough outside the houses for two pathways, two rows of trees, and for troops to form, so that (unless they were panic-stricken) the attempt was likely to be a failure. Mr. Charles Topham Bowden, an English officer, who visited Clonegal one hundred years ago, has preserved in his 'Tour' a mention of this local tradition, which is substantially the same as that already given, and he has also placed on record a stanza of an old Irish song descriptive of the battle, which was translated into English for him by the Rev. Mr. M'Daniel, who was at that time the Roman Catholic curate of the parish:

The sun of thy glory for ever is set,
Ill-fated Hibernia, in darkness profound;
With the blood of thy heroes Kilcarry is wet,
Desolation and death roam at large all around.
The streams of old Derry which silver were called,
By the sweet bards of Orchard in happier days,
Are tainted with murders, and crimson'd with gore,
Choked up with carnage, and stopt in their ways.

You will observe that a hundred years ago it was necessary to translate into English a local song, as Irish was the language spoken; but in latter years not one word of Irish was understood in the valley. I will illustrate this by a story. My old coachman, who has been thirty years in my service, was born and reared in Clonegal. When the last census was taken I asked Pat had he filled the paper. 'Yes, sir,' he said. 'What language did you say you spoke?' I asked. 'Irish,' he said. 'Why, man,' said I, 'you never heard a word of Irish spoken. What do you think they speak in England?' 'If, sir,' he said, 'they speak like me, they speak Irish.' This was said with such determination that I was obliged at once to give in, and let it pass as a fact that the whole English nation spoke Irish.

'Desolation' was indeed a very fitting description to give to the patrimony of the

Clonmullen sept, for Cromwell seems to have determined to take every precaution that they should give him no further trouble, and he transplanted the whole tribe, so that from Newtonbarry to the Nine Stones, high up on the side of Mount Leinster, not one farmer of the name of Kavanagh remains to tell where once that warlike sept was located ; the plough passes over the green field where once the strong castle of Clonmullen stood ; and although the beautiful mountain valleys that are to be found between Newtonbarry and the Nine Stones are now inhabited by hardy, thrifty, industrious farmers, the population is of comparatively modern growth, and the old men will tell you that their fathers and grandfathers told them that, when they settled there, the land had lain so long desolate, that the furze bushes had grown into forest trees, in which the magpies built their nests. When the military despotism of Cromwell had passed over, and the king got his own again, there was not one of the Clonmullen Kavanaghs who could claim the beautiful patrimony of their ancestors ; for, as I have already mentioned, the last of the

chieftains of Clonmullen died childless in a foreign land, and the estates of the family were granted to Arthur, Earl of Anglesey. I have called those estates a beautiful patrimony, because it would be difficult to find a much more picturesque and charming mountain scene than that which can be enjoyed by those who drive from the well-built, thriving, and beautifully situated little town of Newtownbarry to the Nine Stones. The contrast between the highly cultivated valleys and the purple heath-covered mountains, on which the lights and shadows are ever playing, forms a lovely picture; and when visitors have arrived at the highest point to which they can drive, the whole County Carlow, and miles beyond, lies spread out in one vast panorama before them. Mr. Bowden, of a hundred years ago, was as much impressed with the beauty of his surroundings and the courtesy of the inhabitants as visitors are at the present day; and he seems, during his very short visit, to have thoroughly enjoyed himself. He stopped at the hotel of Leonard Brown, a large house in the village, which has been purchased within the last few years

for a clergyman's residence. Mr. Bowden admired everything that his very short sojourn enabled him to see, particularly the residences, close to the village, of Mr. Durden of Huntington Castle, and Lieutenant Rowan of Lower Kilcarry. He also admired the pretty thatched cottage called Upper Kilcarry, where, subsequently, Mr. Tighe (of the Woodstock family) and his wife, the gifted poetess and author of 'Psyche,' lived.[1]

1 Authorities quoted:—*The State Papers*; 'Loca Patriciana,' by the Rev. J. F. Shearman (*Journal, Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 1874–1875); Bowden's *Tour*; *Historical Collections*, Dublin, 1758, &c.

CHAPTER IX

A VISIT TO CLONMACNOISE [1]

DURING a recent visit to Athlone, I found myself in the neighbourhood of Clonmacnoise, and, having taken a car from the excellent Prince of Wales's Hotel, I speedily was on my way to that most interesting pile of ecclesiastical ruins. This celebrated group of churches is situated on the banks of the Shannon, and, like many of the old foundations, it is placed in a secluded position, having the broad waters of the Shannon on one side, and a wide expanse of wild bog between it and Athlone. Even in these days of railways and telegraphs, its isolated position seems to tell upon the peasantry, who appear to be still in a very primitive state. I saw many of them barefooted, and bearing heavy loads of turf upon their backs, in baskets

[1] From the *Irish Builder*, October 1, 1890.

THE NUNS' CHURCH AT CLONMACNOISE.

made to be strapped between the shoulders. My driver told me that it was not unusual for the small land-holders, who did not wish to employ a horse, to put the manure on their fields in the same way, and that they were able to put out a very large quantity in the day. This I could quite credit, from the short, strong, square-built type of men I saw—evidently the remains of some primitive tribe, who had lingered on in this retired spot—perhaps a remnant of the old Firbolgs that had not been driven away by the succession of conquering tribes who swept over Ireland. A description of the ecclesiastical ruins of Clonmacnoise would be quite outside the scope of this sketch. It will be sufficient to say that any archæologist who has not already visited this place will find in its seven churches (containing so many beautiful Hiberno-Romanesque architectural features), in its two round towers, and in its numerous crosses, a rich treat that can hardly be equalled elsewhere. I cannot refrain from mentioning the beautiful chancel arch of the Nuns' Church, which lies at some distance eastward of the

cemetery, and which alone repays a visit. This church was erected, in 1167, by Dervorgille, whose elopement with Dermot MacMurrough led to the Norman invasion. It is curious to see the flagged causeway which connected this little church with the cemetery, in many places still in a fair state of preservation; and the interested will also observe, worked in among the carved work of the chancel arch, one of those weird and hideous little figures called *sheela-na-gigs*, which tell how the conservative Celt still clung to old pagan customs long after their meaning was forgotten. Another remnant of these old customs I observed within the cemetery itself. On particularly sacred places, where the worshippers still pray, I saw little groups of pins and small objects. I asked the intelligent caretaker what brought them there, and he told me that they were left there by the worshippers when they prayed. How strange to see remnants of this old forgotten religion lingering on late in the nineteenth century, just as rags are still hung on thorns at holy wells, and pins are dropped into the cavities of cup-marked and holed stones—all telling

of the long-forgotten worship of a far-distant past! In the cemetery itself we are indeed walking on what from the earliest times was esteemed holy ground. Clonmacnoise was considered one of the most holy of the holy places of Ireland—in fact, it 'occupied a position only second to Armagh in popular reverence.' Ware tells us that Clonmacnoise was founded by St. Kiaran, who died and was buried here in A.D. 549, 'in the flower of his age, having lived only thirty-three years.' He also tells us that St. Kevin attended his funeral, and that St. Columba composed a hymn in his praise. From that day onwards countless kings, nobles, and bishops have been interred within the two Irish acres of burial-ground that surround the Churches of Clonmacnoise, and its monumental inscriptions in the Irish language form the richest and most varied collection of examples of that kind to be met with in Ireland. Sir James Ware, writing more than one hundred and eighty years ago, tells us the cemetery was 'famous for the sepulchres of the nobility and bishops, and some monuments and inscriptions, part in Irish and part in

Hebrew.' Dr. Petrie valued these inscriptions so highly that he copied upwards of 'one hundred and seventy examples' at Clonmacnoise and in its neighbourhood; and these inscriptions were subsequently arranged more or less in sequence, so as to form a complete series ranging from the seventh down to the twelfth century, showing the gradual development and progress of sculpture and style of lettering in Ireland, which may serve as a key to the approximate date of such works in other parts of the country, as well as elsewhere in the British Islands. But, sad to say, no cemetery in Ireland has suffered more from the ruthless hand of the destroyer than Clonmacnoise. Unfortunately it was situated on that very highway of the Danish invaders, the Shannon, and within easy reach of their ships. It is needless to say that they plundered and devastated it; but, more than that, they converted it into a heathen sanctuary, and there 'Ota, wife of Turgèsius the Dane, was a Pythoness,' and from the altar of the great Church of Clonmacnoise,

amid foul and bloody pagan rites, amid the shrieks

of butchered victims and the smoke of human sacrifices, the wild pagan priestess delivered her oracular responses.[1]

And yet we have most interesting and invaluable monumental memorials of the dead, which, while they passed comparatively unharmed through that fearful ordeal, were from pure thoughtlessness in danger of being destroyed in this Christian and civilised nineteenth century. In fact, so fast were the monumental memorials of the dead disappearing from the cemetery of Clonmacnoise, that the caretakers of the churchyard felt that there was no course open to them, in order to preserve these monuments, except to take them all up and place them under lock and key in one of the ecclesiastical buildings. Let it not be supposed that our fellow-countrymen have an enmity to the monuments of the dead. This is, indeed, far from being the case. There are no people who guard more carefully and regard with deeper feelings of reverence and respect the tombs of their own relatives than our fellow-countrymen. And this trait of their character,

[1] See Professor Stokes's *Ireland and the Celtic Church.*

accompanied as it is by deep religious feeling, makes us confident that the spirit which would cause them to treat with respect the monumental memorials of others, lies latent in their breasts, and only requires to be awakened. I had an excellent opportunity afforded me of judging how easily this spirit is awakened, during my visit to Clonmacnoise. In accordance with my usual custom, I sought for antiquarian objects to purchase, and in a short time I was able to purchase a gold-bronze pin of a usual type, a local token, and an old Irish shoe that had been found at the bottom of a deep cutting of turf—one of the kind that was made in ancient times, before the shoemakers had learned to use hemp, and was sewn altogether with narrow thongs of leather. The supply seemed to be exhausted, until a man came forward and asked me would I buy a stone with Irish letters on it. 'Where is it?' said I. 'It is in the bottom of the field ditch, sir,' said he. 'I will buy nothing until I see it first,' was my reply; and at his request we then went to his potato field, and he commenced to pull down a portion of the rough stone ditch that

surrounded it. When he had reached the foundation, there lay the inscribed flag, fortunately face downwards, so that the inscription was not injured. When he placed it before me, I saw at once that it was one of the monuments from the cemetery, bearing an inscription in the Irish language and character, and inscribed with a beautiful incised cross of a very early design. 'This, my friend,' said I, 'is a tombstone from the churchyard; I cannot purchase it, for it should never have been removed from where it stood.' 'Sir,' said the man, 'I did not take it out of the churchyard; I dug it up in the field we are standing in, years ago, and if it is a tombstone, it must belong to the old people who are dead and gone long ago.' 'But those old people,' said I, 'thought as much about their father and mother's tomb as you think about your father and mother's tomb; and would you like your family tombstone to be under a ditch in a potato field?' 'It is true for you, sir,' said he, 'and I will hand it over to Mr. Molloy, and let it go back to the churchyard.' Just at this moment Mr. Kieran Molloy, the intelligent

and active caretaker of Clonmacnoise, came in sight, and then and there we handed over the old tombstone to him, to be placed among the others in the locked-up building. Unfortunately I had not the materials with me wherewith to take a rubbing of the stone, nor had I time to study the inscription, as I had to hasten back to Athlone to catch a train ; but in Mr. Kieran Molloy's hands the monument is in safety, and can be studied at any time ; and I was happy to see these most interesting ruins looked after by a man who esteems his work a labour of love in which he takes the most lively interest.

CHAPTER X

ON A MANNER OF LIGHTING HOUSES IN OLD TIMES, ILLUSTRATED BY RUSH-LIGHT CANDLESTICKS [1]

As long as houses in Ireland were round, and had no lofts or partitions, they were probably illuminated in summer by the light that came through the door, and in winter by the fire that was kindled in the centre of the floor; but as soon as houses were constructed of an oblong shape, and when fires were removed to one end or side of the house, and a separate exit or flue provided for smoke, and lofts and partitions were introduced, then the necessity for a household illuminant must have been quickly felt; and, as we might have expected, we find very early mention of such lights. It is stated by Dr. Sullivan, in his introduction to the 'Manners and Customs,' that 'one of the

[1] Read before the Royal Irish Academy, January 12, 1911.

essential articles of furniture in the house of a Bó-Aire was a candle upon a candlestick,' it being the custom that in such abodes a light should be kept burning through the night. Sullivan also tells us that an oblong house was divided roughly, in the direction of its length, into three parts by two rows of pillars, which supported the roof, the candelabrum being placed between the fire and the door, and generally towards the middle of the house. Although references to candles and candlesticks are plentiful enough, yet detailed information as to the manner in which the candlesticks were constructed or the material of which the candles were made is, as far as I know, very rare. No doubt the wax of the large quantity of honey that was paid 'as rents and tributes to the Kings and other Flaths' was utilised by them for lighting purposes; and in a legend recorded in one of the early Journals of the Kilkenny Archæological Society, mention is made of a square wax candle, which if square must have been run in a mould.

Doubtless also bog-wood was used as a torch for lighting purposes; for, down to our

own time, long strips of bog-wood were dried, and made use of by the poorer classes instead of candles, and were placed by them in candlesticks. But the method of household illumination which I would seek to bring under the notice of the Academy is neither that of the very rich nor of the very poor, but the ordinary common manner of lighting houses, which, I believe, has come down to us from times that are prehistoric, and, like the quern or hand-mill, may be found in a few isolated instances still in use. The conservative Celt did not readily give up the use of his quern hand-mill, and even yet makes use of the rush-light. The candles that were used for ordinary lighting purposes seem to have been of three kinds : the dipped candle, which was made by taking a wick of flax, and dipping it again and again into melted grease until it had attained the necessary thickness ; rushes may also have been used for wicks in this kind of candle ; secondly, the rush-light candle, or rush taper, which was the light in everyday use ; and, thirdly, the resin candle, called a snob, which was made by rolling resin in a soft state around a wick of linen rag.

Just as the arrangements of Irish houses were in most respects similar to those of the Anglo-Saxons, so I believe were the methods of household illumination common to both. My attention was first called to Irish rush-light candlesticks by an engraving of an English candlestick that was exhibited in the collection of an English antiquarian, which I saw in one of the illustrated journals. I subsequently purchased one exactly similar to that engraving at a farm-house in my neighbourhood. Afterwards I saw a second illustration of another type of these candlesticks in that journal; and I also found one similar to it in another farm-house. I may mention that the English writer altogether misunderstood his candlestick, as he believed the pincers arrangement to hold the rush-light taper to be a kind of snuffers to snuff the candle, which was placed in the candle-holder.

The earliest mention I have been able to find of the preparation of rushes for lighting purposes is in a pretty story in the life of Cormac Mac Art, King of Ireland, about the year A.D. 200 or 227. This story, as related by Keating and others, tells us that Cormac,

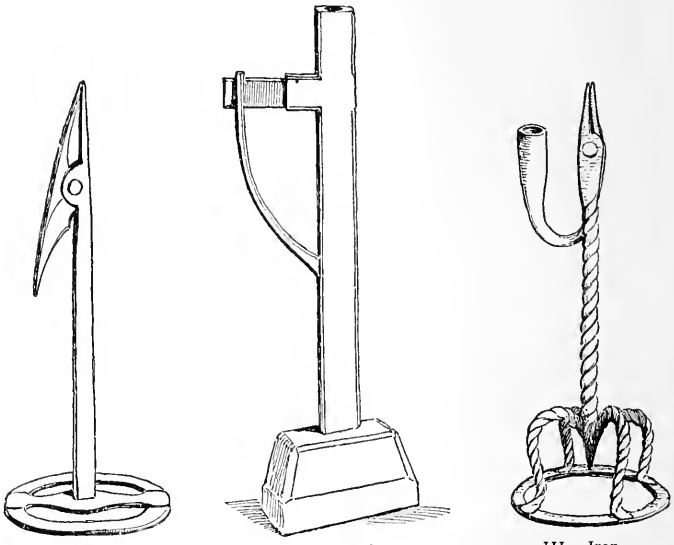
riding through a wood, came suddenly and unobserved upon a fair damsel, who was engaged in her household avocations of milking and drawing water, and cutting rushes with a sharp hook ; and as she cut the rushes she separated those that were long and green from such as were short and withered, and laid them in different heaps (the long green ones being, as we know, suitable for lighting purposes, and the others, in accordance with the custom of the times, for strewing the floor). One version of the story tells us that, when he revealed himself to her, and questioned her about cutting the rushes, she told him that it was the work of the women to cut and peel the rushes, as women are the light of the house. The story further goes on to tell how, captivated by her beauty and her aptitude for housekeeping, he made her his Queen. Our story very plainly describes the first process in the manufacture of rush-lights : the cutting of long green rushes, and peeling them until nothing remained of the outside rind except a narrow strip of green just sufficient to bind together the pith. The rushes when thus prepared and dried were

dipped into a vessel called a grisset, containing melted grease, and then dried. The grisset, of which I exhibit a miniature specimen, was a boat-shaped vessel of metal or iron, standing on three legs, and having a long handle projecting from the centre of the side. There were also long, narrow baskets, made for holding the prepared rushes, which were much prized, and considered suitable for wedding presents. The preparing and peeling of rushes was part of the work of every farmer's wife, almost to our own time; and the preparing and selling of bundles of rushes to old bachelors and other unfortunates who had no women in their families to do the work was a regular industry among the poor.

Now, with regard to the candlesticks or stands which held these rush-lights, they were very diverse in pattern; yet I think we can trace, not only distinct types, but also a steady progress in type in their manufacture. At first, I have no doubt, they were made of wood, and displayed but little refinement of art, although they showed a ready wit in the manner of their construction. I have had descriptions given me, or sent to

me from different parts of Ireland, of these early and rude candlesticks. One such description was given me by a County Carlow man over eighty years of age, of a candlestick which was of a type that was old when he was young, and may well be a survival of the primitive pattern. He described this candle-holder as a round or square oak stick of the size of an ordinary spade-handle, or somewhat thicker, inserted in a block of wood, its height depending on whether it was to stand on the floor or on a table. If it was to stand on the floor, it would be about three feet long; if to stand on a table, it would be about ten or eleven inches in height. This upright post was bored in the centre to contain a candle, and had inserted in it, at right angles, a small piece of wood with a notch cut in it to hold a rush-light. The rush-light when inserted in the notch was kept in position by a wooden spring attached to the upright shaft, which sprang back against the notched hollow in the projecting shaft, and thus prevented the rush from dropping out. I had a model made of this type of candlestick under his guidance and direction, which I exhibit

(fig. I), and which he says is exactly similar to the candlesticks that he remembers in use. I have obtained from the County Meath a similar description of a candlestick, except that instead of the rush being held in the notch



II.—Iron. I.—Wood. III.—Iron.

RUSH-LIGHT CANDLESTICKS.

by a spring, a wooden pincers was attached by a wooden dowel to the upright shaft. There is also a record of a rush-light candlestick seen in the County Sligo in the year 1760. It is described as two feet six inches high,

with a stand of three legs and a catch to hold the rush-light. It must have been a candlestick such as one of these, which the Hon. Emily Lawless describes as having been found under sixteen feet of peat in a Kerry bog, the material of which it was composed being all wood. I now pass on to the iron forms of the rush-light candlestick, which plainly show the influence of the wooden forms which preceded them.

The next candlestick which I exhibit has a twisted iron stem, standing on three bowed and twisted iron supports, which are combined by an iron ring. It is fourteen and a half inches in gross height ; and the ring on which it stands is nearly five inches in width. It has a pincers arrangement at right angles with the shaft, the idea of which is plainly derived from the old wooden form ; and it has also attached to it a place on which to stick a candle, which is what may be properly called a *candlestick*, not a candle-holder such as that to which we give that name.

I also show a sketch of a rush-light candlestick in which an upright pincers has

taken the place of the pincers at right angles with the shaft; but still the old wooden influence is shown in the spring which is adapted to keep the pincers closed. It is ten and a quarter inches in height and four inches wide at base.

Next a pincers candlestick standing in a wooden block fourteen inches high and between four and five inches wide at base. This candlestick has no spring. Then a candlestick with a very nicely finished shaft of twisted iron, attached to an oak block or stand, with both a candle-holder and a rush-light holder. It stands fourteen and a half inches high, and is four and a half inches wide at base.

Next I put forward a very well-finished rush-light and ordinary candle-holder combined, with twisted stem, standing on four bowed and twisted legs united by an iron ring. It is twelve inches high and five inches wide at base. Then a much simpler candlestick of the same pattern, but not twisted, nine and a half inches in height and four inches wide at base; also a rush-light candlestick of iron, for standing on the floor, which

I have removed from the block in which it was inserted in order to enable me to carry it more easily. At present it is two feet seven and a half inches in height, with a twisted stem. When inserted in its block it stood three feet high. In conclusion, may I say that in these days of progress, when the electric light may be seen under the shadow of Mount Leinster, and when even a pair of snuffers is an unknown implement, to which no name could be attached by many of our young people, it may not be undesirable to preserve some record of a method of household illumination that is now very much a thing of the past.

Note.—These candlesticks were exhibited at a meeting of the Royal Irish Academy in their rooms in Dawson Street.

CHAPTER XI

HISTORIC AND PREHISTORIC IRISH TRIBAL BADGES — THE ARMS OF IRELAND AND CELTIC TRIBAL HERALDRY

THE Armorial Bearings that I am about to treat of in this chapter are the allegorical designs, or badges, emblazoned on the standards of Ireland and its princes in times past. Heraldry has been described as 'the art of arranging and explaining in proper terms all that relates or appertains to the bearing of arms, crests, badges, quarterings, and other hereditary marks of honour'; but this definition would apply more properly to Norman than to Celtic heraldry, which was of a much simpler type. I believe I can safely assert that so far as heraldry consists in the bearing by different nations, cities, and tribes of distinguishing standards, emblems, and devices, it can be traced back to the very

earliest records that we possess of the oldest civilisation. In this, as in many other cases, I can quote an old and homely proverb, 'Necessity is the mother of invention'; and necessity required that different nations, cities, and tribes should have some well-known and easily discerned sign or badge, by which they could be distinguished the one from the other. When seeking for the first traces of any particular use, we naturally turn to Egypt, the birthplace of architecture, and, to some extent, of art design; and there, I think, we find the earliest traces of the use of heraldic symbols or badges.

The learned Egyptologist, Professor Flinders Petrie, in a lecture delivered before the British Association, in which he took as his subject 'Man before Writing,' tells us that the city of Heliopolis, probably the most ancient city whose origin we can guess at (far older than the Egyptian monarchy), had as its sign a sixteen-sided fluted column, with a tapering shaft, just as in after years a lion became the sign of Leonopolis, and a goat of the city of Pantopolis. Here, says Petrie, still speaking of the Heliopolis sign,

we have a form (symbol or badge) which is carried back into the unlettered ages, and which we cannot hope to touch with any continuous record. It was doubtless his residence in Egypt, and the impression made on his mind by what he learned there, that caused the patriarch Jacob to give distinguishing heraldic badges, or devices, to his sons, by which their various tribes should be hereafter known. Thus, Reuben is supposed to have had as his badge water (or wavy); Judah, a lion's whelp; Issachar, an ass; Dan, a serpent; Naphtali, a hind; Joseph, a fruitful bough, &c.; and in the Book of Numbers we find the direction—'Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard with the ensign of his father's house.' In its earliest conception the idea of a standard was not a flag, but a figure, or device, elevated on a pole, like the eagle of the Roman soldiers and the raven of the Scandinavian Rovers (popularly called Danes). Here I may remark that, although in the course of time the Scandinavian Rovers adopted as a banner a representation of a raven, there is reason to believe that in the

first instance their standard was a tamed specimen of the bird itself; and, if this is the case, it is not to be wondered at that it was considered a bird of ill omen.

In Ireland banners bearing various colours seem to have been associated with the badges or devices of the various tribes at an early period. The Rev. Geoffrey Keating, D.D., in his 'General History of Ireland,' tells us that in the reign of Ollamh Fodhla, in a great triennial assembly at Tara, it was ordained by a law that every nobleman and great officer should, by the learned heralds, have a particular coat-of-arms assigned to him according to his merit and his quality, whereby he should be distinguished from others of the same rank, and be known wherever he appeared. In an historical tale called 'The Battle of Magh Rath,' edited and transcribed by John O'Donovan from the 'Book of Leinster,' which was compiled from ancient manuscripts in the first half of the twelfth century by Finn MacGorman, Bishop of Kildare, who died in the year 1160, we have a whole list of the banners used by the combatants in that contest, by which they were

distinguished from one another. From this account, which was published in 1842 by the Irish Archæological Society, I quote (p. 227; see also p. 347):

Mightily advance the battalions of Congal
To us over the ford of Ornamh;
When they came to the contest of the men
They require not to be harangued.
The token of the great warrior of Macha—
Variegated satin on warlike poles;
The banner of each bright king with prosperity
Over his own head conspicuously displayed.
The banner of Scannlan—an ornament with prosperity,
And of Fiachna Mor, the son of Baedan,
Great symbol of plunder floating from its staff
Is over the head of Congal advancing towards us
A yellow Lion on green satin,
The insignia of the Craebh Ruadh,
Such as the noble Conchobar bore,
Is now held up by Congal.
The standards of the sons of Eochaidh
In front of the embattled hosts,
Are dun-coloured standards like fire.
Over the well-shaped spear handles of Crumthann.
The standard of the vigorous king of Britain,
Conan Rod, the royal soldier,
Streaked satin, blue and white,
In folds displayed.
The standard of the great king of Saxonland of hosts
Is a wide, very great standard,
Yellow and red, richly displayed,
Over the head of Dairbhre, son of Dornmor.
The standard of the majestic king of Feabhail
(I have not seen such another)
Is over his head (no treachery does he carry with him),
Black and red, certainly.

The standard of Suibhne—a yellow banner,
The renowned king of Dal Araidhe ;
Yellow satin, over that mild man of hosts—
The white-fingered stripling himself in the middle of them.
The standard of Ferdoman of banquets,
The red-weaponed king of the Ards of Ulster ;
White satin, to the sun and wind displayed,
Over that mighty man without blemish.

Here we have many standards, but only one symbol or sign—the yellow lion. Dr. Keating says that favourite signs, borne by the ancient Irish, were 'a dead serpent, and the rod of Moses.' Badges, symbols, or heraldic signs seem to have been common enough among the Irish tribes, such as the red hand, which has been for some centuries the badge of the O'Neills, but which, Owen O'Donnelly contended, was derived from the heroes of the Red Branch, and belonged, of right, to Magennis, the senior representative of Conall Cernach, the most distinguished of those heroes.

The story of the red hand is a well-known one : two tribes contended for the same portion of land, and the future owner was to be decided by the result of a boat-race ; whoever touched the land first was to be lord of the soil. It was a close race, what we call

a neck-to-neck race; but as the land drew near, it became evident to the ancestor of the Magennis that his adversary would touch land before him, so he cut the matter short by standing up in the bow of his boat, cutting off one of his hands with a hatchet, and casting it with the other hand on the shore. His descendants ever after bore the bloody hand as their heraldic cognisance. King James adopted it as the symbol of Ulster, with which the new order of baronet was identified. We may also mention the cat and salmon of O'Cathain or O'Kane.

John O'Donovan gives the following heraldic bearings, which he translated from an ancient Irish MS. quoted in his edition of 'The Battle of Magh Rath,' p. 349:

Bearings of O'Doherty

Mightily advance the battalions of Conn
With O'Doherty to engage in battle;
His battle-sword with golden cross
Over the standard of this great chief;
A lion and bloody eagle—
Hard it is to repress his plunder—
On a white sheet of silken satin.

Bearings of O'Sullivan in the Battle of Caisglinn

I see mightily advancing in the plain
The banner of the race of noble Finghin,
His spear with venomous adder [entwined].

Bearings of O'Donovan

A hand holds an ancient Irish sword entwined with a serpent.

Bearings of O'Loughlin Burren

In O'Loughlin's camp was visible a fair satin sheet
To be at the head of each battle, to defend in battle-field ;
An ancient *fruit-bearing oak*, defended by a chieftain justly,
And an anchor blue, with folds of a golden cable.

That the Celtic tribes were distinguished by particular colours, we have ocular demonstration of to the present day, in the tartans of the Scotch Highland tribes ; and so particular were the ancient Irish about distinguishing colours, that the number of colours each class of society were to wear in their clothes was specially regulated by law. One colour in the clothes of servants, two colours in the clothes of rent-paying farmers, three colours in the clothes of officers, five colours in the clothes of chiefs, six colours in the clothes of ollamhs and poets, seven colours in the clothes of kings and queens.

In the account of the Battle of Clontarf, which took place in 1014, and which Dr. Joyce quotes as reliable history, the old king, Brian Boru, who was too feeble to engage

in the fight himself, is described as remaining in his tent, and engaged in prayer, while his attendant stood at the door to watch the battle. In response to an anxious inquiry from the king, the attendant said: 'Many have fallen, but Murrogh's banner still stands moving through the battalions.' 'That is well,' said the king; 'as long as the men of Erin see that standard they will fight with courage and valour.' Now, if we take this even as a free version, it shows that standards were used then as now to rally the troops around them; and surely no one will contend that they were like a blank sheet of paper, without any particular colour or device by which they could be distinguished the one from the other. The old Irish prophecy about the 'Flag of Battles' shows how familiar they were with its use, and 'we find references in the lives of the primitive Irish saints to several consecrated banners called by the name of Cathach.' These banners may have been borne, not on poles, but on the breast of the standard-bearer.

I think that I have now fairly established my proposition that the ancient Irish had a

heraldry of their own; also tribal badges and colours, by which their various tribes and kingdoms were distinguished the one from the other. But when we seek for any coat-of-arms for the whole land, or any crest that might be considered the badge of the whole kingdom, we are at once face to face with a difficulty; a badge or crest such as the eagle of the Romans, the white horse of the Saxons, the raven of the Danes, the lion of the Normans, we cannot find. I am disposed to think that the heraldic colour of Ireland for the time being was that of the tribe that supplied Ireland with its Ard Righ, or chief king, and that the badge or symbol was that of his family. For instance, when the great Munster sept of Dal Cais supplied Ireland with an Ard Righ in the person of Brian Borumha, there can be little doubt that the colours of Ireland for the time being were the colours borne by that tribe, which Mr. O'Looney told me were brown, purple, green, and gold. In our days blue and green have often contended for precedence, but in those old Celtic days there was a strong preference for a 'blay brown.' This is shown

in the English version of an old Irish song, for which I am indebted to the late Mr. O'Looney :

> Brown was the banner of the fierce and mighty Gaul,
> Brown was the banner of the great Fiana Fail,
> When the fierce 'Dalraids' of Alba on the Roman wall were seen,
> They planted there the standard of the brown, and blue, and green.

Here we have the great Fenian forces marching to battle under colours of brown, and blue, and green. As every one of the minor kings of Ireland had 'as the ground of his chief colour the principal colour of the head king' in the days of Brian Boru, brown must have been, to a great extent, the national colour.[1] But great a man and great a king

[1] It has been asserted on the supposed authority of Dr. Geoffrey Keating that the ground of the shield or principal colour of the O'Briens was red. I have failed to find this statement in his history. The idea probably arose from the fancy picture of an Irish king to be found in the folio edition of Dermod O'Connor's translation. In it King Brian is represented resting on a shield gules bearing three lions ; but it, like the twelve sheets of coats-of-arms attached to the book, is Dermod O'Connor's work, for which Dr. Keating is not in any way accountable. These coats-of-arms cannot be considered as specimens of Celtic heraldry (although they may contain Celtic tribal badges). They are plainly arms that had been granted to the various families by Norman heralds.

as he was, Brian was to a certain extent a usurper; for Meath was the Imperial Province, and the arms of Meath might be taken as the arms of Ireland.

O'Halloran tells us that he read in some old manuscripts, and found in O'Flaherty's writings, that the arms of the Irish monarchs were a king enthroned in majesty, with a lily in his hand, in a field 'saturn.' This, he concluded, must be the arms of Meath, about which he could obtain no information at the Herald's office. We are told that this coat-of-arms is now recorded in Ulster's office as an ancient coat-of-arms of the Kingdom of Ireland, and is thus entered: (sa) a king sitting on his throne cross-legged, in his right hand a golden lily; crest, a tower triple-towered (or) from the portal a hart springing (ar) attired and hoofed (or). There is much to be said in favour of this last coat-of-arms. It is quite unlike the coats-of-arms adopted by the Norman Conquerors, and yet has held its own as a coat-of-arms of the Kingdom of Ireland to the present day (although not in use); and for this reason I am disposed to think that it was the old arms of the country

which passed out of use when the Normans adopted the three crowns ; and if this be the case, the principal colour was saturn or sable, otherwise black, which in heraldry is believed to imply vengeance, and the deathful prowess of the bearer.[1] We now come to the period of the Norman Invasion, when we find the old, simple badges of the various tribes superseded by the complicated system of family heraldry, which at that time was called

1 I am indebted to our well-known Fellow, David MacRitchie, Esq., of Edinburgh, for the following information, obtained by him from Mr. G. Grant, *Rothesay Herald* :

COURT OF THE LORD LYON,
EDINBURGH, *3rd March* 1903.

DEAR MR. MACRITCHIE,—I have received your letter of yesterday enclosing 'Mr. French's.' I find in an old Heraldic MS. compiled in 1567, commonly called 'Workman's MSS.,' because it belonged to James Workman, Marchmont Herald, a painting of the arms of the Kingdom of Ireland, and a written blazon : azure, a king enthroned (or sitting in his chair), holding in his right hand a sceptre, and an antique crown with points on his head, or. No crest is given. The arms described by 'Mr. French' are, I believe, recorded in Ulster's office. The ancient arms of Ireland are said to be azure, three ancient crowns or. These are now the arms of Munster. The arms of Ireland would never be officially recorded in this office.

Yours sincerely,
FRANCIS P. GRANT.

into existence. The necessities of the Crusades may be said to have created heraldry in the modern sense of the term. Knights from all parts of Europe, and from twenty different nations, assembled together to recover the Holy Land and the holy places from the followers of Mahomet ; and it was necessary to have some means of distinguishing between them, and to have heralds who were skilled in the art of blazoning, assigning, and marshalling coat armour, in order to marshal the knights under the banners of their various leaders, and so that in a tournament, when a knight rode into the lists with his visor down, someone should be able to explain the shield or coat of armour that he bore, and to tell who he was.

The late Sir Bernard Burke, writing on the subject of heraldry, says :

> For my own part I consider that the registry of its birth may be found among the archives of the Holy Wars ; that its cradle was rocked by the soldiers of the Cross, and that its maturity was attained in the chivalrous age of Feudalism.

The old Irish chieftains, satisfied with their old, simple tribal heraldry, were slow in

adopting the complicated system of the Normans; and John O'Donovan tells us[1] that he had 'examined more tombstones in Irish churchyards than any person then living, with an anxious wish to discover Irish inscriptions and armorial bearings; but among the many tombs he had seen he had not observed any escutcheon of a Milesian Irish family older than the reign of Queen Elizabeth,'—the coats-of-arms before that time being the armorial bearings of tribes and territories, not of families. The earliest known private coat-of-arms is that upon the monumental effigy of a Count of Wasserburgh in the Church of St. Emeran at Ratisbon, the ensigns being 'Per fess az. and sa., a lion rampant, countercharged,' and the date 1010. The earliest heraldic document that has come down to us is a roll of arms between the years 1240 and 1245, containing the names and arms of the barons and knights of the reign of Henry III.

But to return to Ireland; it is interesting to observe the difference in the arms of Ulster, given by Mr. O'Halloran about eighty years

[1] *Battle of Magh Rath*, p. 348.

ago, from the arms now in use. He tells us:

I some years ago applied to Sir William Hawkins and to Mr. Withens at the Herald's office, where I learned that the provincial arms were for Munster on a field azure, three eastern diadems proper; for Leinster on a field vert, a harp or, string argent; for Ulster on a field (or) a lion rampant, double-queued gules; and for Connaught, party per pale, argent, and sable; on the argent side, a demi-eagle spread sable; on the field sable, a hand and arm holding a sword erect. I have been told that the crest of Ireland as used by our own princes in tilts and tournaments on the continent, and after them by some of the Henrys and Edwards, was a bleeding hind wounded by an arrow, under the arch of an old castle.

You will observe that the arms which for many hundred years after the Conquest were borne by the whole of Ireland are now borne by the province of Munster alone.

In the time of Edward IV a Commission was held to inquire into the arms of Ireland, which Commission returned, 'y^{t} ye three crowns were ye arms.' This bearing is found on the reverse of early Irish coins subsequent to the Conquest.

The meaning to be attached to the three

crowns has been a subject of controversy. In Harris's 'Ware,' ii. 215, the idea is put forward that the three crowns represented the three kingdoms of England, France, and Ireland. Fynes Moryson imagined that they represented the Pope's triple crown.

Dr. Aquilla Smith, in his learned essay on the 'Irish Coins of Edward IV,' published among the *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*, tells us neither of these opinions is correct; and it is a remarkable circumstance that this device, the meaning of which the learned research of Sir James Ware failed to discover, has proved to be the arms of Ireland.

The Rev. Richard Butler, of Trim, afterwards Dean of Clonmacnoise, puts forward the following summary of the evidence that he has collected on the subject:

1. Richard II granted to Robert de Vere permission to bear arms, so long as he should be Lord of Ireland, three crowns within a bordure.

2. At Henry V's funeral, on the first car were emblazoned the ancient arms of England; on the second, those of France and England,

quarterly; on the third, those of France; and on the fourth three crowns on a field azure, doubtless for Ireland.

3. The crown first appears on the first distinct and separate coinage for Ireland, issued according to an Act of Parliament in 1460, declaring the independence of Ireland, and enacting that it should have a proper coin, separate from the coin of England.

4. The three crowns appear on the Irish coins of Edward IV, Richard III, and Henry VII. They are unknown on the English coinage; and when Henry VIII assumed the harp as the arms of Ireland, they appear no more.

5. On the only silver coins on which the three crowns occur, they appear, as the harp does afterwards, on the reverse—the obverse bearing the arms of England; and when the legend 'Dominus Hibernie' is on the coin, it is on the same side with the three crowns, as it is afterwards on the same side with the harp.

6. That these crowns are borne, *not* in a shield, but 'upon a cross,' is no objection to their being armorial bearings, as the harp was never borne on a shield, except on the

coins of Queen Elizabeth, who, instead of one harp, bore three on her coinage of 1561, as Edward IV bore sometimes one, and sometimes three, crowns. But that the three crowns were sometimes enclosed within a shield is a fact which is incontestably proved by a small copper coin, two specimens of which were found at Trim, and another of which had previously been found near Dublin.

7. In 1483 Thomas Galmole, gentleman, and worker of the money of silver, and keeper of the Exchanges in the Cities of Devylyn (Dublin) and Waterford, was bound by indenture to make two sorts of moneys, one called a penny, with the king's arms on one side upon a cross, trefoiled at every end, and with the inscription, ' Rex Anglie et France,' and on the other side the arms of Ireland, *upon a cross*, with this scripture, ' Dns Hibernie.' Sir Bernard Burke thought it probable that the crowns, or, upon an az. ground, were introduced by the Normans from the coat of St. Edmund. He says:

This was the coat of St. Edmund, and it is possible that the Anglo-Norman invaders, who were arrayed under the banners of St. George and

St. Edmund, introduced the bearings of the latter saint as the ensigns of the new Conquest.

The three crowns appear to have been relinquished by Henry VIII as the arms of Ireland about the time that he obtained an Act of Parliament constituting him King of Ireland; and probably because they were mistaken for the Papal arms. Since that time the heraldic arms of this country have been: az. a harp or, stringed argent, otherwise a golden harp with silver strings on a blue ground. Truly a rich and beautiful device.

O'Curry devotes much care and attention to the consideration of the origin of a harp device. He thinks that the idea was probably derived from the harp, popularly known as Brian Boru's harp, and that this instrument may possibly be the harp of Donnchadh Cairbreach O'Brien, son of the last King of Munster, who had a small, sweet harp which passed from this country into Scotland, and which he made great efforts to recover, and failed to do so.

He further suggests that this harp may have been carried into England by Edward I,

when he took away from the Palace of Scone, in Scotland, the ancient inaugural chair, or stone, and other regalia of the old Scottish monarchs, to Westminster Abbey, and that it there remained, with the name of its original owner traditionally attached to it, till the time of Henry VIII, who, it is said, presented a celebrated harp to the Earl of Clanrickard, as the harp of Donogh O'Brien. He goes on to say :

> Would it be two much to believe that it was the celebrity of this ancient instrument that suggested to their execrable monarch the first idea of placing the harp in the arms of Ireland in the fashion of the heraldry of the time, and impressing it upon the coinage of this country ?

I should say that Ware claims a far older association of the harp with the arms of Ireland than that which is now generally accepted. He says (p. 208, Harris's ' Ware '), when treating of the coinage of King John :

> The triangle on the Irish coins of this monarch, as well as of those of his two next successors, represents a harp which was anciently of that shape, for all pennies that have a head in a triangle were Irish coins.

There is a note quoted by Brewer from Chalmers's 'Caledonia,' i. 463, which has an important bearing on the subject. He says:

> There remains in the College of Arms a curious roll containing the badges of the Earls of Warwick from Brutus the founder, which was composed by the celebrated John Rous, the Warwick antiquary, who died in 1491. He included Richard III as an Earl of Warwick. This antiquary, in painting the several crests of Richard, surmounted his crest as Lord of Ireland with the harp, and in order to prevent mistakes wrote under each crest—England, France, Acquitane, and Ireland.

When Henry VIII placed a harp instead of three crowns on the Irish shield, he may have only called into requisition a well-known Irish badge, which would, on that account, be more readily accepted. Whether this is the case or not I will not venture to determine; but this I can safely say, that the adoption of the harp as the badge of Ireland was a decided success, and has proved equally acceptable to all parties in the state.

One subject relating to the arms of Ireland still remains to be considered. How did green obtain its present position as the

colour that, above all others, is symbolical of the Emerald Isle? Various reasons have been suggested. One is that it originated with the Ulster United Irishmen, who made a blend of orange and blue, and thus produced green, which was to be symbolical of the union of two different parties in the country, but this seems a mere guess. It was in use long before that time, and it would be a far more likely thing if we were to say that it was brought into favour by the Catholic Confederation. In the 'National MSS. Series,' vol. i. date 1582–3, there is the picture of an Irish soldier bearing an Irish coat-of-arms. The shield is blue, bearing a gold harp, with a crown of gold over the shield. Very shortly after this we find green in use. The following extract from a letter of Father Matthew O'Hartigan, dated from Paris, October 17, 1642, shows that green was then borne as an Irish standard:

> Colonel Owne Ro his frigot is back to Dunkert full of butter, tallow, and hides. This frigot bears the Irish harp in a green field in a flagg in the main-top.

Cardinal Moran, in his 'Spicilegium Ossori-

ense,' gives the following extract from the description of the standards of the Irish Confederate army, A.D. 1643, which is found in the Wadding papers at Rome :

> Nota quod in parte dextra sit crux Hiberniæ in circuitu color rubir in campo viridi, sub cruce, 'Vivat Rex Carolus,' et super, has literas, C. R. et corona Imperialis.

If the Irish Confederate Catholics flew a standard which bore an Irish cross on a green field or ground, surely that in itself would give great prominence to green as a colour, and even to a certain extent as a national colour.

Now we come to A.D. 1737, and we find that in a book published in The Hague in that year the arms of Ireland are given as 'Il est vert, chargé d'une harpe d'or.'

Next, let us take up the great Volunteer Movement of 1782, which was just as much a Protestant movement as the Catholic Confederation had been a Roman Catholic movement. One of the principal leaders of the Volunteers was the then Protestant Bishop of Derry. Let us see what prominence was given to green by them. The Attorneys' Regiment of Volunteers wore, as their uniform,

scarlet and Pomona green. There were fifty-two regiments and companies of mounted and foot Volunteers scattered all over Ireland, who wore uniforms faced with green, or altogether green ; and it is to be remarked that green was not worn as a party colour, but as a national colour, for these regiments and companies were nearly all Protestants, and were officered by the resident gentry in their respective districts. The arms of Leinster given by Sir William Hawkins and Mr. Withens, of the Herald's Office, to Mr. O'Halloran some eighty years ago, were a golden harp with silver strings on a green ground ; and the arms of Leinster still remain—'Vert an Irish harp or, stringed argent.' So completely has this passed away from remembrance that when a well-known Dublin antiquary was applied to by a gentleman to tell him what were the correct arms of Leinster, he sent him the foregoing, and immediately received the reply : 'Come now, don't be poking fun at me. I know the popular arms well enough, but I want the correct arms.' In this case the popular arms and the correct arms are identical.

An amusing story is told of something like a hoax which was played off on the poet Moore. He gives a facsimile of a so-called ancient Irish inscription in the folio edition of the 'Irish Melodies,' p. 84, the translation of which is :

A yellow lion upon green satin,
The standard of the heroes of the Red Branch,
Which Connor carried in battle
During his frequent wars for the expulsion of foreigners.

To which Moore adds the following note :

The inscription upon Connor's tomb (for the facsimile of which I am indebted to Mr. Murphy, the chaplain to Lady Moira) has not, I believe, been noticed by any antiquarian or traveller.

This inscription is to be found on an eighteenth-century tombstone in the Abbey Church of Multifarnham, which was founded by William Delamar in the year 1236, consequently it would not be a likely place to find the tomb of Connor or Conchobar mac Nessa, who died in the beginning of the first century. But Mr. Moore evidently never saw the first part of the inscription on this tombstone, which immediately precedes

the Irish inscription, and which runs as follows :

Pray for the soul of James Gaynor of Leney, who died January the 15th 1764, aged 66 years. Also for his ancestors and posterity.

James Gaynor's posterity evidently wished to make history.

At present green is the field of the shield of the Province of Leinster, blue is the field of the shield of Munster, and black and gold of Connaught. Strange to say, Ware asserts that arms almost identical with those borne by the Province of Connaught were at one time borne as the arms of all Ireland. He says (p. 184) :

If Ulysses Aldrovandus may be credited, the more ancient arms of Ireland were in one part of the scutcheon, or, an arm armed with a sword ; in the other part a demi-eagle in a field argent.[1]

So that it would seem that with very little difference the arms now borne by the provinces of Leinster, Munster, and Connaught, were borne by the whole country

1 'Ornithol.' lib. 1, quoted in Harris's *Ware*, vol. ii. Antiqq. 184.

at different periods. The arms of the provinces, as given by the late Sir Bernard Burke, are :

Ulster.—Az. a cross gules, on an inescutcheon a dexter hand couped also gules.

Leinster.—Vert, an Irish harp or, stringed argent.

Munster.—Azure, three antique crowns or.

Connaught.—Per pale argent and azure. On the dexter a dimidiated eagle, displayed sable ; and on the sinister conjoined therewith at the shoulder a sinister arm embowed proper ; sleeved of the first holding a sword erect, also proper.[1]

The writer wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to the writings of John O'Donovan, and particularly to his translation of 'The Battle of Magh Rath' ; also to O'Curry's 'Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish' ; and to a Paper on 'The Irish Coins of Edward the Fourth,' by Aquilla Smith, Esq., M.D., M.R.I.A., published in the *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. xix. ; to Mac Nevin's 'History of the Volunteers of 1782' ; also to a Paper on 'The Ancient Arms of Ireland,' published by Sylvester O'Halloran, Esq., M.R.I.A.

1 See *Journal, R.S.A.I.*, 1902, p. 416.

APPENDIX

The writer has still further to thank the President, J. R. Garstin, Esq., D.L.,&c., for the following Notes :

It will be well to remember that Sir J. Bernard Burke, Ulster, besides his account of the arms of Ireland, &c., in his ' General Armoury,' 1878, published a fuller discussion of them in the remodelled two-volume edition of his ' Vicissitudes of Families,' i. 124–6, in a note on the race of Niall the Great, whose posterity, he says, had ' exclusively occupied the throne of Ireland for upwards of six hundred years, and whose banner—if any banner can claim the distinction—might be regarded as the national standard of Ireland antecedent to the Anglo-Norman Invasion.' As this book has long been out of print, and Sir Bernard was the highest authority, his note here follows in full :

' It is very difficult to ascertain whether Ireland had any national colour before the advent of the English. I have failed in tracing any such, and I am inclined to think there was not a recognised national standard.

' The various septs were ranged under the banners of their respective chiefs, and when one of these chiefs was elected king, his colour may be considered for the time the national ensign. The *field* " gules " of the O'Brien coat-of-arms would indicate that Brian Boru's banner at Clontarf was " *red.*" Most assuredly, the popular colours in those

days were "crimson," "saffron," and "blue"; "green" was not much in favour; O'Neill did not use it, nor O'Meleaghlin, nor O'Donnell, nor MacCarthy, nor O'Rorke, nor MacMorrough-Kavanagh, nor O'Brien; and these were among the chief Celtic princes, from among whom the kings were chosen. I am not so sure as to the colours of Roderick O'Connor.

'Certain it is, that from the date of the advent of the Strongbowians, the *field* of the national arms, and consequently the national colour, has been *blue*. From the fact that "azure three crowns or" was the coat of augmentation granted by King Richard II (Rot. Pat. 9 Ric. II, m. i. in Latin, which is quoted) to his favourite, Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford, and Marquess of Dublin, when he created him Duke of Ireland, with the lordship and domain thereof; and from the occurrence of the "three crowns" on the old Irish coinage, it may fairly be inferred that that coat-of-arms was the national bearing of Ireland during the Plantagenet era.

'This coat "az. three crowns or" was that of St. Edmund; and it is just possible that the Anglo-Normans, arrayed as they are known to have been under the banner of St. George and St. Edmund, may have introduced the bearings of St. Edmund as the ensigns of the newly acquired country of Ireland. St. Edmund's arms had, indeed, been long employed as part of the Royal insignia. They were borne with those of St. George in the army of King Edward I, and, in conjunction with the Royal

banner, were placed on the turrets of Carlaverock Castle after its capture. (Sir H. Nichols.)

'The three crowns were relinquished for the *harp* as the arms of Ireland by Henry VIII from an apprehension, it is said, lest they might be taken for the Papal tiara; and the *gold* harp on a *blue* field has been, since the time of James I, quartered for Ireland in the Royal achievement.

'There is a very interesting MS., in the handwriting of Sir William Le Neve, still preserved in the Heralds' College, London, on the subject of the adoption of the harp. In it are given the words of dissent of the Earl Marshal, the Earl of Northampton, which are worth quoting:

Sir W^m^ Seagar tould me y^t^ when the comm^rs^ for ye first claymes of King James had determined the harpe to be quartered w^th^ France, Ingland & Scotland, for the armes of Ireland, the Earl of Northampton (Lord H. Howard), in shewing no affection in approving the same, sayd the best reason that I can observe for the bearing thereof is it resembles y^t^ country in being such an instrument y^t^ it requires more cost to keep it in tune than it is worth. *Note:* y^e^ 3 crownes are y^e^ antient armes of Ireland (—the Harp but an antient badge or device of that country—) from whence it came y^t^ Vere, Duke of Ireland, had three crownes w^th^ a border given him in augmentation. In the tyme of Edw. ye 4th a commission being to enquire the arms of Ireland it was returned y^t^ y^e^ 3 crownes were the armes, and these arms I have seene uppon the reverse of old Irish coynes.

'It is thus shown that *azure*, and *azure* only, has been the colour of Ireland since the English Conquest, and it is equally clear that antecedently *green*

was not much in vogue with the great Celtic houses from which the kings of Ireland were chosen.

'At the creation of the Order of St. Patrick, an order instituted as a compliment to the nationality of Ireland, just after 1782 and the Volunteers, when it was the object of the King to gratify the national sensibility of Ireland, the colour selected for the knights was *blue*; the Royal Irish Regiments have their facings generally *blue*, and never *green*, and the uniform of the Irish Brigade in the service of France was *red*. About seventy years ago, when the peerage of Bantry was created, one of the supporters granted was a female figure representing 'Ireland,' viz. a lady robed in *blue*, wearing an ancient crown, and standing in front of a harp.

'From all these circumstances, it would appear that, prior to the Anglo-Norman Invasion, there was not any one colour or banner adopted for Ireland at large. None such is traceable in the old Celtic records or authorities; none handed down by tradition, and none found mentioned in history; and since the introduction of English rule, the national colour, established by and derived from the national arms, has been invariably blue.'

With reference to the use of the colour 'green,' Mr. Garstin also mentions that notices of it will be found in *Notes and Queries*, 9th series, iii. 37; vi. 274, &c. The Knights of St. John of Jerusalem used a green flag. Josephus, in his 'Antiquities' (ed. of 1864, pp. 398, 424), mentions a mysterious organisation in the time

of Augustus, known as 'The Green Band Faction.' See also Gibbon and Hodgkin's 'Invaders of Italy,' v. 434. The use of green can be traced to Delphos. At Nisme, in 1816–8, the Bourbon party wore their cockades embroidered with green.

Dr. Joyce, in his 'Social History of Ancient Ireland' (ii. 190–3), has an interesting section on Colours. He says that though green is at the present day regarded as the national colour, this is a modern innovation, and he adds:

> It is well known that at the Battle of the Boyne, in 1690, the Irish wore little strips of white paper in their caps, while the Williamites wore sprigs of green.

In the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries*, ii. 378–380, there is an Irish poem on the origin of armorial bearings; and in the same journal, 1902, xxxii. 415–417, will be found communications from Bishop Howley, Mr. Burtchaell, and Mr. Vinycomb, giving many memoranda bearing on the subject. The origin of the arms of Connaught has, however, yet to be explained. (See p. 190, *supra*, extract from Harris's 'Ware,' ii. 184.)

The red saltire cross of St. Patrick, which was associated with those of St. George and St. Andrew, to form the flag of the United Kingdom, as recorded in a volume in Ulster's Office, was older than Mr. Vinycomb and other writers supposed, though in Cromwell's time the harp was used to correspond with the two other crosses on the coinage, &c. The old seal of Trinity College, Dublin, found among the archives in Kilkenny Castle, and depicted in 'The

Book of Trinity College,' bears the date 'April, 1593,' and includes, on the two flags surmounting the towers, two crosses—the saltire in question, and that of St. George. The cross of St. Patrick (a saltire gules) was probably derived from the arms of the noble house of FitzGerald, which also suggested the arms of the Bishopric of Kildare.

A very full account of the formation of the Union Flag will be found in the *Times* newspaper of September 30 and October 1 (three columns), 1903.

The arms now assigned to the four provinces (which figure prominently in the O'Connell Monument, and in the badge of our Society) are comparatively modern, having been settled by Sir B. Burke for a grant to the Royal University in 1881; but in Petty's maps and elsewhere earlier variations may be found, though, unlike the arms of Meath, they were not registered in the Irish Office of Arms.

In the Book of Arms, drawn up by Sir David Lindsay, 'of the Mount,' Lion King-of-Arms of Scotland in 1630, which were officially approved by the Privy Council of Scotland, there are coloured representations of the arms of the kings of Christendom, and these include those of 'The Kyng of Yrland,' which show a king seated on a throne, both apparently gold, on a blue shield. The blazon is given as: 'Az. A king seated on throne, or.' These were the arms of the ancient kingdom registered in *Ulster's* Office.

CHAPTER XII

SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF FERNS CATHEDRAL

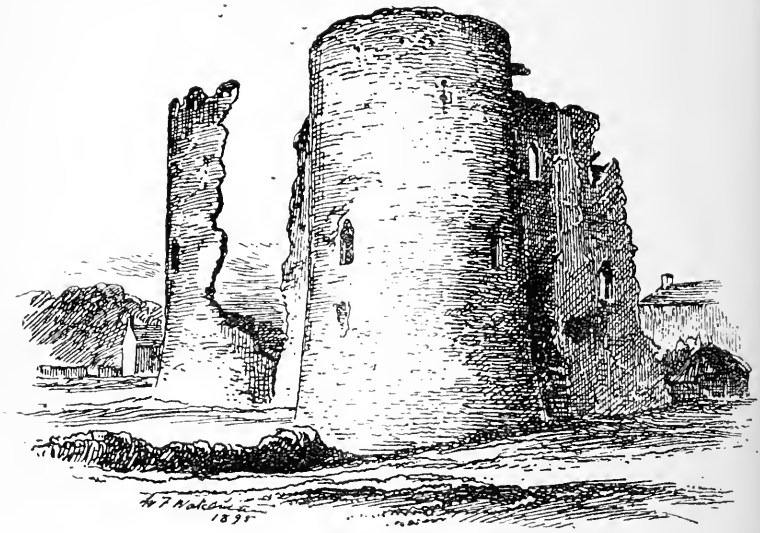
However prosaic and commonplace the little town of Ferns may be, the ruins of its cathedral, its castle, its parish church, and its monastery are sufficient to remind us of its former importance. Ferns of the saints and Ferns of the kings was a provincial seat of government, and the residence of an archbishop before Dublin had well-nigh attained to the dignity of a bishop's see; and much of the history of our country centres around its site.

The old semi-circular graveyard points us back to a time previous to the foundation of the see of Canterbury, when our founding archbishop, known as St. Mœdoc, St. Ædan, and St. Mogue (all of which names may be

rendered in English as St. Hugh), the friend and pupil of the great St. David of Wales, sailed across the channel, and collecting together the scattered Christians and the converts gathered out of the surrounding heathen, formed them into a united church; and when, after a short sojourn at Clonmore, County Wexford, and other places, he threw up his ecclesiastic rath, or fort, at Ferns, for the protection of himself and his followers on the site now occupied by the present graveyard, this location being a portion of land which had been granted to him by our Irish 'Black Prince,' '*Bran Dubh*,' as a thank-offering for the services rendered to him by suggesting a stratagem, or military ruse, which enabled him to successfully resist his enemy, Aedh, son of Ainmire, King of all Ireland. Within this rampart he built his little oratory, probably of wood or wattle-work, to be succeeded in after years by a group of little Celtic churches like those which remain to our own day at Glendalough.

One of these (like Glendalough), larger and more imposing than the others, would be the predecessor of our cathedral; for we read in

the records both of the 'oratory' of Ferns and of the 'oratories' of Ferns. Within these walls lived not only St. Mœdoc, Archbishop of all Leinster, but also his successor,



FERNS CASTLE

an equally celebrated Irish saint and bishop, or archbishop, St. Molling of Ferns, patron of the Clan Kavanagh. A holy well, dedicated to St. Mogue (some say to St. Molling), is situated not far from the cathedral enclosure, and over it a modern stonework dome has

been erected, adorned with heads abstracted from the ancient Celtic church of Clone.

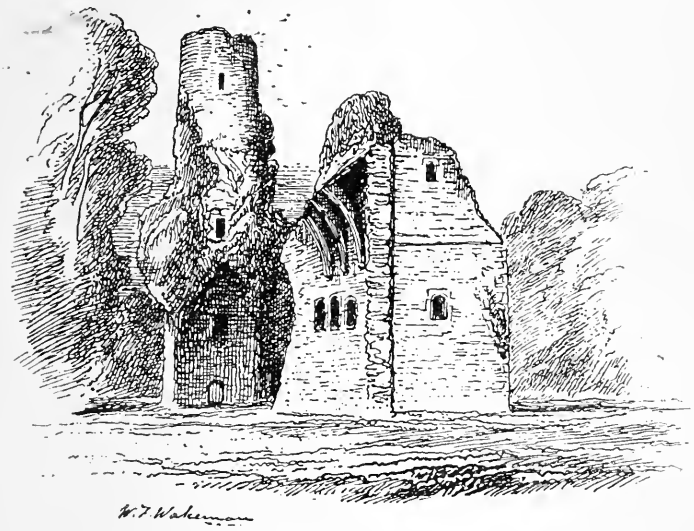
Of this great Archbishop of Ferns we have an interesting monument preserved for us in the Book of Mulling, on which Professor Jackson Lawlor has published such a learned essay, and in which he has discovered 'the only sample of a daily office of the ancient Irish or Scottish church known to exist.' At a time long subsequent, but still well within the Celtic period, was written the celebrated 'Book of Leinster,' which was compiled in the first half of the 12th century by Bishop Finn MacGorman, in accordance with the direction of the tutor of Dermot MacMurrough, the well-known last King of Leinster [in Celtic times] who resided at Ferns, and which, like the Book of Mulling, is now one of the literary treasures preserved in Trinity College, Dublin. In fact, the principal remains of Celtic Ferns, with the exception of the Celtic crosses (one of which is supposed to mark the grave of King Dermot), are literary; for although we would desire to speak of the tomb of St. Mœdoc with all respect, we must place it well within the Norman period.

The tomb itself is a very fine one, and has resting upon it a nicely carved full-length figure of a well-set-up Norman Bishop. That eminent antiquary, the late Herbert Hore, believed it to be the tomb of Richard of Northampton, who had been secretary to the Prime Minister of England, and was interred in the Cathedral of Ferns A.D. 1303. Yet it is quite possible that in the course of the many convulsions through which Ferns passed, the tomb of this Norman bishop may have been removed from its own resting-place and placed over the grave of the founding bishop of the diocese, whose remains may have been buried at some period in the crypt underneath.

The little parish church, which is in the rectory lawn, is a late Celtic or Romanesque building. Within the cathedral enclosure the Normans found nothing but ruins; for in 1166 King Dermot MacMurrough burned down the whole place as a precaution lest the Connaught men might burn it.

The monastery of King Dermot's own foundation was without the cathedral enclosure. These Normans were mighty builders

and introduced into Ireland the Gothic or Early Pointed style of architecture. In it (making use, doubtless, of the materials of the old oratories, not a vestige of which



FERNS MONASTERY

now exists) they constructed a fine Gothic church, and the ruins of some of its graceful Gothic windows still remain to show that at one time a building stood there that was worthy of the ancient reputation that attaches to an honoured site; but before that church

was built the most gorgeous pageant that ever took place in Ferns must have been witnessed within that cathedral enclosure, when the conquering Earl Strongbow and the Princess Eva came there, with all their retinue, to wed the earl's daughter to Robert de Quency. And here, in the presence of Norman knights clad in glistening coats of mail and Irish nobles in their bright tunics adorned with that wealth of colour that was esteemed suitable to princely rank, wearing fringed cloaks fastened on the right breast with brooches of gold, the wedding took place; when the ceremony was over, Strongbow endowed the bridegroom with the lands called 'The Duffry,' and conferred on him the office and dignity of Constable of Leinster. The old record tells us that he handed him the standard and banner of his office in the presence of all the baronage. Here from time to time knelt in prayer not only Irish kings and princes, but all that was great and noble among the Norman knights, such as the Lord de Prendergast (grandson of the chivalrous Sir Maurice de Prendergast), who married the heiress of the Constable of Leinster. Here

were seen the noble Earls-Marshal of England, Lords of Pembroke, well known if it was only for the tenacity with which they held on to the church lands claimed by the bishops until the last of the race passed away and the family became extinct. Here also scions of the noble house of Fitzgerald kept watch and ward in that fine old Norman castle which dominates the valley in which the cathedral stands, and which doubtless was erected on the site of the Celtic dun or fort where Dermot and the Princess Dervorgilla, wife of O'Rourke, Prince of Briefne, kept their court; but shortly after the Norman invasion the palmy days of Ferns may be said to have passed away; for although in the olden time it had been subject to periodical raids made by the Danes, that may be said to have been as nothing compared with the unrest of the Norman period of occupation.

The Normans could conquer, but they proved unable to hold. There was no steadiness or continuity in the government they set up. To-day, Bishop Charnells was heading his retainers against the Irish clans and routing them with great slaughter. To-morrow, the

war cries of the clans of the Kavanaghs, the O'Byrnes, and O'Tooles rang through the streets, and the townsmen and ecclesiastics withdrew to a more peaceful neighbourhood. Neglect and decay followed. The district was held for lengthened periods by the chieftains of the Kavanaghs, nominally as constables for the king, but really as independent princes—so very independent that the king found it necessary to pay them blackmail, which was called 'MacMurrough's black penny,' to keep them quiet.

In the reign of Queen Elizabeth the O'Byrnes burnt the cathedral down, and in 1577 an Order in Council was passed commanding them to rebuild it. This they seem to have partly attempted to do, as Bishop Ram tells us that there was an 'ile' of the Cathedral Church 'builded,' 'wherein Divine Service is duely celebrated.' This aisle was subsequently partly rebuilt and restored in 1816, and an effort to rescue it from the degradation of 'carpenter's Gothic' and the barbarous square pews of the Georgian period was afterwards made. It is also hoped that the mother church of the diocese may now be

considered in some respects an object-lesson of ecclesiastical order to its daughter churches. The present status of the building is defined by an Act of Parliament passed in the year 1781, giving permission for the cathedral to be used for parish or parochial purposes, as the parish church had become a ruin, and at the same time 'saving to the Lord Bishop of Ferns and his successors, and to the Dean and Chapter of said Cathedral and their successors, their several and respective and distinct rights, and privileges, and immunities, in said Cathedral, anything in this Act contained to the contrary thereof in anywise notwithstanding.' So interesting do strangers consider this relic of the past and the antiquarian remains contained in and around it, that one of the first subscribers to the restoration fund was the editor of the *Ulster Journal of Archæology*, who, although his fellow-townsmen were straining every effort to build a cathedral for Belfast, felt that he could not allow such an excellent object of church improvement to pass by unaided.

Of the history of the Chapter of Ferns but

little worthy of record remains to be told. From the Vatican registers we learn that Reginald, Archdeacon of Ferns, obtained a licence from Honorius III (A.D. 1223) admitting the validity of certain ecclesiastical acts done by him. This same Reginald was witness to a grant of lands made by John St. John, the first Norman Bishop of Ferns, to the Abbey of Douske, or Vale St. Saviours; as was also Geffry St. John, Official of Ferns, who became the next Bishop of Ferns. In A.D. 1252 we find a mandate to the Bishop and Chapter of Ferns to give a canonry to Richard, called Chancellor of their diocese. This, doubtless, was to be held along with his dignity of Chancellor. In A.D. 1325 there was an 'Indult' issued to Master Geoffrey, Precentor of Ferns, to enjoy the dispensation, hitherto without effect, granted to him by the Archbishop of Dublin, to hold an additional benefice provided he reside thereon. In 1286 an Indult was issued to Master John de Stanford, 'Dean of Dublin,' who obtained first the Treasurership of Ferns, and then the parish church of Cavendish, in the diocese of Norwich. These documents provide us

with names of the earliest holders of these offices known to us, and show that the diocese of Ferns had a properly constituted Chapter at an early date.

Note.—Authorities quoted in this chapter: 'The Annals of the Four Masters'; Lanigan's 'Ecclesiastical History of Ireland'; 'The Song of Dermot and the Earl,' translated by Goddart Orpen, &c., &c

APPENDIX

TO CHAPTERS I, II, III, AND VII

Prehistoric Religion.—In the *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. xxx. sec. c. no. 2, p. 57, Major R. G. Berry, A.S.C., tells us on the authority of Dr. O'Gorman, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Sierra Leone (writing of the cannibals of that region): 'All the Mendi-speaking people have individualised the Creator. It is he who has made the world, themselves and everything in it. They consider him good and beneficent and give to him an attribute of aloofness. He does not now trouble much with the earth and its inhabitants, but he is all-powerful. He does not act direct, he tells some spirit or devil to do it': so that their practical worship is the worship of devils, whom they greatly fear.

Ancestor Worship.—On page 59 the same writer tells us: 'Ancestor worship prevails as much in Africa as in China.'

Totemism.—There are relics of totemism among the Mendi, some of the people claiming to belong to the bird family, others to the fish and leopard families, and others again to vegetable families; and

none will eat objects which are of or represent these families in the animal or vegetable world.

Earth Houses.—On page 26 we are told that during the troubles in the Soudan the troops were subject to constant annoyance from a mysterious enemy who appeared from nowhere and as mysteriously disappeared. On being pursued by some British officers, it was found that they disappeared down holes, the ground being honeycombed with them like a rabbit-warren. On being entered it was found that the holes led into passages and these into galleries and chambers until quite a city was revealed.

(*Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, published May 4th, 1912.)

THE END

PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO. LTD., COLCHESTER
LONDON AND ETON

CELTIC LITERATURE, FOLK LORE ETC.

PRIMITIVE PATERNITY. The Myth of Supernatural Birth in Relation to the History of the Family. By E. S. HARTLAND, F.S.A. 2 vols. 18*s.* net.

"The book is certainly a most interesting contribution to the study both of primitive culture and folk-lore."—*Scotsman.*

CELTIC LITERATURE. By MATTHEW ARNOLD. With Preface and Notes by Mr. ALFRED NUTT. 3*s.* 6*d.* net.

Mr. Nutt, who admires the essay enormously, has done it the great service of stating fully the circumstances in which it was written, and of correcting in footnotes those errors either of fact or impression which the great improvement of Celtic scholarship has laid open to detection.

THREE MIDDLE ENGLISH ROMANCES. By LAURA HIBBARD. Uniform with the Arthurian Romance Series. 2*s.* net.

MONUMENTA HISTORICA CELTICA. By W. DINAN. A Collection of references to the Celts in classical authors. 2 vols. Demy 8vo. Vol. I. 15*s.* net.

POPULAR STUDIES No. 3.—OSSIAN AND OSSIANIC LITERATURE. By ALFRED NUTT. New Edition. 6*d.* net.

CULTS, MYTHS AND RELIGIONS. By S. REINACH. Translated by Miss ELIZABETH FROST. [*In Preparation.*

FOLK-TALES AND LEGENDS OF THE SANTAL PARGANAS. Collected by the Rev. D. BODDING, and translated by C. H. BOMPAS, Indian Civil Service. Demy 8vo. Cloth. Upwards of 400 pp. 10*s.* 6*d.* net.

"The stories make delightful reading, and there is much instruction mingled with the delight."—*Expository Times.*

EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL. By the Rev. E. S. BUCHANAN. [*In Preparation.*

THOUGHTS ON ULTIMATE PROBLEMS. By F. W. FRANKLAND. Fifth and revised edition. Crown 8vo. Price 1*s.* 6*d.* net. A series of short studies on theological and metaphysical subjects.

THE BOOK OF RUTH. By the Rev. R. H. J. STEUART, S.J. Crown 8vo. Bound. 3*s.* 6*d.* net. A literal translation from the Hebrew.

THE SCIENCE OF THE SCIENCES, constituting a new system of the universe, which solves great ultimate problems. By H. JAMYN BROOKS. Probable price, 3*s.* 6*d.* to 5*s.* [*In Preparation.*

THE EUCHARIST. A study by AMY BROOKS. Demy 8vo. Price 6*d.* net.

DAVID NUTT, 17 GRAPE STREET, NEW OXFORD STREET.

IRISH TEXTS SOCIETY.

INEDITED IRISH TEXTS WITH ACCOMPANYING ENGLISH VERSION, NOTES AND INTRODUCTION.

Demy 8vo. cloth.

VOL. I.—**THE ADVENTURES OF THE LAD OF THE FERULE.** The Adventures of the Children of the King of Norway. Two Irish Romantic Tales of the 16th and 17th Centuries, edited and translated for the first time by DOUGLAS HYDE, LL.D., with Introduction, Notes and Glossary. 1899. xvi-176 pp. [*Out of Print.*

VOL. II.—**FLED BRICREND; THE FEAST OF BRICRIU.** An early Gaelic Saga, edited, with Translation, Introduction and Notes by GEORGE HENDERSON, M.A., Ph.D. 1899. lxvii-209 pp. [*Out of Print.*

VOL. III.—**THE POETICAL WORKS OF EOGAN O'RAHILLY.** For the first time edited, with accompanying English version, Introduction, Notes and Glossary by the Rev. Father DINEEN, S.J. 1900. lxiii-304 pp. [*Out of Print.*

VOL. IV.—**HISTORY OF IRELAND.** By GEOFFREY KEATING. Edited by DAVID COMYN. Vol. I. 1901. 10*s.* 6*d.* net.

VOL. V.—**THE MARTIAL CAREER OF CONGHAL CLAIRINGHNEACH.** Edited for the first time, with Translation, Introduction, Notes, and Glossary, by P. MACSWEENEY, M.A. 1902. lxviii-233 pp. 10*s.* 6*d.* net.

VOL. VI.—**THE IRISH AENEID.** Printed for the first time from fourteenth century MSS., and Translated by the Rev. J. CALDER. With Introduction, Notes, Glossary. 1903. 10*s.* 6*d.* net.

VOL. VII.—**DUANAIRE FINN.** The Book of the Lays of Fionn. Irish Text with Translation into English, by JOHN MACNEILL. Part I. Demy 8vo. lxv-208 pp. 10*s.* 6*d.* net.

Mr. MacNeill's Introduction is a most valuable contribution to the elucidation of the "origines" of the Ossianic cycle and to the criticism of Irish romantic history of the third century A.D.

VOLS. VIII. and IX.—**KEATING'S HISTORY OF IRELAND.** Vols. II. and III. 10*s.* 6*d.* each net.

VOL. X.—**THE STORY OF THE CROP-EARED DOG. THE STORY OF EAGLE BOY.** Two Irish Arthurian Romances. Edited and Translated by R. A. STEWART MACALISTES. ix-204 pp. 10*s.* 6*d.* net.

VOL. XI.—**THE POEMS OF DAVID O'BRUADAIR.** Part I. Containing poems down to the year 1666. Edited with Introduction, Translation and Notes by the Rev. JOHN L. C. MACERLEAN, S.J. 206 pp. 10*s.* 6*d.* net.

VOL. XII.—Reprint of Vol. III. Revised and Enlarged. 10*s.* 6*d.* net.

Catalogue on application.

DAVID NUTT, 17 GRAPE STREET, NEW OXFORD STREET.