Gildas Bandonicus, a British [i.e. Celtic] monk, lived in the 6th century. In the 540s - in the most aggressive language - he set out to denounce the wickedness of his times. He ended up being the only substantial source which survives from the time of the Anglo-Saxon conquest of Britain, and the best source before the much more impressive work of the Venerable Bede [who completed his Ecclesiastical History of the English People almost 200 years later in 731]. At any event, the Anglo-Saxons began arriving in the 470s, perhaps imported as soldiers as Gildas suggests. For some time the British fought back [the historic basis of the Arthurian myth], but by 600 the Anglo-Saxons had control of most of what becomes 'England', and the Celtic peoples were pushed to the hills of Wales and Scotland and across the English Channel to "Brittany".

Chapter 23.

Then all the councillors, together with that proud tyrant Gurthrigern [Vortigern], the British king, were so blinded, that, as a protection to their country, they sealed its doom by inviting in among them (like wolves into the sheep-fold), the fierce and impious Saxons, a race hateful both to God and men, to repel the invasions of the northern nations. Nothing was ever so pernicious to our country, nothing was ever so unlucky. What palpable darkness must have enveloped their minds--darkness desperate and cruel! Those very people whom, when absent, they dreaded more than death itself, were invited to reside, as one may say, under the same roof. Foolish are the princes, as it is said, of Thafneos, giving counsel to unwise Pharaoh. A multitude of whelps came forth from the lair of this barbaric lioness, in three cyuls, as they call them, that is, in three ships of war, with their sails wafted by the wind and with omens and prophecies favourable, for it was foretold by a certain soothsayer among them, that they should occupy the country to which they were sailing three hundred years, and half of that time, a hundred and fifty years, should plunder and despoil the same. They first landed on the eastern side of the island, by the invitation of the unlucky king, and there fixed their sharp talons, apparently to fight in favour of the island, but alas! more truly against it. Their mother-land, finding her first brood thus successful, sends forth a larger company of her wolfish offspring, which sailing over, join themselves to their bastard-born comrades. From that time the germ of iniquity and the root of contention planted their poison amongst us, as we deserved, and shot forth into leaves and branches. The barbarians being thus introduced as soldiers into the island, to encounter, as they falsely said, any dangers in defence of their hospitable entertainers, obtain an allowance of provisions, which, for some time being plentifully bestowed, stopped their doggish mouths. Yet they complain that their monthly supplies are not furnished in sufficient abundance, and they industriously aggravate each occasion of quarrel, saying that unless more liberality is shown them, they will break the treaty and plunder the whole island. In a short time, they follow up their threats with deeds.

Chapter 24.

For the fire of vengeance, justly kindled by former crimes, spread from sea to sea, fed by the hands of our foes in the east, and did not cease, until, destroying the neighbouring towns and lands, it reached the other side of the island, and dipped its red and savage tongue in the western ocean. In these assaults, therefore, not unlike that of the Assyrian upon Judea, was fulfilled in our case what the prophet describes in words of lamentation: "They have burned with fire the sanctuary; they have polluted on earth the tabernacle of thy
name." And again, "O God, the gentiles have come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled," &c. So that all the columns were levelled with the ground by the frequent strokes of the battering-ram, all the husbandmen routed, together with their bishops, priests, and people, whilst the sword gleamed, and the flames cracked around them on every side. Lamentable to behold, in the midst of the streets lay the tops of lofty towers, tumbled to the ground, stones of high walls, holy altars, fragments of human bodies, covered with livid clots of coagulated blood, looking as if they had been squeezed together in a press; and with no chance of being buried, save in the ruins of the houses, or in the ravening bellies of wild beasts and birds; with reverence be it spoken for their blessed souls, if, indeed, there were many found who were carried, at that time, into the high heaven by the holy angels. So entirely had the vintage, once so fine, degenerated and become bitter, that, in the words of the prophet, there was hardly a grape or ear of corn to be seen where the husbandman had turned his back.

Chapter 25.

Some, therefore, of the miserable remnant, being taken in the mountains, were murdered in great numbers; others, constrained by famine, came and yielded themselves to be slaves for ever to their foes, running the risk of being instantly slain, which truly was the greatest favour that could be offered them: some others passed beyond the seas with loud lamentations instead of the voice of exhortation. "Thou hast given us as sheep to be slaughtered, and among the Gentiles hast thou dispersed us." Others, committing the safeguard of their lives, which were in continual jeopardy, to the mountains, precipes, thickly wooded forests, and to the rocks of the seas (albeit with trembling hearts), remained still in their country. But in the meanwhile, an opportunity happening, when these most cruel robbers were returned home, the poor remnants of our nation (to whom flocked from divers places round about our miserable countrymen as fast as bees to their hives, for fear of an ensuing storm), being strengthened by God, calling upon him with all their hearts, as the poet says,—

"With their unnumbered vows they burden heaven,"

that they might not be brought to utter destruction, took arms under the conduct of Ambrosius Aurelianus, a modest man, who of all the Roman nation was then alone in the confusion of this troubled period by chance left alive. His parents, who for their merit were adorned with the purple, had been slain in these same broils, and now his progeny in these our days, although shamefully degenerated from the worthiness of their ancestors, provoke to battle their cruel conquerors, and by the goodness of our Lord obtain the victory.

Chapter 26.

After this, sometimes our countrymen, sometimes the enemy, won the field, to the end that our Lord might in this land try after his accustomed manner these his Israelites, whether they loved him or not, until the year of the siege of Mount Badon [Note: Giles translates "Badonici montis" as "of Bath-hill"], when took place also the last almost, though not the least slaughter of our cruel foes, which was (as I am sure) forty-four years and one month after the landing of the Saxons, and also the time of my own nativity. And yet neither to this day are the cities of our country inhabited as before, but being forsaken and overthrown, still lie desolate; our foreign wars having ceased, but our civil troubles still remaining. For as well the remembrance of such a terrible desolation of the island, as also of the unexpected recovery of the same, remained in the minds of those who were eyewitnesses of the wonderful events of both, and in regard thereof, kings, public magistrates, and private persons, with priests and clergymen, did all and every one of them live orderly according to their several vocations. But when these had departed out of this world, and a new race succeeded, who were ignorant of this troublesome time, and had only experience of the present prosperity, all the laws of truth and justice were so shaken and subverted, that not so much as a vestige or remembrance of these virtues remained among the above-named orders of men, except among a very few who, compared with the great multitude which were daily rushing headlong down to hell, are accounted so small a number, that our reverend mother, the church, scarcely beholds them, her only true children, reposing in her bosom; whose worthy lives, being a pattern to all men, and beloved of God, inasmuch as by their holy prayers, as by certain pillars and most profitable supporters, our infirmity is sustained up, that it may not utterly be broken down, I would have no one suppose I intended to reprove, if forced by the increasing multitude of offences, I have freely, aye, with anguish, not so much declared as bewailed the wickedness of those who are become servants, not only to their bellies, but also to the devil rather than to Christ, who is our blessed God, world without end.
For why shall their countrymen conceal what foreign nations round about now not only know, but also continually are casting in their teeth?

Most of the Translation is from: Six Old English Chronicles. Ed. J. A. Giles. London: Henry G. Bohn, 1848.)

Two chapters were translated by Alan Lupack [ALPK@db1.cc.rochester.edu] for the Camelot Project (referenced in the main Sourcebook index), and where this text, along with many others referring to Arthurian themes, is available.

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Medieval Sourcebook:
The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel, c 1100

Translation: Whitely Stokes

Introductory Note

The vast and interesting epic literature of Ireland has remained, for the most part, inaccessible to English readers until these last sixty years. In 1853, Nicholas O’Kearney published the Irish text and an English translation of “The Battle of Gabra,” and since that date the volume of printed texts and English versions has steadily increased. Now there lies open to the ordinary reader a considerable mass of material illustrating the imaginative life of medieval Ireland.

Of these Irish epic tales, “The Destruction of Da Derga’s Hostel” is a specimen of remarkable beauty and power. The primitive aspects of the story are made evident in the way that the plot turns upon the disasters that follow on the violation of taboos, by the monstrous nature of many of the warriors, and by the absence of any attempt to explain the beliefs implied or the marvels related in it. The powers and achievements of the heroes are fantastic and extraordinary beyond description. The natural and extra-natural constantly mingle, yet nowhere does the narrator express surprise. The technical method of the tale, too, is curiously and almost mechanically symmetrical, after the manner of savage art. Both description and narration are marked by a high degree of freshness and vividness.

The following translation is, with slight modification, that of Dr. Whitley Stokes, from a text constructed by him on the basis of eight manuscripts, the oldest going back to about 1100 A.D. The story itself is, without doubt, from several centuries earlier and belongs to the oldest group of extant Irish sagas.

Part I

There was a famous and noble king over Erin, named Eochaid Feidlech. Once upon a time he came over the fairgreen of Bri Leith, and he saw at the edge of a well a woman with a bright comb of silver adorned with gold, washing in a silver basin wherein were four golden birds and little, bright gems of purple carbuncle in the rims of the basin. A mantle she had, curly and purple, a beautiful cloak, and in the mantle silvery fringes arranged, and a brooch of fairest gold. A kirtle she wore, long, hooded, hard-smooth, of green silk, with red embroidery of gold. Marvellous clasps of gold and silver in the kirtle on her breasts and her shoulders and spaulds on every side. The sun kept shining upon her, so that the glistening of the gold against the sun from the green silk was manifest to men. On her head were two golden-yellow tresses, in each of which was a plait of four locks, with a bead at the point of each lock. The hue of that hair seemed to them like the flower of the iris in summer, or like red gold after the burnishing thereof.

There she was, undoing her hair to wash it, with her arms out through the sleeve-holes of her smock. White as the snow of one night were the two hands, soft and even, and red as foxglove were the two clear-beautiful cheeks. Dark as the back of a stag-beetle the two eyebrows. Like a shower of pearls were the teeth in her head. Blue as a hyacinth were the eyes. Red as rowan-bERRIES the lips. Very high, smooth and soft-white the shoulders. Clear-white and lengthy the fingers. Long were the hands. White as the foam of a wave was the flank, slender, long, tender, smooth, soft as wool. Polished and warm, sleek and white were the two thighs. Round and small, hard and white the two knees. Short and white and rulerstraight the two shins. Justly straight and beautiful the two heels. If a measure were put on the feet it would hardly have
found them unequal, unless the flesh of the coverings should grow upon them. The bright radiance of the moon was in her noble face: the loftiness of pride in her smooth eyebrows: the light of wooing in each of her regal eyes. A dimple of delight in each of her cheeks, with a dappling (?) in them, at one time, of purple spots with redness of a calf's blood, and at another with the bright lustre of snow. Soft womanly dignity in her voice; a step steady and slow she had: a queenly gait was hers. Verily, of the world's women 'twas she was the dearest and loveliest and justest that the eyes of men had ever beheld. It seemed to King Eochaid and his followers that she was from the elfmounds. Of her was said: "Shapely are all till compared with Etain," "Dear are all till compared with Etain."

A longing for her straightway seized the king; so he sent forward a man of his people to detain her. The king asked tidings of her and said, while announcing himself: "Shall I have an hour of dalliance with thee?"

"'Tis for that we have come hither under thy safeguard," quoth she.

"Query, whence art thou and whence hast thou come?" says Eochaid.

"Easy to say," quoth she. "Etain am I, daughter of Etar, king of the cavalcade from the elfmounds. I have been here for twenty years since I was born in an elfmound. The men of the elfmound, both kings and nobles, have been wooing me: but nought was gotten from me, because ever since I was able to speak, I have loved thee and given thee a child's love for the high tales about thee and thy splendour. And though I had never seen thee, I knew thee at once from thy description: it is thou, then, I have reached."

"No 'seeking of an ill friend afar' shall be thine," says Eochaid. "Thou shalt have welcome, and for thee every other woman shall be left by me, and with thee alone will I live so long as thou hast honour."

"My proper bride-price to me!" she says, "and afterwards my desire."

"Thou shalt have both," says Eochaid.

Seven cumals1 are given to her.

[Footnote 1: i.e., twenty-one cows.]

Then the king, even Eochaid Feidlech, dies, leaving one daughter named, like her mother, Etain, and wedded to Cormac, king of Ulaid.

After the end of a time Cormac, king of Ulaid, "the man of the three gifts," forsakes Eochaid's daughter, because she was barren save for one daughter that she had borne to Cormac after the making of the pottage which her mother - the woman from the elfmounds gave her. Then she said to her mother: "Bad is what thou hast given me: it will be a daughter that I shall bear."

"That will not be good," says her mother; "a king's pursuit will be on her."

Then Cormac weds again his wife, even Etain, and this was his desire, that the daughter of the woman who had before been abandoned [i. e. his own daughter] should be killed. So Cormac would not leave the girl to her mother to be nursed. Then his two thralls take her to a pit, and she smiles a laughing smile at them as they were putting her into it. Then their kindly nature came to them. They carry her into the calfshed of the cowherds of Etirscel, great-grandson of Iar, king of Tara, and they fostered her till she became a good embroideress; and there was not in Ireland a king's daughter dearer than she.

A fenced house of wickerwork was made by the thralls for her, without any door, but only a window and a skylight. King Etercel's folk espy that house and suppose that it was food the cowherds kept there. But one of them went and looked through the skylight, and he saw in the house the dearest, beautifullest maiden! This is told to the king, and straightway he sends his people to break the house and carry her off without asking the cowherds. For the king was childless, and it had been prophesied to him by his wizards that a woman of unknown race would bear him a son.

Then said the king: "This is the woman that has been prophesied to me!"

Now while she was there next morning she saw a Bird on the skylight coming to her, and he leaves his birdskin on the floor of the house, and went to her, and possessed her, and said: "They are coming to thee from the king to wreck thy house and to bring thee to him perforce. And thou wilt be pregnant by me, and bear a son, and that son must not kill birds.2 And 'Conaire, son of Mess Buachalla' shall be his name," for hers
was Mess Buachalla, 'the Cowherds' fosterchild."

[Footnote 2: This passage indicates the existence in Ireland of totems, and of the rule that the person to whom a totem belongs must not kill the totem-animal. - W.S.]

And then she was brought to the king, and with her went her fosterers, and she was betrothed to the king, and he gave her seven cumals and to her fosterers seven other cumals. And afterwards they were made chieftains, so that they all became legitimate, whence are the two Fedlimthi Rechtai. And then she bore a son to the king, even Conaire son of Mess Buachalla, and these were her three urgent prayers to the king, to wit, the nursing of her son among three households, that is, the fosterers who had nurtured her, and the two Honeyworded Maines, and she herself is the third; and she said that such of the men of Erin as should wish to do aught for this boy should give to those three households for the boy's protection.

So in that wise he was reared, and the men of Erin straightway knew this boy on the day he was born. And other boys were fostered with him, to wit, Fer Le and Fer Gar and Fer Rogein, three great-grandsons of Donn Desa the champion, an army-man of the army from Muc-lesi.

Now Conaire possessed three gifts, to wit, the gift of hearing and the gift of eyesight and the gift of judgment; and of those three gifts he taught one to each of his three fosterbrothers. And whatever meal was prepared for him, the four of them would go to it. Even though three meals were prepared for him each of them would go to his meal. The same raiment and armour and colour of horses had the four.

Then the king, even Eterscel, died. A bull-feast is gathered by the men of Erin, in order to determine their future king; that is, a bull used to be killed by them and thereof one man would eat his fill and drink its broth, and a spell of truth was chanted over him in his bed. Whosoever he would see in his sleep would be king, and the sleeper would perish if he uttered a falsehood.

Four men in chariots were on the Plain of Liffey at their game, Conaire himself and his three fosterbrothers. Then his fosterers went to him that he might repair to the bullfeast. The bull-feaster, then in his sleep, at the end of the night beheld a man stark-naked, passing along the road of Tara, with a stone in his sling.

"I will go in the morning after you," quoth he.

He left his fosterbrothers at their game, and turned his chariot and his charioteer until he was in Dublin. There he saw great, white-speckled birds, of unusual size and colour and beauty. He pursues them until his horses were tired. The birds would go a spearcast before him, and would not go any further. He alighted, and takes his sling for them out of the chariot. He goes after them until he was at the sea. The birds betake themselves to the wave. He went to them and overcame them. The birds quit their birdskins, and turn upon him with spears and swords. One of them protects him, and addressed him, saying: "I am Nemglan, king of thy father's birds; and thou hast been forbidden to cast at birds, for here there is no one that should not be dear to thee because of his father or mother."

"Till today," says Conaire, "I knew not this."

"Go to Tara tonight," says Nemglan; "'tis fittest for thee. A bull feast is there, and through it thou shalt be king. A man stark-naked, who shall go at the end of the night along one of the roads of Tara, having a stone and a sling - 'tis he that shall be king."

So in this wise Conaire fared forth; and on each of the four roads whereby men go to Tara there were three kings awaiting him, and they had raiment for him, since it had been foretold that he would come stark-naked. Then he was seen from the road on which his fosterers were, and they put royal raiment about him, and placed him in a chariot, and he bound his pledges.

The folk of Tara said to him: "It seems to us that our bullfeast and our spell of truth are a failure, if it be only a young, beardless lad that we have visioned therein."

"That is of no moment," quoth he. "For a young, generous king like me to be in the kingship is no disgrace, since the binding of Tara's pledges is mine by right of father and grandsire."

"Excellent! excellent!" says the host. They set the kingship of Erin upon him. And he said: "I will enquire of wise men that I myself may be wise."

Then he uttered all this as he had been taught by the man at the wave, who said this to him: "Thy reign will
be subject to a restriction, but the bird-reign will be noble, and this shall be thy restriction, i.e. thy tabu.

"Thou shalt not go righthandwise round Tara and lefthandwise round Bregia.

"The evil-beasts of Cerna must not be hunted by thee.

"And thou shalt not go out every ninth night beyond Tara.

"Thou shalt not sleep in a house from which firelight is manifest outside, after sunset, and in which light is manifest from without.

"And three Reds shall not go before thee to Red's house.

"And no rapine shall be wrought in thy reign.

"And after sunset a company of one woman or one man shall not enter the house in which thou art.

"And thou shalt not settle the quarrel of thy two thralls.

Now there were in his reign great bounties, to wit, seven ships in every June in every year arriving at Inver Colptha, and oakmast up to the knees in every autumn, and plenty of fish in the rivers Bush and Boyne in the June of each year, and such abundance of good will that no one slew another in Erin during his reign. And to every one in Erin his fellow's voice seemed as sweet as the strings of lutes. From mid-spring to mid-autumn no wind disturbed a cow's tail. His reign was neither thunderous nor stormy.

[Footnote 3: The mouth of the river Boyne. - W.S.]

Now his fosterbrothers murmured at the taking from them of their father's and their grandsire's gifts, namely Theft and Robbery and Slaughter of men and Rapine. They thieved the three thefts from the same man, to wit, a swine and an ox and a cow, every year, that they might see what punishment therefor the king would inflict upon them, and what damage the theft in his reign would cause to the king.

Now every year the farmer would come to the king to complain, and the king would say to him. "Go thou and address Donn Desa's three great grandsons, for 'tis they that have taken the beasts." Whenever he went to speak to Donn Desa's descendants they would almost kill him, and he would not return to the king lest Conaire should attend his hurt.

Since, then, pride and wilfulness possessed them, they took to marauding, surrounded by the sons of the lords of the men of Erin. Thrice fifty men had they as pupils when they (the pupils) were were-wolfin the province of Connaught, until Maine Miliscothach's swineherd saw them, and he had never seen that before. He went in flight. When they heard him they pursued him. The swineherd shouted, and the people of the two Maines came to him, and the thrice fifty men were arrested, along with their auxiliaries, and taken to Tara. They consulted the king concerning the matter, and he said: "Let each (father) slay his son, but let my fosterlings be spared."

"Leave, leave!" says every one: "it shall be done for thee."

"Nay indeed," quoth he; "no 'cast of life' by me is the doom I have delivered. The men shall not be hung; but let veterans go with them that they may wreak their rapine on the men of Alba."

This they do. Thence they put to sea and met the son of the king of Britain, even Ingcel the One-eyed, grandson of Conmac: thrice fifty men and their veterans they met upon the sea.

They make an alliance, and go with Ingcel and wrought rapine with him.

This is the destruction which his own impulse gave him. That was the night that his mother and his father and his seven brothers had been bidden to the house of the king of his district. All of them were destroyed by Ingcel in a single night. Then the Irish pirates put out to sea to the land of Erin to seek a destruction as payment for that to which Ingcel had been entitled from them.

In Conaire's reign there was perfect peace in Erin, save that in Thomond there was a joining of battle between the two Carbres. Two fosterbrothers of his were they. And until Conaire came it was impossible to make peace between them. 'Twas a tabu of his to go to separate them before they had repaired to him. He
went, however, although to do so was one of his tabus, and he made peace between them. He remained five nights with each of the two. That also was a tabu of his.

After settling the two quarrels, he was travelling to Tara. This is the way they took to Tara, past Usnech of Meath; and they saw the raiding from east and west, and from south and north, and they saw the warbands and the hosts, and the men stark-naked; and the land of the southern O'Neills was a cloud of fire around him.

"What is this?" asked Conaire. "Easy to say," his people answer. "Easy to know that the king's law has broken down therein, since the country has begun to burn."

"Whither shall we betake ourselves?" says Conaire.

"To the Northeast," says his people.

So then they went righthandwise round Tara, and lefthandwise round Bregia, and the evil beasts of Cerna were hunted by him. But he saw it not till the chase had ended.

They that made of the world that smoky mist of magic were elves, and they did so because Conaire's tabus had been violated.

Great fear then fell on Conaire because they had no way to wend save upon the Road of Midluachair and the Road of Cualu.

So they took their way by the coast of Ireland southward.

Then said Conaire on the Road of Cualu: "whither shall we go tonight?"

"May I succeed in telling thee! my fostering Conaire," says Mac cecht, son of Snade Teiched, the champion of Conaire, son of Eterscel. "Oftener have the men of Erin been contending for thee every night than thou hast been wandering about for a guesthouse."

"Judgment goes with good times," says Conaire. "I had a friend in this country, if only we knew the way to his house!"

"What is his name?" asked Mac cecht.

"Da Derga of Leinster," answered Conaire. "He came unto me to seek a gift from me, and he did not come with a refusal. I gave him a hundred kine of the drove. I gave him a hundred fattened swine. I gave him a hundred mantles made of close cloth. I gave him a hundred blue-coloured weapons of battle. I gave him ten red, gilded brooches. I gave him ten vats good and brown. I gave him ten thralls. I gave him ten querns. I gave him thrice nine hounds all-white in their silver chains. I gave him a hundred race-horses in the herds of deer. There would be no abatement in his case though he should come again. He would make return. It is strange if he is surly to me tonight when reaching his abode."

"When I was acquainted with his house," says Mac cecht, "the road whereon thou art going towards him was the boundary of his abode. It continues till it enters his house, for through the house passes the road. There are seven doorways into the house, and seven bedrooms between every two doorways; but there is only one doorvalve on it, and that valve is turned to every doorway to which the wind blows."

"With all that thou hast here," says Conaire, "thou shalt go in thy great multitude until thou alight in the midst of the house."

"If so be," answers Mac cecht, "that thou goest thither, I go on that I may strike fire there ahead of thee."

When Conaire after this was journeying along the Road of Cualu, he marked before him three horsemen riding towards the house. Three red frocks had they, and three red mantles: three red bucklers they bore, and three red spears were in their hands: three red steeds they bestrode, and three red heads of hair were on them. Red were they all, both body and hair and raiment, both steeds and men.

"Who is it that fares before us?" asked Conaire. "It was a tabu of mine for those Three to go before me - the three Reds to the house of Red. Who will follow them and tell them to come towards me in my track?"

"I will follow them," says Le fri flaith, Conaire's son.
He goes after them, lashing his horse, and overtook them not. There was the length of a spearcast between them: but they did not gain upon him and he did not gain upon them.

He told them not to go before the king. He overtook them not; but one of the three men sang a lay to him over his shoulder:

"Lo, my son, great the news, news from a hostel... Lo, my son!"

They go away from him then: he could not detain them.

The boy waited for the host. He told his father what was said to him. Conaire liked it not. "After them, thou!" says Conaire, "and offer them three oxen and three bacon-pigs, and so long as they shall be in my household, no one shall be among them from fire to wall."

So the lad goes after them, and offers them that, and overtook them not. But one of the three men sang a lay to him over his shoulder:

"Lo, my son, great the news! A generous king's great ardour whets thee, burns thee. Through ancient men's enchantments a company of nine yields. Lo, my son!"

The boy turns back and repeated the lay to Conaire.

"Go after them," says Conaire, "and offer them six oxen and six bacon pigs, and my leavings, and gifts tomorrow, and so long as they shall be in my household no one to be among them from fire to wall."

The lad then went after them, and overtook them not; but one of the three men answered and said:

"Lo, my son, great the news. Weary are the steeds we ride. We ride the steeds of Donn Tetscorach from the elfmounds. Though we are alive we are dead. Great are the signs: destruction of life: sating of ravens: feeding of crows, strife of slaughter: wetting of sword-edge, shields with broken bosses in hours after sundown. Lo, my son!"

Then they go from him.

"I see that thou hast not detained the men," says Conaire.

"Indeed it is not I that betrayed it," says Le fri faith.

He recited the last answer that they gave him. Conaire and his retainers were not blithe thereat: and afterwards evil forebodings of terror were on them.

"All my tabus have seized me tonight," says Conaire, "since those Three Reds are the banished folks."

[Footnote 4: They had been banished from the elfmounds, and for them to precede Conaire was to violate one of his taboos. - W.S.]

They went forward to the house and took their seats therein, and fastened their red steeds to the door of the house.

That is the Forefaring of the Three Reds in the Bruden Da Derga.

This is the way that Conaire took with his troops, to Dublin.

Part II

Conaire And His Troops To Dublin

'Tis then the man of the black, cropt hair, with his one hand and one eye and one foot, overtook them. Rough cropt hair upon him. Though a sackful of wild apples were flung on his crown, not an apple would fall on the ground, but each of them would stick on his hair. Though his snout were flung on a branch they would remain together. Long and thick as an outer yoke was each of his two shins. Each of his buttocks was
the size of a cheese on a withe. A forked pole of iron black-pointed was in his hand. A swine, black-bristled,
singed, was on his back, squealing continually, and a woman big-mouthed, huge, dark, sorry, hideous, was
behind him. Though her snout were flung on a branch, the branch would support it. Her lower lip would
reach her knee.

He starts forward to meet Conaire, and made him welcome. "Welcome to thee, O master Conaire! Long hath
thy coming hither been known."

"Who gives the welcome?" asks Conaire.

"Fer Caille here, with his black swine for thee to consume that thou be not fasting tonight, for 'tis thou art
the best king that has come into the world!"

"What is thy wife's name?" says Conaire.

"Cichuil," he answers.

"Any other night," says Conaire, "that pleases you, I will come to you, and leave us alone tonight."

"Nay," say the churl, "for we will go to thee to the place wherein thou wilt be tonight, O fair little master
Conaire!"

So he goes towards the house, with his great, big-mouthed wife behind him, and his swine short-bristled,
black, singed, squealing continually, on his back. That was one of Conaire's tabus, and that plunder should be
taken in Ireland during his reign was another tabu of his.

Now plunder was taken by the sons of Donn Desa, and five hundred there were in the body of their
marauders, besides what underlings were with them. This, too, was a tabu of Conaire's. There was a good
warrior in the north country, "Wain over withered sticks," this was his name. Why he was so called was
because he used to go over his opponent even as a wain would go over withered sticks. Now plunder was
taken by him, and there were five hundred in the body of their marauders alone, besides underlings.

There was after that a troop of still haughtier heroes, namely, the seven sons of Ailill and Medb, each of
whom was called "Mane." And each Mane had a nickname, to wit, Mane Fatherlike and Mane Motherlike, and
Mane Gentle-pious, Mane Very-pious, Mane Unslow, and Mane Honeyworded, Mane Grasp-them-all, and Mane
the Loquacious. Rapine was wrought by them. As to Mane Motherlike and Mane Unslow there were fourteen
score in the body of their marauders. Mane Fatherlike had three hundred and fifty. Mane Honeyworded had
five hundred. Mane Grasp-them-all had seven hundred. Mane the Loquacious had seven hundred. Each of the
others had five hundred in the body of his marauders.

There was a valiant trio of the men of Cualu of Leinster, namely, the three Red Hounds of Cualu, called
Cethach and Clothach and Conall. Now rapine was wrought by them, and twelve score were in the body of
their marauders, and they had a troop of madmen. In Conaire's reign a third of the men of Ireland were
reavers. He was of sufficient strength and power to drive them out of the land of Erin so as to transfer their
marauding to the other side (Great Britain), but after this transfer they returned to their country.

When they had reached the shoulder of the sea, they meet Ingcel the One eyed and Eiccel and Tulchinne,
three great-grandsons of Conmac of Britain, on the raging of the sea. A man ungentle, huge, fearful, uncouth
was Ingcel. A single eye in his head, as broad as an oxhide, as black as a chafer, with three pupils therein.
Thirteen hundred were in the body of his marauders. The marauders of the men of Erin were more numerous
than they.

They go for a sea-encounter on the main. "Ye should not do this," says Ingcel: "do not break the truth of
men (fair play) upon us, for ye are more in number than I."

"Nought but a combat on equal terms shall befall thee," say the reavers of Erin.

"There is somewhat better for you," quoth Ingcel. "Let us make peace since ye have been cast out of the
land of Erin, and we have been cast out of the land of Alba and Britain. Let us make an agreement between
us. Come ye and wreak your rapine in my country, and I will go with you and wreak my rapine in your
country."

They follow this counsel, and they gave pledges therefor from this side and from that. There are the sureties
that were given to Ingcel by the men of Erin, namely, Fer gair and Gabur (or Fer lee) and Fer rogain, for the destruction that Ingcel should choose to cause in Ireland and for the destruction that the sons of Donn Desa should choose in Alba and Britain.

A lot was cast upon them to see with which of them they should go first. It fell that they should go with Ingcel to his country. So they made for Britain, and there his father and mother and his seven brothers were slain, as we have said before. Thereafter they made for Alba, and there they wrought the destruction, and then they returned to Erin.

'Tis then, now, that Conaire son of Eterscel went towards the Hostel along the Road of Cualu.

'Tis then that the reavers came till they were in the sea off the coast of Bregia overagainst Howth.

Then said the reavers: "Strike the sails, and make one band of you on the sea that ye may not be sighted from land; and let some lightfoot be found from among you to go on shore to see if we could save our honors with Ingcel. A destruction for the destruction he has given us."

"Who will go on shore to listen? Let some one go," says Ingcel, "who should have there the three gifts, namely, gift of hearing, gift of far sight, and gift of judgment."

"I," says Mane Honeyworded, "have the gift of hearing."

"And I," says Mane Unslow, "have the gift of far sight and of judgment."

"'Tis well for you to go thus," say the reavers: "good is that wise."

Then nine men go on till they were on the Hill of Howth, to know what they might hear and see.

"Be still a while!" says Mane Honeyworded.

"What is that?" asks Mane Unslow.

"The sound of a good king's cavalcade I hear."

"By the gift of far sight, I see," quoth his comrade.

"What seest thou here?"

"I see there," quoth he, "cavalcades splendid, lofty, beautiful, warlike, foreign, somewhat slender, weary, active, keen, whetted, vehement, a good course that shakes a great covering of land. They fare to many heights, with wondrous waters and invers."5

[Footnote 5: Mouths of rivers.]

"What are the waters and heights and invers that they traverse?"


"Thereafter I see before them special cattle specially keen, to wit, thrice fifty dark-gray steeds. Small-headed are they, red-nosed, pointed, broad-hoofed, big-nosed, red-chested, fat, easily-stopt, easily-yoked, foray-nimble, keen, whetted, vehement, with their thrice fifty bridle of red enamel upon them."

"I swear by what my tribe swears," says the man of the long sight, "these are the cattle of some good lord. This is my judgment thereof: it is Conaire, son of Eterscel, with multitudes of the men of Erin around him, who has travelled the road."

Back then they go that they may tell it to the reavers. "This," they say, "is what we have heard and seen."

Of this host, then, there was a multitude, both on this side and on that, namely, thrice fifty boats, with five thousand in them, and ten hundred in every thousand. Then they hoisted the sails on the boats, and steer them thence to shore, till they landed on the Strand of Furibthe.
When the boats reached land, then was Mac cecht a-striking fire in Da Derga's Hostel. At the sound of the
spark the thrice fifty boats were hurled out, so that they were on the shoulders of the sea.

"Be silent a while!" said Ingcel. "Liken thou that, O Fer rogain."

"I know not," answers Fer rogain, "unless it is Luchdonn the satirist in Emain Macha, who makes this
handsmiting when his food is taken from him perforce: or the scream of Luchdonn in Temair Luachra: of Mac
cecht's striking a spark, when he kindles a fire before a king of Erin where he sleeps. Every spark and every
shower which his fire would let fall on the floor would broil a hundred calves and two half-pigs."

"May God not bring that man (even Conaire) there tonight!" say Donn Desa's sons. "Sad that he is under the
hurt of foes!"

"Meseems," says Ingcel, "it should be no sadder for me than the destruction I gave you. This were my feast
that Conaire should chance to come there."

Their fleet is steered to land. The noise that the thrice fifty vessels made in running ashore shook Da Derga's
Hostel so that no spear nor shield remained on rack therein, but the weapons uttered a cry and fell all on the
floor of the house.

"Liken thou that, O Conaire," says every one: "what is this noise?"

"I know nothing like it unless it be the earth that has broken, or the Leviathan that surrounds the globe and
strikes with its tail to overturn the world, or the barque of the sons of Donn Desa that has reached the shore.
Alas that it should not be they who are there! Beloved foster-brothers of our own were they! Dear were the
champions. We should not have feared them tonight."

Then came Conaire, so that he was on the green of the Hostel.

When Mac cecht heard the tumultuous noise, it seemed to him that warriors had attacked his people.
Thereat he leapt on to his armour to help them. Vast as the thunderfeat of three hundred did they deem his
game in leaping to his weapons. Thereof there was no profit.

Now in the bow of the ship wherein were Donn Desa's sons was the champion, great-accoutred, wrathful,
the lion hard and awful, Ingcel the One -eyed, great-grandson of Conmac. Wide as an oxhide was the sin-
gle eye protruding from his forehead, with seven pupils therein, which were black as a chafer. Each of his knees
as big as stripper's caldron; each of his two fists was the size of a reaping-basket: his buttocks as big as a
cheese on a withe: each of his shins as long as an outer yoke.

So after that, the thrice fifty boats, and those five thousands - with ten hundred in every thousand, - landed
on the Strand of Fuirbthe.

Then Conaire with his people entered the Hostel, and each took his seat within, both tabu and non-tabu.
And the three Reds took their seats, and Fer caille with his swine took his seat.

Thereafter Da Derga came to them, with thrice fifty warriors, each of them having a long head of hair to the
hollow of his polls, and a short cloak to their buttocks. Speckled-green drawers they wore, and in their hands
were thrice fifty great clubs of thorn with bands of iron.

"Welcome, O master Conaire!" quoth he. "Though the bulk of the men of Erin were to come with thee, they
themselves would have a welcome."

When they were there they saw a lone woman coming to the door of the Hostel, after sunset, and seeking
to be let in. As long as a weaver's beam was each of her two shins, and they were as dark as the back of a
stag-beetle. A greyish, wooly mantle she wore. Her lower hair used to reach as far as her knee. Her lips were
on one side of her head.

She came and put one of her shoulders against the door-post of the house, casting the evil eye on the king
and the youths who surrounded him in the Hostel. He himself addressed her from within.

"Well, O woman," says Conaire, "if thou art a wizard, what seest thou for us?"

"Truly I see for thee," she answers, "that neither fell nor flesh of thine shall escape from the place into which
"thou hast come, save what birds will bear away in their claws."

"It was not an evil omen we foreboded, O woman," saith he: "it is not thou that always augurs for us. What is thy name, O woman?"

"Calib," she answers.

"That is not much of a name," says Conaire.

"Lo, many are my names besides."

"Which be they?" asks Conaire.


On one foot, and holding up one hand, and breathing one breath she sang all that to them from the door of the house.

"I swear by the gods whom I adore," says Conaire, "that I will call thee by none of these names whether I shall be here a long or a short time."

"What dost thou desire?" says Conaire.

"That which thou, too, desirest," she answered.

"'Tis a tabu of mine," says Conaire, "to receive the company of one woman after sunset."

"Though it be a tabu," she replied, "I will not go until my guesting come at once this very night."

"Tell her," says Conaire, "that an ox and a bacon-pig shall be taken out to her, and my leavings: provided that she stays tonight in some other place."

"If in sooth," she says, "it has befallen the king not to have room in his house for the meal and bed of a solitary woman, they will be gotten apart from him from some one possessing generosity - if the hospitality of the Prince in the Hostel has departed."

"Savage is the answer!" says Conaire. "Let her in, though it is a tabu of mine."

Great loathing they felt after that from the woman's converse, and ill foreboding; but they knew not the cause thereof.

The reavers afterwards landed, and fared forth till they were at Lecca cinn slebe. Ever open was the Hostel. Why it was called a Bruden was because it resembles the lips of a man blowing a fire.

Great was the fire which was kindled by Conaire every night, to wit, a "Boar of the Wood." Seven outlets it had. When a log was cut out of its side every flame that used to come forth at each outlet was as big as the blaze of a burning oratory. There were seventeen of Conaire's chariots at every door of the house, and by those that were looking from the vessels that great light was clearly seen through the wheels of the chariots.

"Canst thou say, O Ferrogain, what that great light yonder resembles?"

"I cannot liken it to aught," answers Ferrogain, "unless it be the fire of a king. May God not bring that man there tonight! 'Tis a pity to destroy him!"

"What then deemest thou," says Ingcel, "of that man's reign in the land of Erin?"

"Good is his reign," replied Ferrogain. "Since he assumed the kingship, no cloud has veiled the sun for the space of a day from the middle of spring to the middle of autumn. And not a dewdrop fell from grass till midday, and wind would not touch a beast's tail until nones. And in his reign, from year's end to year's end, no wolf has attacked aught save one bullock of each byre; and to maintain this rule there are seven wolves in hostagelash at the sidewall in his house, and behind this a further security, even Maclocc, and 'tis he that
pleads for them in Conaire's house. In Conaire's reign are the three crowns on Erin, namely crown of corn-
ears, and crown of flowers, and crown of oak mast. In his reign, too, each man deems the other's voice as
melodious as the strings of lutes, because of the excellence of the law and the peace and the goodwill
prevailing throughout Erin. May God not bring that man there tonight! 'Tis sad to destroy him. 'Tis 'a branch
through its blossom,' 'Tis a swine that falls before mast. 'Tis an infant in age. Sad is the shortness of his life!"

"This was my luck," says Ingcel, "that he should be there, and there should be one Destruction for another.
It were not more grievous to me than my father and my mother and my seven brothers, and the king of my
country, whom I gave up to you before coming on the transfer of the rapine."

"'Tis true, 'tis true!" say the evildoers who were along with the reavers.

The reavers make a start from the Strand of Furbithe, and bring a stone for each man to make a cairn; for this
was the distinction which at first the Fians made between a "Destruction" and a "Rout." A pillar-stone they
used to plant when there would be a Rout. A cairn, however, they used to make when there would be a
Destruction. At this time, then, they made a cairn, for it was a Destruction. Far from the house was this, that
they might not be heard or seen therefrom.

For two causes they built their cairn, namely, first, since this was a custom in marauding, and, secondly, that
they might find out their losses at the Hostel. Every one that would come safe from it would take his stone
from the cairn: thus the stones of those that were slain would be left, and thence they would know their
losses. And this is what men skilled in story recount, that for every stone in Carn leca there was one of the
reavers killed at the Hostel. From that cairn Leca in Hui Cellag is so called.

A "boar of a fire" is kindled by the sons of Donn Desa to give warning to Conaire. So that is the first warning-
beacon that has been made in Erin, and from it to this day every warning-beacon is kindled.

This is what others recount: that it was on the eve of samain (AllSaints-day) the destruction of the Hostel
was wrought, and that from yonder beacon the beacon of samain is followed from that to this, and stones
(are placed) is the samain-fire.

Then the reavers framed a counsel at the place where they had put the cairn.

"Well, then," says Ingcel to the guides, "what is nearest to us here?

"Easy to say: the Hostel of Hua Derga, chief-hospitaler of Erin."

"Good men indeed," says Ingcel, "were likely to see their fellows at that Hostel to-night."

This, then, was the counsel of the reavers, to send one of them to see how things were there.

"Who will go there to espy the house?" say everyone.

"Who should go," says Ingcel, "but I, for 'tis I that am entitled to dues."

Ingcel went to reconnoitre the Hostel with one of the seven pupils of the single eye which stood out of his
forehead, to fit his eye into the house in order to destroy the king and the youths who were around him
therein. And Ingcel saw them through the wheels of the chariots.

Then Ingcel was perceived from the house. He made a start from it after being perceived.

He went till he reached the reavers in the stead wherein they were. Each circle of them was set around
another to hear the tidings - the chiefs of the reavers being in the very centre of the circles. There were Fer
ger and Fer gel and Fer rogel and Fer rogain and Lomna the Buffoon, and Ingcel the One-eyed - six in the
centre of the circles. And Fer rogain went to question Ingcel.

"How is that, O Ingcel?" asks Fer rogain.

"However it be," answered Ingcel, "royal is the custom, hostful is the tumult: kingly is the noise thereof.
Whether a king be there or not, I will take the house for what I have a right to. Thence my turn of rapine
cometh."

We have left it in thy hand, O Ingcel!" say Conaire's fosterbrothers. "But we should not wreak the
Destruction till we know who may be therein."

"Question, hast thou seen the house well, O Ingcel?" asks Fer rogain.

"Mine eye cast a rapid glance around it, and I will accept it for my dues as it stands."

"Thou mayest well accept it, O Ingcel," saith Fer rogain: "the foster father of us all is there, Erin's overking, Conaire, son of Eterscel."

"Question, what sawest thou in the champion's high seat of the house, facing the King, on the opposite side?"

The Room Of Cormac Conlongas

"I saw there," says Ingcel, "a man of noble countenance, large, with a clear and sparkling eye, an even set of teeth, a face narrow below, broad above, fair, flaxen, golden hair upon him, and a proper fillet around it. A brooch of silver in his mantle, and in his hand a gold-hilted sword. A shield with five golden circles upon it: a five-barbed javelin in his hand. A visage just, fair, ruddy he hath: he is also beardless. Modest-minded is that man!"

"And after that, whom sawest thou there?"

The Room Of Cormac's Nine Comrades

"There I saw three men to the west of Cormac, and three to the east of him, and three in front of the same man. Thou wouldest deem that the nine of them had one mother and one father. They are of the same age, equally goodly, equally beautiful, all alike. Thin rods of gold in their mantles. Bent shields of bronze they bear. Ribbed javelins above them. An ivory-hilted sword in the hand of each. An unique feat they have, to wit, each of them takes his sword's point between his two fingers, and they twirl the swords round their fingers, and the swords afterwards extend themselves by themselves. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain," says Ingcel.

"Easy," says Fer rogain, "for me to liken them. It is Conchobar's son, Cormac Conlongas, the best hero behind a shield in the land of Erin. Of modest mind is that boy! Evil is what he dreads tonight. He is a champion of valour for feats of arms; he is an hospitaller for householding. These are yon nine who surround him, the three Dungusses, and the three Doelgusses, and the three Dangusses, the nine comrades of Cormac Conlongas, son of Conchobar. They have never slain men on account of their misery, and they never spared them on account of their prosperity. Good is the hero who is among them, even Cormac Conlongas. I swear what my tribe swears, nine times ten will fall by Cormac in his first onset, and nine times ten will fall by his people, besides a man for each of their weapons, and a man for each of themselves. And Cormac will share prowess with any man before the Hostel, and he will boast of victory over a king or crown-prince or noble of the reavers; and he himself will chance to escape, though all his people be wounded."

"Woe to him who shall wreak this Destruction!" says Lomna Druth, "even because of that one man, Cormac Conlongas, son of Conchobar." "I swear what my tribe swears," says Lomna son of Donn Desa, "if I could fulfill my counsel, the Destruction would not be attempted were it only because of that one man, and because of the hero's beauty and goodness!"

"It is not feasible to prevent it," says Ingcel: "clouds of weakness come to you. A keen ordeal which will endanger two cheeks of a goat will be opposed by the oath of Fer rogain, who will run. Thy voice, O Lomna," says Ingcel, "hath taken breaking upon thee: thou art a worthless warrior, and I know thee. Clouds of weakness come to you. . . .

Neither old men nor historians shall declare that I quitted the Destruction, until I shall wreak it."

"Reproach not our honour, O Ingcel," say Ger and Gabur and Fer rogain. "The Destruction shall be wrought unless the earth break under it, until all of us are slain thereby."

"Truly, then, thou hast reason, O Ingcel," says Lomna Druth son of Donn Desa. "Not to thee is the loss caused by the Destruction. Thou wilt carry off the head of the king of a foreign country, with thy slaughter of another; and thou and thy brothers will escape from the Destruction, even Ingcel and Ecell and the Yearling of the Rapine."

"Harder, however, it is for me," says Lomna Druth: "woe is me before every one! woe is me after every one! 
'Tis my head that will be first tossed about there to-night after an hour among the chariot-shafts, where devilish foes will meet. It will be flung into the Hostel thrice, and thrice will it be flung forth. Woe to him that comes! woe to him with whom one goes! woe to him to whom one goes! Wretches are they that go! wretches are they to whom they go!"

"There is nothing that will come to me," says Ingcel, "in place of my mother and my father and my seven brothers, and the king of my district, whom ye destroyed with me. There is nothing that I shall not endure henceforward."

"Though a... should go through them," say Ger and Gabur and Fer rogain, "the Destruction will be wrought by thee to-night."

"Woe to him who shall put them under the hands of foes!" says Lomna. "And whom sawest thou afterwards?"

The Room Of The Picts, This

"I saw another room there, with a huge trio in it: three brown, big men: three round heads of hair on them, even, equally long at nape and forehead. Three short black cowls about them reaching to their elbows: long hoods were on the cowls. Three black, huge swords they had, and three black shields they bore, with three dark broadgreen javelins above them. Thick as the spit of a caldron was the shaft of each. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!"

"Hard it is for me to find their like. I know not in Erin that trio, unless it be yon trio of Pictland, who went into exile from their country, and are now in Conaire's household. These are their names: Dublonges son of Trebuat, and Trebuat son of Hua-Lonsce, and Cumach son of Hua Faich. The three who are best in Pictland at taking arms are that trio. Nine decades will fall at their hands in their first encounter, and a man will fall for each of their weapons, besides one for each of themselves. And they will share prowess with every trio in the Hostel. They will boast a victory over a king or a chief of the reavers; and they will afterwards escape though wounded. Woe to him who shall wreak the Destruction, though it be only on account of those three!"

Says Lomna Druth: "I swear to God what my tribe swears, if my counsel were taken, the Destruction would never be wrought."

"Ye cannot," says Ingcel: "clouds of weakness are coming to you. A keen ordeal which will endanger, etc. And whom slowest thou there afterwards?"

The Room Of The Pipers

"I saw another room there, with nine men in it. Hair fair and yellow was on them: they all are equally beautiful. Mantles speckled with colour they wore, and above them were nine bagpipes, four-turned, ornamented. Enough light in the palace were the ornament on the four-turned pipes. Liken thou them, O Fer rogain."

"Easy for me to liken them," says Fer rogain. "Those are the nine pipers that came to Conaire out of the Elfmound of Bregia, because of noble tales about him. These are their names: Bind, Robind, Riarbind, Sibe, Dibe, Deichrind, Umail, Cumal, Callglinid. They are the best pipers in the world. Nine enneads will fall before them, and a man for each of their weapons, and a man for each of themselves. And each of them will boast a victory over a king or a chief of the reavers. And they will escape from the Destruction; for a conflict with them will be a conflict with shadow. They will slay, but they will not be slain, for they are out of an elfmound. Woe to him who shall wreak the Destruction, though it be only because of those nine!"

"Ye cannot," says Ingcel. "Clouds of weakness come to you," etc. "And after that, whom sawest thou there?"

The Room Of Conaire's Majordomo

"I saw a room with one man in it. Rough cropt hair upon him. Though a sack of crab-apples should be flung on his head, not one of them would fall on the floor, but every apple would stick on his hair. His fleecy mantle was over him in the house. Every quarrel therein about seat or bed comes to his decision. Should a needle drop in the house, its fall would be heard when he speaks. Above him is a huge black tree, like a millshaft, with its paddles and its cap and its spike. Liken thou him, O Fer rogain!"

"Easy for me is this. Tuidle of Ulaid is he, the steward of Conaire's household. 'Tis needful to hearken to the
decision of that man, the man that rules seat and bed and food for each. 'Tis his household staff that is above him. That man will fight with you. I swear what my tribe swears, the dead at the Destruction slain by him will be more numerous that the living. Thrice his number will fall by him, and he himself will fall there. Woe to him who shall wreak the Destruction!” etc.

"Ye cannot," says Ingecel. "Clouds of weakness come upon you. What sawest thou there after that?"

Part III

The Room Of Mac Cecht, Conaire's Battle-Soldier

There I beheld another room with a trio in it, three half-furious nobles: the biggest of them in the middle, very noisy... rock-bodied, angry, smiting, dealing strong blows, who beats nine hundred in battleconflict. A wooden shield, dark, covered with iron, he bears, with a hard... rim, a shield whereon would fit the proper litter of four troops of ten weaklings on its... of... leather. A... boss thereon, the depth of a caldron, fit to cook four oxen, a hollow maw, a great boiling, with four swine in its mid-maw great... At his two smooth sides are two five-thwarted boats fit for three parties of ten in each of his two strong fleets.

A spear he hath, blue-red, hand-fitting, on its puissant shaft. It stretches along the wall on the roof and rests on the ground. An iron point upon it, dark-red, dripping. Four amply-measured feet between the two points of its edge.

Thirty amply-measured feet in his deadly-striking sword from dark point to iron hilt. It shews forth fiery sparks which illumine the Mid-court House from roof to ground.

'Tis a strong countenance that I see. A swoon from horror almost befell me while staring at those three. There is nothing stranger.

Two bare hills were there by the man with hair. Two loughs by a mountain of the... of a blue-fronted wave: two hides by a tree. Two boats near them full of thorns of a white thorn tree on a circular board. And there seems to me somewhat like a slender stream of water on which the sun is shining, and its trickle down from it, and a hide arranged behind it, and a palace housepost shaped like a great lance above it. A good weight of a plough-yoke is the shaft that is therein. Liken thou that, O Ferrogain!

"Easy, meseems, to liken him! That is Mac cecht son of Snaide Teichid; the battle-soldier of Conaire son of Eterscel. Good is the hero Mac cecht! Supine he was in his room, in his sleep, when thou beheldest him. The two bare hills which thou sawest by the man with hair, these are his two knees by his head. The two loughs by the mountain which thou sawest, these are his two eyes by his nose. The two hides by a tree which thou sawest, these are his two ears by his head. The two five-thwarted boats on a circular board, which thou sawest, these are his two sandals on his shield. The slender stream of water which thou sawest, whereon the sun shines, and its trickle down from it, this is the flickering of his sword. The hide which thou sawest arranged behind him, that is his sword's scabbard. The palace house-post which thou sawest, that is his lance: and he brandishes this spear till its two ends meet, and he hurls a wilful cast of it when he pleases. Good is the hero, Mac cecht!"

"Six hundred will fall by him in his first encounter, and a man for each of his weapons, besides a man for himself. And he will share prowess with every one in the Hostel, and he will boast of triumph over a king or chief of the reavers in front of the Hostel. He will chance to escape though wounded. And when he shall chance to come upon you out of the house, as numerous as hailstones, and grass on a green, and stars of heaven will be your cloven heads and skulls, and the clots of your brains, your bones and the heaps of your bowels, crushed by him and scattered throughout the ridges."

Then with trembling and terror of Mac cecht they flee over three ridges.

They took the pledges among them again, even Ger and Gabur and Ferrogain.

"Woe to him that shall wreak the Destruction," says Lomna Druth; "your heads will depart from you."

"Ye cannot," says Ingecel: "clouds of weakness are coming to you" etc.

"True indeed, O Ingecel," says Lomna Druth son of Donn Desa. "Not unto thee is the loss caused by the
Destruction. Woe is me for the Destruction, for the first head that will reach the Hostel will be mine!"

"'Tis harder for me," says Ingcel: "'tis my destruction that has been . . . there.

"Truly then," says Ingcel, "maybe I shall be the corpse that is frailest there," etc.

"And afterwards whom sawest thou there?"

The Room Of Conaire's Three Sons, Oball And Oblin And Corpre

"There I beheld a room with a trio in it, to wit, three tender striplings, wearing three silken mantles. In their mantles were three golden brooches. Three golden-yellow manes were on them. When they undergo headcleansing their golden-yellow mane reaches the edge of their haunches. When they raise their eye it raises the hair so that it is not lower than the tips of their ears, and it is as curly as a ram's head. A . . . of gold and a palace-flambeau above each of them. Every one who is in the house spares them, voice and deed and word. Liken thou that, O Ferrogain," says Ingcel.

Ferrogain wept, so that his mantle in front of him became moist. And no voice was gotten out of his head till a third of the night had passed.

"O little ones," says Ferrogain, "I have good reason for what I do! Those are three sons of the king of Erin: Oball and Obline and Corpere Findmor."

"It grieves us if the tale be true," say the sons of Donn Desa. "Good is the trio in that room. Manners of ripe maidens have they, and hearts of brothers, and valours of bears, and furies of lions. Whosoever is in their company and in their couch, and parts from them, he sleeps not and eats not at ease till the end of nine days, from lack of their companionship. Good are the youths for their age! Thrice ten will fall by each of them in their first encounter, and a man for each weapon, and three men for themselves. And one of the three will fall there. Because of that trio, woe to him that shall wreak the Destruction!"

"Ye cannot," says Ingcel: "clouds of weakness are coming to you, etc. And whom sawest thou afterwards?"

The Room Of The Fomorians

I beheld there a room with a trio in it, to wit, a trio horrible, unheard - of, a triad of champions, etc.

Liken thou that, O Ferrogain?

"'Tis hard for me to liken that trio. Neither of the men of Erin nor of the men of the world do I know it, unless it be the trio that Mac cecht brought out of the land of the Fomorians by dint of duels. Not one of the Fomorians was found to fight him, so he brought away those three, and they are in Conaire's house as sureties that, while Conaire is reigning, the Fomorians destroy neither corn nor milk in Erin beyond their fair tribute. Well may their aspect be loathy! Three rows of teeth in their heads from one ear to another. An ox with a bacon-pig, this is the ration of each of them, and that ration which they put into their mouths is visible till it comes down past their navels. Bodies of bone (i.e. without a joint in them) all those three have. I swear what my tribe swears, more will be killed by them at the Destruction than those they leave alive. Six hundred warriors will fall by them in their first conflict, and a man for each of their weapons, and one for each of the three themselves. And they will boast a triumph over a king or chief of the reavers. It will not be more than with a bite or a blow or a kick that each of those men will kill, for no arms are allowed them in the house, since they are in 'hostageship at the wall' lest they do a misdeed therein. I swear what my tribe swears, if they had armour on them, they would slay us all but a third. Woe to him that shall wreak the Destruction, because it is not a combat against sluggards."

"Ye cannot," says Ingcel, etc. "And whom sawest thou there after that?"

The Room Of Munremar Son Of Gerrchenn, Birderg Son Of Ruan, Mal son of Telband

"I beheld a room there, with a trio in it. Three brown, big men, with three brown heads of short hair. Thick calf-bottoms (ankles?) they had. As thick as a man's waist was each of their limbs. Three brown and curled masses of hair upon them, with a thick head: three cloaks, red and speckled, they wore: three black shields with clasps of gold, and three five-barbed javelins; and each had in hand an ivory-hilted sword. This is the feat they perform with their swords: they throw them high up, and they throw the scabbards after them, and the swords, before reaching the ground, place themselves in the scabbards. Then they throw the scabbards first,
and the swords after them, and the scabbards meet the swords and place themselves round them before they reach the ground. Liken thou that, O Ferrogain!"

"Easy for me to liken them! Mal son of Telband, and Munremar son of Gerrchenn, and Birderg son of Ruan. Three crown-princes, three champions of valour, three heroes the best behind weapons in Erin! A hundred heroes will fall by them in their first conflict, and they will share prowess with every man in the Hostel, and they will boast of the victory over a king or chief of the reavers, and afterwards they will chance to escape. The Destruction should not be wrought even because of those three."

"Woe to him that shall wreak the Destruction!" says Lomna. "Better were the victory of saving them than the victory of slaying them! Happy he who should save them! Woe to him that shall slay them!"

"It is not feasible," says Ingcel, etc. "And afterwards whom sawest thou?"

The Room Of Conall Cernach

"There I beheld in a decorated room the fairest man of Erin's heroes. He wore a tufted purple cloak. White as snow was one of his cheeks, the other was red and speckled like foxglove. Blue as hyacinth was one of his eyes, dark as a stag-beetle's back was the other. The bushy head of fair golden hair upon him was as large as a reaping-basket, and it touches the edge of his haunches. It is as curly as a ram's head. If a sackful of red-shelled nuts were spilt on the crown of his head, not one of them would fall on the floor, but remain on the hooks and plaits and swordlets of their hair. A gold hilted sword in his hand; a blood-red shield which has been speckled with rivets of white bronze between plates of gold. A long, heavy, three-ridged spear: as thick as an outer yoke is the shaft that is in it. Liken thou that, O Ferrogain!"

"Easy for me to liken him, for the men of Erin know that scion. That is Conall Cernach, son of Amorgen. He has chanced to be along with Conaire at this time. 'Tis he whom Conaire loves beyond every one, because of his resemblance to him in goodness of form and shape. Goodly is the hero that is there, Conall Cernach! To that blood-red shield on his fist, which has been speckled with rivets of white bronze, the Ulaid have given a famous name, to wit, the Bricriu of Conall Cernach.

"I swear what my tribe swears, plenteous will be the rain of red blood over it to-night before the Hostel! That ridged spear above him, many will there be unto whom to-night, before the Hostel, it will deal drinks of death. Seven doorways there are out of the house, and Conall Cernach will contrive to be each of them, and from no doorway will he be absent. Three hundred will fall by Conall in his first conflict, besides a man for each (of his) weapons and one for himself. He will share prowess with every one in the Hostel, and when he shall happen to sally upon you from the house, as numerous as hailstones and grass on green and stars of heaven will be your half-heads and cloven skulls, and your bones under the point of his sword. He will succeed in escaping though wounded. Woe to him that shall wreak the Destruction, were it but for this man only!"


"And after that whom sawest thou?"

The Room Of Conaire Himself

"There I beheld a room, more beautifully decorated than the other rooms of the house. A silvery curtain around it, and there were ornaments in the room. I beheld a trio in it. The outer two of them were, both of them, fair, with their hair and eyelashes; and they are as bright as snow. A very lovely blush on the cheek of each of the twain. A tender lad in the midst between them. The ardour and energy of a king has he and the counsel of a sage. The mantle I saw around him is even as the mist of Mayday. Diverse are the hue and semblance each moment shewn upon it. Lovelier is each hue than the other. In front of him in the mantle I beheld a wheel of gold which reached from his chin to his navel. The colour of his hair was like the sheen of smelted gold. Of all the world's forms that I beheld, this is the most beautiful. I saw his golden-hilted glaive down beside him. A forearm's length of the sword was outside the scabbard. That forearm, a man down in the front of the house could see a fleshworm by the shadow of the sword! Sweeter is the melodious sounding of the sword than the melodious sound of the golden pipes that accompany music in the palace."

"Then," quoth Ingcel, "I said, gazing at him:

I see a high, stately prince, etc.

I see a famous king, etc.
I see his white prince's diadem, etc.

I see his two blue-bright cheeks, etc.

I see his high wheel . . . round his head . . . which is over his yellow - curly hair.

I see his mantle red, many-coloured, etc.

I see therein a huge brooch of gold, etc.

I see his beautiful linen frock . . . from ankle to kneecaps.

I see his sword golden-hilted, inlaid, in its scabbard of white silver, etc.

I see his shield bright, chalky, etc.

A tower of inlaid gold," etc.

Now the tender warrior was asleep, with his feet in the lap of one of the two men and his head in the lap of the other. Then he awoke out of his sleep, and arose, and chanted this lay:

"The howl of Ossar (Conaire's dog) . . . cry of warriors on the summit of Tol Geisse; a cold wind over edges perilous: a night to destroy a king is this night."

He slept again, and awoke thereout, and sang this rhetoric:


He said the third time:

"Trouble hath been shewn to me: a multitude of elves: a host supine: foes' prostration: a conflict of men on the Dodder6: oppression of Tara's king: in youth he was destroyed: lamentations will overcome laughter: Ossar's howl."

[Footnote 6: A small river near Dublin, which is said to have passed through the Bruden. - W. S.]

"Liken thou, O Fer rogain, him who has sung that lay."

"Easy for me to liken him," says Fer rogain. No "conflict without a king" this. He is the most splendid and noble and beautiful and mighty king that has come into the whole world. He is the mildest and gentlest and most perfect king that has come to it, even Conaire son of Eterscel. 'Tis he that is overking of all Erin. There is no defect in that man, whether in form or shape or vesture: whether in size or fitness or proportion, whether in eye or hair of brightness, whether in wisdom or skill or eloquence, whether in weapon or dress or appearance, whether in splendour or abundance or dignity, whether in knowledge or valour or kindred.

"Great is the tenderness of the sleepy simple man till he has chanced on a deed of valour. But if his fury and his courage be awakened when the champions of Erin and Alba are at him in the house, the Destruction will not be wrought so long as he is therein. Six hundred will fall by Conaire before he shall attain his arms, and seven hundred will fall by him in his first conflict after attaining his arms. I swear to God what my tribe swears, unless drink be taken from him, though there be no one else in the house, but he alone, he would hold the Hostel until help would reach it which the man would prepare for him from the Wave of Clidna7 and the Wave of Assaroe8 while ye are at the Hostel."

[Footnote 7: In the bay of Glandore, co. Cork. - W. S.]

[Footnote 8: At Ballyshannon, co. Donegal. - W. S.]
"Nine doors there are to the house, and at each door a hundred warriors will fall by his hand. And when every one in the house has ceased to ply his weapon, 'tis then he will resort to a deed of arms. And if he chance to come upon you out of the house, as numerous as hailstones and grass on a green will be your halves of heads and your cloven skulls and your bones under the edge of his sword."

"'Tis my opinion that he will not chance to get out of the house. Dear to him are the two that are with him in the room, his two fosterers, Dris and Snithe. Thrice fifty warriors will fall before each of them in front of the Hostel, and not farther than a foot from him, on this side and that, will they too fall."

"Woe to him who shall wreak the Destruction, were it only because of that pair and the prince that is between them, the over-king of Erin, Conaire son of Eterscel! Sad were the quenching of that reign!" says Lomna Druth, son of Donn Desa.

"Ye cannot," says Ingcel. "Clouds of weakness are coming to you," etc.

"Good cause hast thou, O Ingcel," says Lomna son of Donn Desa. "Not unto thee is the loss caused by the Destruction: for thou wilt carry off the head of the king of another country, and thyself will escape. Howbeit 'tis hard for me, for I shall be the first to be slain at the Hostel."

"Alas for me!" says Ingcel, "peradventure I shall be the frailest corpse," etc.

"And whom sawest thou afterwards?"

The Room Of The Rearguards

"There I saw twelve men on silvery hurdles all around that room of the king. Light yellow hair was on them. Blue kilts they wore. Equally beautiful were they, equally hardy, equally shapely. An ivory-hilted sword in each man's hand, and they cast them not down; but it is the horse-rods in their hands that are all round the room. Liken thou that, O Ferrogain."

"Easy for me to say. The king of Tara's guardsmen are there. These are their names: three Londs of Lifey-plain: three Arts of Ath clath (Dublin): three Buders of Buagnech: and three Trenfers of Cuilne. I swear what my tribe swears, that many will be the dead by them around the Hostel. And they will escape from it although they are wounded. Woe to him who shall wreak the Destruction were it only because of that band! And afterwards whom sawest thou there?"

Le Fri Flaith Son Of Conaire, Whose Likeness This Is

"There I beheld a red-freckled boy in a purple cloak. He is always a wailing in the house. A stead wherein is the king of a cantred, whom each man takes from bosom to bosom."

"So he is with a blue silvery chair under his seat in the midst of the house, and he always a-wailing. Truly then, sad are his household listening to him! Three heads of hair on that boy, and these are the three; green hair and purple hair and all-golden hair. I know not whether they are many appearances which the hair receives, or whether they are three kinds of hair which are naturally upon him. But I know that evil is the thing he dreads to night. I beheld three fifty boys on silvern chairs around him, and there were fifteen bulrushes in the hand of that red-freckled boy, with a thorn at the end of each of the rushes. And we were fifteen men, and our fifteen right eyes were blinded by him, and he blinded one of the seven pupils which was in my head," saith Ingcel. "Hast thou his like, O Ferrogain?"

"Easy for me to liken him!" Ferrogain wept till he shed his tears of blood over his cheeks. "Alas for him!" quoth he. "This child is a 'scion of contention' for the men of Erin with the men of Alba for hospitality, and shape, and form and horsemanship. Sad is his slaughter! 'Tis a 'swine that goes before mast,' 'tis a babe in age! the best crown-prince that has ever come into Erin! The child of Conaire son of Eterscel, Le fri flaith is his name. Seven years there are in his age. It seems to me very likely that he is miserable because of the many appearances on his hair and the various hues that the hair assumes upon him. This is his special household, the thrice fifty lads that are around him."

"Woe," says Lomna, "to him that shall wreak the Destruction, were it only because of that boy!"

"Ye cannot," says Ingcel. "Clouds of weakness are coming on you, etc." "And after that whom sawest thou there?"
The Room Of The Cupbearers

"There I saw six men in front of the same room. Fair yellow manes upon them: green mantles about them: tin brooches at the opening of their mantles. Half-horses (centaurs) are they, like Conall Cernach. Each of them throws his mantle round another and is as swift as a millwheel. Thine eye can hardly follow them. Liken thou those, O Fer rogain!"

"This is easy for me. Those are the King of Tara's six cupbearers, namely Uan and Broen and Banna, Delt and Drucht and Dathen. That feat does not hinder them from their skinking, and it blunts not their intelligence thereat. Good are the warriors that are there! Thrice their number will fall by them. They will share prowess with any six in the Hostel, and they will escape from their foes, for they are out of the elfmounds. They are the best cupbearers in Erin. Woe to him that shall wreak the Destruction were it only because of them!"

"Ye cannot," says Ingcel. "Clouds, etc." "And after that, whom sawest thou there?"

The Room Of Tuchinne The Juggler

"There I beheld a great champion, in front of the same room, on the floor of the house. The shame of baldness is on him. White as mountain cotton grass is each hair that grows through his head. Earrings of gold around his ears. A mantle speckled, coloured, he wore. Nine swords in his hand, and nine silvern shields, and nine apples of gold. He throws each of them upwards, and none of them falls on the ground, and there is only one of them on his palm; each of them rising and falling past another is just like the movement to and fro of bees on a day of beauty. When he was swiftest, I beheld him at the feat, and as I looked, they uttered a cry about him and they were all on the house-floor. Then the Prince who is in the house said to the juggler: 'We have come together since thou wast a little boy, and till to-night thy juggling never failed thee.'

"'Alas, alas, fair master Conaire, good cause have I. A keen, angry eye looked at me: a man with the third of a pupil which sees the going of the nine bands. Not much to him is that keen, wrathful sight! Battles are fought with it,' saith he. 'It should be known till doomsday that there is evil in front of the Hostel.'

"Then he took the swords in his hand, and the silvern shields and the apples of gold; and again they uttered a cry and were all on the floor of the house. That amazed him, and he gave over his play and said: 'O Fer caille, arise! Do not . . . its slaughter. Sacrifice thy pig! Find out who is in front of the house to injure the men of the Hostel.'

'Oh Fer caille,' said he, 'are Fer Cualngi, Fer le, Fer gar, Fer rogel, Fer rogain. They have announced a deed which is not feeble, the annihilation of Conaire by Donn Desa's five sons, by Conaire's five loving foster-brothers.'

"Liken thou that, O Fer rogain! Who has chanted that lay?"

"Easy for me to liken him," says Fer rogain. "Taulchinne the chief juggler of the King of Tara; he is Conaire's conjurer. A man of great might is that man. Thrice nine will fall by him in his first encounter, and he will share prowess with every one in the Hostel, and he will chance to escape therefrom though wounded. What then? Even on account of this man only the Destruction should not be wrought."

"Long live he who should spare him!" says Lomna Druth.

"Ye cannot," says Ingcel, etc.

The Room Of The Swineherds

"I beheld a trio in the front of the house: three dark crowntufts on them: three green frocks around them: three dark mantles over them: three forked . . . (?) above them on the side of the wall. Six black greaves they had on the mast. Who are yon, O Fer rogain?"

"Easy to say," answers Fer rogain: "the three swineherds of the king, Dub and Donn and Dorcha: three brothers are they, three sons of Mapher of Tara. Long live he who should protect them! woe to him who shall slay them! for greater would be the triumph of protecting them than the triumph of slaying them!"

"Ye cannot," says Ingcel, etc.

The Room Of The Principal Charioteers
"I beheld another trio in front of them: three plates of gold on their foreheads: three short aprons they wore, of grey linen embroidered with gold: three crimson capes about them: three goads of bronze in their hands. Liken thou that, O Ferrogain!"

"I know them," he answered. "Cul and Frecul and Forcul, the three charioteers of the King: three of the same age: three sons of Pole and Yoke. A man will perish by each of their weapons, and they will share the triumph of slaughter."

Part IV

The Room Of Cuscrad Son Of Conchobar

"I beheld another room. Therein were eight swordsmen, and among them a stripling. Black hair is on him, and very stammering speech has he. All the folk of the Hostel listen to his counsel. Handsomest of men he is: he wears a shirt and a bright-red mantle, with a brooch of silver therein."

"I know him," says Ferrogain: "'tis Cuscraid Menn of Armagh, Conchobar's son, who is in hostageship with the king. And his guards are those eight swordsmen around him, namely, two Flanns, two Cummains, two Aeds, two Crimthans. They will share prowess with every one in the Hostel, and they will chance to escape from it with their fostering."

The Room Of The Under-Charioteers

"I beheld nine men: on the mast were they. Nine capes they wore, with a purple loop. A plate of gold on the head of each of them. Nine goads in their hands. Liken thou."

"I know those," quoth Ferrogain: "Riado, Riamcobur, Riade, Buadon, Buadchar, Buadgnad, Eirr, Ineir, Argatlam - nine charioteers in apprenticeship with the three chief charioteers of the king. A man will perish at the hands of each of them," etc.

The Room Of The Englishmen

"On the northern side of the house I beheld nine men. Nine very yellow manes were on them. Nine linen frocks somewhat short were round them: nine purple plaids over them without brooches therein. Nine broad spears, nine red curved shields above them."

"We know them," quoth he. "Oswald and his two foster-brothers, Osbrit Longhand and his two foster-brothers, Lindas and his two foster-brothers. Three crown-princes of England who are with the king. That set will share victorious prowess," etc.

The Room Of The Equerries

"I beheld another trio. Three cropt heads of hair on them, three frocks they wore, and three mantles wrapt around them. A whip in the hand of each."

"I know those," quoth Ferrogain. "Echdruim, Echriud, Echruathar, the three horsemen of the king, that is, his three equerries. Three brothers are they, three sons of Argatron. Woe to him who shall wreak the Destruction, were it only because of that trio."

The Room Of The Judges

"I beheld another trio in the room by them. A handsome man who had got his baldness newly. By him were two young men with manes upon them. Three mixed plaids they wore. A pin of silver in the mantle of each of them. Three suits of armour above them on the wall. Liken thou that, O Ferrogain!"

"I know those," quoth he. "Fergus Ferde, Fergus Fordae and Domaine Mossud, those are the king's three judges. Woe to him who shall wreak the Destruction were it only because of that trio! A man will perish by each of them."

The Room Of The Harpers
"To the east of them I beheld another ennead. Nine branchy, curly manes upon them. Nine grey, floating mantles about them: nine pins of gold in their mantles. Nine rings of crystal round their arms. A thumb-ring of gold round each man's thumb: an ear-tie of gold round each man's ear: a torque of silver round each man's throat. Nine bags with golden faces above them on the wall. Nine rods of white silver in their hands. Liken thou them."

"I know those," quoth Fer rogain. "They are the king's nine harpers, with their nine harps above them: Side and Dide, Dulgothe and Deichrinne, Caumul and Celigen, Ol and Olene and Olchoi. A man will perish by each of them."

The Room Of The Conjurers

"I saw another trio on the dais. Three bedgowns girt around them. Four cornered shields in their hands, with bosses of gold upon them. Apples of silver they had, and small inlaid spears."

"I know them," says Fer rogain. "Cless and Clissine and Clessamun, the king's three conjurers. Three of the same age are they: three brothers, three sons of Naffer Rochless. A man will perish by each of them."

The Room Of The Three Lampooners

"I beheld another trio hard by the room of the King himself. Three blue mantles around them, and three bedgowns with red insertion over them. Their arms had been hung above them on the wall."

"I know those," quoth he. "Dris and Draigen and Aittit ('Thorn and Bramble and Furze'), the king's three lampooners, three sons of Sciath foilt. A man will perish by each of their weapons."

The Room Of The Badbs

"I beheld a trio, naked, on the roof-tree of the house: their jets of blood coming through them, and the ropes of their slaughter on their necks."

"Those I know," saith he, three . . . of awful boding. Those are the three that are slaughtered at every time."

The Room Of The Kitcheners

"I beheld a trio cooking, in short inlaid aprons: a fair grey man, and two youths in his company."

"I know those," quoth Fer rogain: "they are the King's three chief kitcheners, namely, the Dagdae and his two fosterlings, Seig and Segdae, the two sons of Rofer Singlespit. A man will perish by each of them," etc.

"I beheld another trio there. Three plates of gold over their heads. Three speckled mantles about them: three linen shirts with red insertion: three golden brooches in their mantles: three wooden darts above them on the wall."

"Those I know," says Fer rogain: "the three poets of that king: Sui and Rodui and Fordui: three of the same age, three brothers: three sons of Maphar of the Mighty Song. A man will perish for each of them, and every pair will keep between them one man's victory. Woe to him who shall wreak the Destruction! etc.

The Room Of The Servant-Guards

"There I beheld two warriors standing over the king. Two curved shields they had, and two great pointed swords. Red kilts they wore, and in the mantles pins of white silver."

"Bole and Root are those," quoth he, "the king's two guards, two sons of Maffer Toll."

The Room Of The King's Guardsmen

"I beheld nine men in a room there in front of the same room, Fair yellow manes upon them: short aprons they wore and spotted capes: they carried smiting shields. An ivory-hilted sword in the hand of each of them, and whoever enters the house they essay to smite him with the swords. No one dares to go to the room of the King without their consent. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!"
"Easy for me is that. Three Mochmatnechs of Meath, three Buageltachs of Bregia, three Sostachs of Slia Fuait, the nine guardsmen of that King. Nine decades will fall by them in their first conflict, etc. Woe to him that shall wreak the Destruction because of them only!"

"Ye cannot," says Ingcel. "Clouds of weakness," etc. "And whom sawest thou then?"

The Room Of Nia And Bruthne, Conaire's Two Waiters

"There I beheld another room, and a pair was in it, and they are 'oxtubs,' stout and thick. Aprons they wore, and the men were dark and brown. They had short back-hair on them, but high upon their foreheads. They are as swift as a waterwheel, each of them past another, one of them to the King's room, the other to the fire. Liken thou those, O Fer rogan!"

"Easy to me. They are Nia and Bruthne, Conaire's two table-servants. They are the pair that is best in Erin for their lord's advantage. What causes brownness to them and height to their hair is their frequent haunting of the fire. In the world is no pair better in their art than they. Thrice nine men will fall by them in their first encounter, and they will share prowess with every one, and they will chance to escape. And after that whom sawest thou?"

The Room Of Sencha, Dubthach And Gobniu Son Of Lurgnech

"I beheld the room that is next to Conaire. Three chief champions, in their first greyness, are therein. As thick as a man's waist is each of their limbs. They have three black swords, each as long as a weaver's beam. These swords would split a hair on water. A great lance in the hand of the midmost man, with fifty rivets through it. The shaft therein is a good load for the yoke of a plough-team. The midmost man brandishes that lance so that its edge-studs hardly stay therein, and he strikes the half thrice against his palm. There is a great boiler in front of them, as big as a calf's caldron, wherein is a black and horrible liquid. Moreover he plunges the lance into that black fluid. If its quenching be delayed it flames on its shaft and then thou wouldst suppose that there is a fiery dragon in the top of the house. Liken thou, that, O Fer rogan!"

"Easy to say. Three heroes who are best at grasping weapons in Erin, namely, Sencha the beautiful son of Ailill, and Dubthach Chafer of Ulaid, and Goibnenn son of Lurgnech. And the Luin of Celtchar son of Uthider which was found in the battle of Mag Tured, this is in the hand of Dubthach Chafer of Ulaid. That feat is usual for it when it is ripe to pour forth of foeman's blood. A caldron full of poison is needed to quench it when a deed of man slaying is expected. Unless this come to the lance, it flames on its haft and will go through its bearer or the master of the palace wherein it is. If it be a blow that is to be given thereby it will kill a man at every blow, when it is at that feat, from one hour to another, though it may not reach him. And if it be a cast, it will kill nine men at every cast, and one of the nine will be a king or crown-prince or chief tain of the reavers.

"I swear what my tribe swears, there will be a multitude unto whom tonight the Luin of Celtchar will deal drinks of death in front of the Hostel. I swear to God what my tribe swears that, in their first encounter, three hundred will fall by that trio, and they will share prowess with every three in the Hostel tonight. And they will boast of victory over a king or chief of the reavers, and the three will chance to escape."

"Woe," says Lomna Druth, "to him who shall wreak the Destruction, were it only because of that trio!"

"Ye cannot," says Ingcel, etc. "And after that, whom sawest thou there?"

The Room Of The Three Manx Giants

"There I beheld a room with a trio in it. Three men mighty, manly, overbearing, which see no one abiding at their three hideous crooked aspects. A fearful view because of the terror of them. A . . . dress of rough hair covers them . . . of cow's hair, without garments enwrapping down to the right heels. With three manes, equine, awful, majestic, down to their sides. Fierce heroes who wield against foeman hard-smiting swords. A blow, they give with three iron flails having seven chains triple-twisted, three-edged, with seven iron knobs at the end of every chain: each of them as heavy as an ingot of ten smeltings. Three big brown men. Dark equine backmanes on them, which reach their two heels. Two good thirds of an oxhide in the girdle round each one's waist, and each quadrangular clasp that closes it as thick as a man's thigh. The raiment that is round them is the dress that grows through them. Tresses of their back-manes were spread, and a long staff of iron, as long and thick as an outer yoke was in each man's hand, and an iron chain out of the end of every club, and at the end of every chain an iron pestle as long and thick as a middle yoke. They stand in their sadness in the house, and enough is the horror of their aspect. There is no one in the house that would not
be avoiding them. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!

Fer rogain was silent. "Hard for me to liken them. I know none such of the world's men unless they be yon trio of giants to whom Cuchulainn gave quarter at the beleaguerment of the Men of Falga, and when they were getting quarter they killed fifty warriors. But Cuchulainn would not let them be slain, because of their wondrousness. These are the names of the three: Subrdaire son of Dordbruige, and Conchenn of Cenn maige, and Fiad sceme son of Scipe. Conaire bought them from Cuchulainn for...so they are along with him. Three hundred will fall by them in their first encounter, and they will surpass in prowess every three in the Hostel; and if they come forth upon you, the fragments of you will be fit to go through the sieve of a corn-kiln, from the way in which they will destroy you with the flails of iron. Woe to him that shall wreak the Destruction, though it were only on account of those three! For to combat against them is not a 'paean round a sluggard.'"

"Ye cannot," says Ingcel. "Clouds of weakness are coming to you," etc. "And after that, whom sawest thou there?"

The Room Of Da Derga

"There I beheld another room, with one man therein and in front of him two servants with two manes upon them, one of the two dark, the other fair. Red hair on the warrior, and red eyebrows. Two ruddy cheeks he had, and an eye very blue and beautiful. He wore a green cloak and a shirt with a white hood and a red insertion. In his hand was a sword with a hilt of ivory, and he supplies attendance of every room in the house with ale and food, and he is quick-footed in serving the whole host. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!"

"I know those men. That one is Da Derga. 'Tis by him that the Hostel was built, and since it was built its doors have never been shut save on the side to which the wind comes - the valve is closed against it - and since he began housekeeping his caldron was never taken from the fire, but it has been boiling food for the men of Erin. The pair before him, those two youths, are his fosterlings, two sons of the king of Leinster, namely Muredach and Corpre. Three decades will fall by that trio in front of their house and they will boast of victory over a king or a chief of the reavers. After this they will chance to escape from it."

"Long live he who should protect them!" says Lomna. "Better were triumph of saving them than triumph of slaying them! They should be spared were it only on account of that man. 'Twere meet to give that man quarter," says Lomna Druth.

"Ye cannot," says Ingcel. "Clouds," etc. "And after that whom sawest thou there?"

The Room Of The Three Champions From The Elfmounds

"There I beheld a room with a trio in it. Three red mantles they wore, and three red shirts, and three red heads of hair were on them. Red were they all together with their teeth. Three red shields above them. Three red spears in their hands. Three red horses in their bridles in front of the Hostel. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!"

"Easily done. Three champions who wrought falsehood in the elfmounds. This is the punishment inflicted upon them by the king of the elfmounds, to be destroyed thrice by the King of Tara. Conaire son of Etencel is the last king by whom they are destroyed. Those men will escape from you. To fulfil their own destruction, they have come. But they will not be slain, nor will they slay anyone. And after that whom sawest thou?"

The Room Of The Doorwards

"There I beheld a trio in the midst of the house at the door. Three holed maces in their hands. Swift as a hare was each of them round the other towards the door. Aprons were on them, and they had gray and speckled mantles. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!"

"Easily done: Three doorwardens of Tara's King are those, namely Echur ('Key') and Tochur and Tecmang, three sons of Ersa ('Doorpost') and Comla ('Valve'). Thrice their number will fall by them, and they will share a man's triumph among them. They will chance to escape though wounded."

"Woe to him that shall wreak!" etc., says Lomna Druth.

"Ye cannot," says Ingcel, etc. "And after that whom sawest thou?"
The Room Of Fer Caille

"There I beheld at the fire in front a man with black cropt hair, having only one eye and one foot and one hand, having on the fire a pig bald, black singed, squealing continually, and in his company a great big-mouthed woman. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!"

"Easily done: Fer calle with his pig and his wife Cichuil. They (the wife and the pig) are his proper instruments on the night that ye destroy Conaire King of Erin. Alas for the guest who will run between them! Fer calle with his pig is one of Conaire's tabus."

"Woe to him who shall wreak the Destruction!" says Lomna.

"Ye cannot," quoth Ingcel. "And after that, whom sawest thou there?"

The Room Of The Three Sons Of Baithis Of Britain

"There I beheld a room with three enneads in it. Fair yellow manes upon them, and they are equally beautiful. Each of them wore a black cape, and there was a white hood on each mantle, a red tuft on each hood, and an iron brooch at the opening of every mantle, and under each man's cloak a huge black sword, and the swords would split a hair on water. They bore shields with scalloped edges. Liken thou them, O Fer rogain!"

"Easily done. That is the robber-band of the three sons of Baithis of Britain. Three enneads will fall by them in their first conflict, and among them they will share a man's triumph. And after that whom sawest thou?"

The Room Of The Mimes

"There I beheld a trio of jesters hard by the fire. Three dun mantles they wore. If the men of Erin were in one place, even though the corpse of his mother or his father were in front of each, not one could refrain from laughing at them. Wheresoever the king of a cantred is in the house, not one of them attains his seat on his bed because of that trio of jesters. Whenever the king's eye visits them it smiles at every glance. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!"

"Easily done. Mael and Milhe and Admilthe - those are the king of Erin's three jesters. By each of them a man will perish, and among them they will share a man's triumph."

"Woe to him that will wreak the Destruction!" says Lomna, etc. "And after that whom sawest thou there?"

The Room Of The Cupbearers

"There I beheld a room with a trio in it. Three grey-floating mantles they wore. There was a cup of water in front of each man, and on each cup a bunch of watercress. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!"

"Easily done. Black and Dun and Dark: they are the King of Tara's three cupbearers, to wit, the sons of Day and Night. And after that, whom sawest thou there?"

The Room Of Nar The Squinter-With-The-Left-Eye

"There I beheld a one-eyed man asquint with a ruinous eye. A swine's head he had on the fire, continually squealing. Liken thou that, O Fer rogain!"

"Easy for me to name the like. He is Nar the Squinter with the left eye, the swineherd of Bodb of the Elfmound on Femen, 'tis he that is over the cooking. Blood hath been split at every feast at which he has ever been present."

"Rise up, then ye champions!" says Ingcel," and get you on to the house!"

With that the reavers march to the Hostel, and made a murmur about it.

"Silence a while!" says Conaire, "what is this?"

"Champions at the house," says Conall Cernach.

There are warriors for them here," answers Conaire.
"They will be needed tonight," Conall Cernach rejoins.

Then went Lomna Druth before the host of reavers into the Hostel. The doorkeepers struck off his head. Then the head was thrice flung into the Hostel, and thrice cast out of it, as he himself had foretold.

Then Conaire himself sallies out of the Hostel together with some of his people, and they fight a combat with the host of reavers, and six hundred fell by Conaire before he could get to his arms. Then the Hostel is thrice set on fire, and thrice put out from thence: and it was granted that the Destruction would never have been wrought had not work of weapons been taken from Conaire.

Thereafter Conaire went to seek his arms, and he dons his battledress, and falls to plying his weapons on the reavers, together with the band that he had. Then, after getting his arms, six hundred fell by him in his first encounter.

After this the reavers were routed. "I have told you," says Fer rogain son of Donn Desa, "that if the champions of the men of Erin and Alba attack Conaire at the house, the Destruction will not be wrought unless Conaire's fury and valour be quelled."

"Short will his time be," say the wizards along with the reavers. This was the quelling they brought, a scantness of drink that seized him.

Thereafter Conaire entered the house, and asked for a drink.

"A drink to me, O master Mac cecht!" says Conaire.

Says Mac cecht: "This is not the order that I have hitherto had from thee, to give thee a drink. There are spencers and cupbearers who bring drink to thee. The order I have hitherto had from thee is to protect thee when the champions of the men of Erin and Alba may be attacking thee around the Hostel. Thou wilt go safe from them, and no spear shall enter thy body. Ask a drink of thy spencers and thy cupbearers."

Then Conaire asked a drink of his spencers and his cupbearers who were in the house.

In the first place there is none," they say; "all the liquids that had been in the house have been spilt on the fires."

The cupbears found no drink for him in the Dodder (a river), and the Dodder had flowed through the house.

Then Conaire again asked for a drink. "A drink to me, O fosterer, O Mac cecht! 'Tis equal to me what death I shall go to, for anyhow I shall perish."

Then Mac cecht gave a choice to the champions of valour of the men of Erin who were in the house, whether they cared to protect the King or to seek a drink for him.

Conall Cernach answered this in the house - and cruel he deemed the contention, and afterwards he had always a feud with Mac cecht. - "Leave the defense of the King to us," says Conall, "and go thou to seek the drink, for of thee it is demanded."

So then Mac cecht fared forth to seek the drink, and he took, Conaire's son, Le fri flaith, under his armpit, and Conaire's golden cup, in which an ox with a bacon-pig would be boiled; and he bore his shield and his two spears and his sword, and he carried the caldron-spit, a spit of iron.

He burst forth upon them, and in front of the Hostel he dealt nine blows of the iron spit, and at every blow nine reavers fell. Then he makes a sloping feat of the shield and an edge-feat of the sword about his head, and he delivered a hostile attack upon them. Six hundred fell in his first encounter, and after cutting down hundreds he goes through the band outside.

The doings of the folk of the Hostel, this is what is here examined presently.

Conall Cernach arises, and takes his weapons, and wends over the door of the Hostel, and goes round the house. Three hundred fell by him, and he hurls back the reavers over three ridges out from the Hostel, and boasts of triumph over a king, and returns, wounded, into the Hostel.

Cormac Condlongas sallies out, and his nine comrades with him, and they deliver their onsets on the reavers.
Nine enneads fall by Cormac and nine enneads by his people, and a man for each weapon and a man for each man. And Cormac boasts of the death of a chief of the reavers. They succeed in escaping though they be wounded.

The trio of Picts sally forth from the Hostel, and take to plying their weapons on the reavers. And nine enneads fall by them, and they chance to escape though they be wounded.

The nine pipers sally forth and dash their warlike work on the reavers; and then they succeed in escaping.

Howbeit then, but it is long to relate, 'tis weariness of mind, 'tis confusion of the senses, 'tis tediousness to hearers, 'tis superfluity of narration to go over the same things twice. But the folk of the Hostel came forth in order, and fought their combats with the reavers, and fell by them, as Fer rogain and Lomna Druth had said to Ingce'l, to wit, that the folk of every room would sally forth still and deliver their combat, and after that escape. So that none were left in the Hostel in Conaire's company save Conall and Sencha and Dubthach.

Now from the vehement ardour and the greatness of the contest which Conaire had fought, his great drouth of thirst attacked him, and he perished of a consuming fever, for he got not his drink, So when the king died those three sally out of the Hostel, and deliver a wily stroke of reaving on the reavers, and fare forth from the Hostel, wounded, to broken and maimed.

Touching Mac cecht, however, he went his way till he reached the Well of Casair, which was near him in Crich Cualann; but of water he found not therein the full of his cup, that is, Conaire's golden cup which he had brought in his hand. Before morning he had gone round the chief rivers of Erin, to wit Bush, Boyne, Bann, Barrow, Neim, Luae, Laigdae, Shannon, Suir, Sligo, Samair, Find, Ruirthech, Slane, and in them he found not the full of his cup of water.

Then before morning he had travelled to the chief lakes of Erin, to wit, Lough Derg, Loch Luimnig, Lough Foyle, Lough Mask, Lough Cumb, Loch Laig, Loch Cuan, Lough Neagh, Morloch, and of water he found not therein the full of his cup.

He went his way till he reached Uaran Garad on Magh Ai. It could not hide itself from him: so he brought thereout the full of his cup, and the boy fell under his covering.

After this he went on and reached Da Derga's Hostel before morning.

When Mac cecht went across the third ridge towards the house, 'tis there were twain striking off Conaire's head. The Mac cecht strikes off the head of one of the two men who were beheading Conaire. The other man then was fleeing forth with the king's head. A pillar-stone chanced to be under Mac cecht's feet on the floor of the Hostel. He hurls it at the man who had Conaire's head and drove it through his spine, so that his back broke. After this Mac cecht beheads him. Mac cecht then split the cup of water into Conaire's gullet and neck. Then said Conaire's head, after the water had been put into its neck and gullet:

"A good man Mac cecht! an excellent man Mac cecht! A good warrior without, good within, He gives a drink, he saves a king, he doth a deed. Well he ended the champions I found. He sent a flagstone on the warriors. Well he hewed by the door of the Hostel...Fer le, So that a spear is against one hip. Good should I be to far-renowned Mac cecht If I were alive. A good man!"

After this Mac cecht followed the routed foe.

'Tis this that some books relate, that but a very few fell around Conaire, namely, nine only. And hardly a fugitive escaped to tell the tidings to the champions who had been at the house.

Where there had been five thousand - and in every thousand ten hundred only one set of five escaped, namely Ingcel, and his two brothers Echell and Tulchinne, the "Yearling of the Reavers" - three great grandsons of Conmac, and the two Reds of Roiur who had been the first to wound Conaire.

Thereafter Ingcel went into Alba, and received the kingship after his father, since he had taken home triumph over a king of another country.

This, however, is the recension in other books, and it is more probably truer. Of the folk of the Hostel forty or fifty fell, and of the reavers three fourths and one fourth of them only escaped from the Destruction.

Now when Mac cecht was lying wounded on the battlefield, at the end of the third day, he saw a woman
passing by.

"Come hither, O woman!" says Mac cecht.

"I dare not go thus," says the woman, "for horror and fear of thee."

"There was a time when I had this, O woman, even horror and fear of me on some one. But now thou shouldst fear nothing. I accept thee on the truth of my honour and my safeguard."

Then the woman goes to him.

"I know not," says he, "whether it is a fly or a gnat, or an ant that nips me in the wound."

It happened that it was a hairy wolf that was there, as far as its two shoulders in the wound!

The woman seized it by the tail, and dragged it out of the wound, and it takes the full of its jaws out of him.

"Truly," says the woman, "this is 'an ant of ancient land.'"

Says Mac cecht "I swear to God what my people swears, I deemed it no bigger than a fly, or a gnat, or an ant."

And Mac cecht took the wolf by the throat, and struck it a blow on the forehead, and killed it with a single blow.

Then Le' fri flaith, son of Conaire, died under Mac cecht's armpit, for the warrior's heat and sweat had dissolved him.

Thereafter Mac cecht, having cleansed the slaughter, at the end of the third day, set forth, and he dragged Conaire with him on his back, and buried him at Tara, as some say. Then Mac cecht departed into Connaught, to his own country, that he might work his cure in Mag Brengair. Wherefore the name clave to the plain from Mac cecht's misery, that is, Mag Bren-guir.

Now Conall Cernach escaped from the Hostel, and thrice fifty spears had gone through the arm which upheld his shield. He fared forth till he reached his father's house, with half his shield in his hand, and his sword, and the fragments of his two spears. Then he found his father before his garth in Taltiu.

"Swift are the wolves that have hunted thee, my son," saith his father.

"'Tis this that has wounded us, thou old hero, an evil conflict with warriors," Conall Cernach replied.

"Hast thou then news of Da Derga's Hostel?" asked Amlegin. "Is thy lord alive?"

"He is not alive," says Conall.

"I swear to God what the great tribes of Ulaid swear, it is cowardly for the man who went thereout alive, having left his lord with his foes in death."

"My wounds are not white, thou old hero," says Conall.

He shews him his shield-arm, whereon were thrice fifty wounds: this is what was inflicted upon it. The shield that guarded it is what saved it. But the right arm had been played upon, as far as two thirds thereof, since the shield had not been guarding it. That arm was mangled and maimed and wounded and pierced, save that the sinews kept it to the body without separation.

"That arm fought tonight, may son," says Amorgein.

"True is that, thou old hero," says Conall Cernach. "Many there are unto whom it gave drinks of death tonight in front of the Hostel."

Now as to the reavers, every one of them that escaped from the Hostel went to the cairn which they had built on the night before last, and they brought thereout a stone for each man not mortally wounded. So this is what they lost by death at the Hostel, a man for every stone that is (now) in Carn Lecca.
It endeth: Amen: it endeth.

Source.

Epic and Saga. New York, P. F. Collier & son [c1910], Harvard Classics no. 49

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Medieval Sourcebook: Rule of St. Columba 6th Century

Even if it did not quite "save civilization", Ireland was one of the monastic centers of Europe in the early middle ages. In fact the Church in Ireland was dominated by monasteries and by monastic leaders. Other Irish monks became missionaries and converted much of Northern Europe St. Columba (521 -597) and his followers converted Scotland and much of northern England. Columba did not leave a written rule. But the following rule, attributed to him, was set down much later. It does reflect the spirit of early Irish Monasticism.

- Be alone in a separate place near a chief city, if thy conscience is not prepared to be in common with the crowd.
- Be always naked in imitation of Christ and the Evangelists.
- Whatsoever little or much thou possessest of anything, whether clothing, or food, or drink, let it be at the command of the senior and at his disposal, for it is not befitting a religious to have any distinction of property with his own free brother.
- Let a fast place, with one door, enclose thee.
- A few religious men to converse with thee of God and his Testament; to visit thee on days of solemnity; to strengthen thee in the Testaments of God, and the narratives of the Scriptures.
- A person too who would talk with thee in idle words, or of the world; or who murmurs at what he cannot remedy or prevent, but who would distress thee more should he be a tattler between friends and foes, thou shalt not admit him to thee, but at once give him thy benediction should he deserve it.
- Let thy servant be a discreet, religious, not tale-telling man, who is to attend continually on thee, with moderate labour of course, but always ready.
- Yield submission to every rule that is of devotion.
- A mind prepared for red martyrdom [that is death for the faith].
- A mind fortified and steadfast for white martyrdom. [that is ascetic practices] Forgiveness from the heart of every one.
- Constant prayers for those who trouble thee.
- Fervour in singing the office for the dead, as if every faithful dead was a particular friend of thine.
- Hymns for souls to be sung standing.
- Let thy vigils be constant from eve to eve, under the direction of another person.
- Three labours in the day, viz., prayers, work, and reading.
- The work to be divided into three parts, viz., thine own work, and the work of thy place, as regards its real wants; secondly, thy share of the brethren's [work]; lastly, to help the neighbours, viz., by instruction or writing, or sewing garments, or whatever labour they may be in want of, ut Dominus ait, "Non apparebis ante Me vacuus [as the Lord says, "You shall not appear before me empty."]
- Everything in its proper order; Nemo enim coronabitur nisi qui legitime certaverit. [For no one is crowned except he who has striven lawfully.]
- Follow alms-giving before all things.
- Take not of food till thou art hungry.
- Sleep not till thou feelst desire.
- Speak not except on business.
- Every increase which comes to thee in lawful meals, or in wearing apparel, give it for pity to the brethren that want it, or to the poor in like manner.
- The love of God with all thy heart and all thy strength;
- The love of thy neighbour as thyself
- Abide in the Testament of God throughout all times.
- Thy measure of prayer shall be until thy tears come;
Or thy measure of work of labour till thy tears come;
Or thy measure of thy work of labour, or of thy genuflexions, until thy perspiration often comes, if thy tears are not free.

From A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland II, i (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1873), pp. 119-121.

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Medieval Sourcebook: The Life of St. Columban, by the Monk Jonas, (7th Century)

[D.C. Munro: Introduction:]

During the sixth and seventh centuries the greatest missionary activity was shown by the Scots who dwelt in Ireland. In that country religion was cherished with greater zeal than elsewhere, and learning was fostered for the sake of the Church. But not content with the flourishing state of Christianity in their own island, the most zealous monks often passed over to the continent. There even the nominal Christians were little inclined to follow the precepts of the religion which they professed. Gaul especially attracted the attention of the bold missionaries from Ireland, and the Irish usages became well established in some parts of lie country. Unfortunately almost all the accounts of the missionaries from Ireland have been lost; consequently this biography of Columban is of great value.

Jonas, the author of this life, became a monk at Bobbio, in northern Italy, three years after Columban's death. He was soon employed on this biography, for which he obtained material, as he himself said, from the stories told by the saint's companions. Living as he did, among the latter, his account reflects their feelings faithfully, and we may be certain that he has recorded the events accurately, and so often reproduced the saint's own words. As is usual in such biographies, the miracles are numerous; for the contemporaries these formed the most valuable portions; for modern students they are full of instruction, and throw much light on the daily life of the monks.

The language of Jonas is somewhat bombastic and difficult to put into English. In some cases, the translator has been unable to determine the exact connection of certain clauses with the context. In such sentences he has translated literally hoping that others might see a connection which he missed. In general, where he suspected any mistake, he has followed the Latin closely. A new and careful collation and transcription of the manuscripts would undoubtedly remove any of the difficulties. There has been no translation of this life into any modern language before, except a very imperfect rendering of selected passages by Abel in the "Geschichtschreiber der deutschen Vorzeit." In this translation the preface, which has little or no importance for the life of the saint, has been omitted from lack of space. All the rest is translated in full. The names of places have generally been modernized, because readers who live far from large libraries, might otherwise lose the geographical information given here.

SAINT DATA: Columban, abbot and missioner, Born in Leinster (Ireland), c. 540; d. at Bobbio, Italy, 640; feast day 23 November. [*Note that, despite Jonas' assertion that Columban was also known as "Columba", he is distinct from St. Columba, founder of Iona, born in 521, d. 597, and whose feast day is June 9.]

THE LIFE OF ST. COLUMBAN
BY THE MONK JONAS.


6.

Columban, who is also called Columba, was born on the island of Ireland. This is situated in the extreme ocean and, according to common report, is charming, productive of various nations, and free from the wars which
trouble other nations, Here lives the race of the Scots, who, although they lack the laws of the other nations, flourish in the doctrine of Christian strength, and exceed in faith all the neighboring tribes. Columban was born amid the beginnings of that race’s faith, in order that the religion, which that race cherished uncompromisingly, might be increased by his own fruitful toil and the protecting care of his associates.

But what happened before his birth, before he saw the light of this world, must not be passed over in silence. For when his mother, after having conceived, was bearing him in her womb, suddenly in a tempestuous night, while she was buried in sleep, she saw the sun rise from her bosom and issuing forth resplendent, furnish great light to the world. After she had arisen from sleep and Aurora rising had driven away the dark shadows from the world, she began to think earnestly of these matters, joyfully and wisely weighing the import of so great a vision; and she sought an increase of consolation from such of her neighbors as were learned, asking that with wise hearts they should examine carefully the meaning of so great a vision. At length she was told by those who had wisely considered the matter, that she was carrying a man of remarkable genius, who would provide what would be useful for her own salvation and for that of her neighbors.

After the mother learned this she watched over him with so great care that she would scarcely entrust him even to his nearest relatives. So the life of the boy aspired to the cultivation of good works under the leadership of Christ, without whom no good work is done. Nor without reason had the mother seen the shining sun proceed from her bosom, the sun which shines brightly in the members of the Church, the mother of all, like a glowing Phoebus. As the Lord says: ct Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." So Deborah, with the voice of prayer, formerly spoke to the Lord, by the admonition of the Holy Spirit, saying: But let them love Thee be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might."

For the Milky Way in the heavens, although it is itself bright, is rendered more beautiful by the presence of the other stars; just as the daylight, increased by the splendor of Phoebus, shines more benignantly on the world. So the body of the Church, enriched by the splendor its Founder, is augmented by the hosts of saints and is made resplendent by religion and learning, so that those who come after draw profit from the concourse of the learned. And just as the sun or moon and all the stars ennoble the day and night by their refulgence, so the merits of the holy priests increase the glory of the Church.

7.

When Columban’s childhood was over and he became older, he began to devote himself enthusiastically to the pursuit of grammar and the sciences, and studied with fruitful zeal all through his boyhood and youth, until he became a man. But, as his fine figure, his splendid color, and his noble manliness made him beloved by all, the old enemy, began finally to turn his deadly weapons upon him, in order to catch in his nets this youth, whom he saw growing so rapidly in grace. And he aroused against him the lust of lascivious maidens, especially of those whose fine figure and superficial beauty are wont to enkindle mad desires in the minds of wretched men.

But when that excellent soldier saw that he was surrounded on all sides by so deadly weapons, and perceived the cunning and shrewdness of the enemy who was fighting against him, and that by an act of human frailty, he might quickly fall over a precipice and be destroyed,—as Livy says, "No one is rendered so sacred by religion, no one is so guarded, that lust is unable to prevail against him,"—holding in his left hand the shield of the Gospel and bearing in his right hand the two-edged sword, he prepared to advance and attack the hostile lines threatening him. He feared lest, ensnared by the lusts of the world, he should in vain have spent so much labor on grammar, rhetoric, geometry and the Holy Scriptures. And in these perils he was strengthened by a particular aid.

8.

When he was already meditating upon this purpose, he came to the dwelling of a holy and devout woman. He at first addressed her humbly, afterwards he began to exhort her, as far as lay in his power. As she saw the increasing strength of the youth she said: "I have gone, forth to the strife as far as it lay in my power. Lo, twelve years have passed by, since I have been far from my home and have sought out this place of pilgrimage. With the aid of Christ, never since then have I engaged in secular matters; after putting my hand to the plough, I have not turned backward. And if the weakness of my sex had not prevented me, I would have crossed the sea and chosen a better place among strangers as my home. But you, glowing with the fire of youth, stay quietly on your native soil; out of weakness you lend your ear even against your own will, to the voice of the flesh, and think you can associate with the female sex without sin. But do you recall the wiles of Eve, Adam’s fall, how Samson was deceived by Delilah, bow David was led to injustice by the beauty of Bathsheba, how the wise Solomon was ensnared by the love of a woman? Away, 0 youth I away! flee
from corruption, into which, as you know, many have fallen. Forsake the path which leads to the gates of hell."

The youth, trembling at these words, which were such as to terrify a youth, thanked her for her reproaches, took leave of his companions and set out. His mother in anguish begged him not to leave her. But he said: "Hast thou not heard, 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me'"? He begged his mother, who placed herself in his way and held the door, to let him go. Weeping and stretched upon the floor, she said she would not permit it. Then leaping over both threshold and mother he asked his mother not to give way to her grief; she would never see him again in this life, but wherever the way of salvation led him, there he would go.

9.

When he left his birthplace, called by the inhabitants, Lagener-land, (Leinster, in Ireland) he betook himself to a holy man named Sinell, who at this time was distinguished among his countrymen for his unusual piety and knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. And when the holy man saw that St. Columban had great ability, he instructed him in the knowledge of all the Holy Scriptures. Nevertheless, as was usual, the master attempted to draw out the pupils under false pretences, in order that he might learn their dispositions, either the glowing excess of the senses, or the torpor induced by slothfulness. He began to inquire into Columban's disposition by difficult questions. But the latter tremblingly, nevertheless wisely, in order not to appear disobedient, nor touched by the vice of the love of vainglory, obeyed his master, and explained in turn all the objections that were made, mindful of that saying of the Psalmist, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill its,

Thus Columban collected such treasures of holy wisdom in his breast that he could, even as a youth, expound the Psalter in fitting language and could make many other extracts worthy to be sung, and instructive to read.

Then he endeavored to enter a society of monks, and went to the monastery of Bangor. [*In Ulster, Ireland] The abbot, the holy Congall, renowned for his virtues, was a faithful father to his monks and was held in high esteem for the fervor of his faith and the order and discipline which he preserved. Here Columban gave himself entirely to fasting and prayer, to bearing the easy yoke of Christ, to mortifying the flesh, to taking the cross upon himself and following Christ, in order that he who was to be a teacher of others might show the learning which he taught teacher more fruitfully by his own example in mortifying his own body; and that he who was to instruct others might first his own instruct himself.

After he had been many years in the cloister he longed to go into strange lands, in obedience to the command which the Lord gave Abraham: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, into a land that I will shew thee." Accordingly he confessed to the venerable father, Congall, the burning desire of his heart and the longing enkindled by the fire of the Lord, concerning which the Lord says: "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?" [*King James Version translation of Luke 12:49, The Vulgate, which is quoted here, reads "quem volo ut ardeat". But he did not receive the answer which he wished, for it was hard for Congall to bear the loss of so great a comfort. At length, however, the latter began to conquer himself and to think that he ought not to consider his own need more than the necessities of others. Nor was it done without the will of the Almighty, who had educated His novice for future strifes, in order that He might win glorious triumphs from his victory and secure joyful victories from the phalanxes of slaughtered enemies.

The abbot accordingly called St. Columban and although sorrowful, he considered the good of others before his own good, and bestowed upon him the bond of peace, the strength of solace and companions who were known for their piety.

10.

Having collected a band of brethren, St. Columban asked the prayers of all, that he might be assisted in his coming journey, and that he might have their pious aid. So he started out in the twentieth [*or thirtieth, MSS differ] year of his life, and under the guidance of Christ went to the seashore with twelve companions. Here they waited to see if the mercy of the Almighty would allow their purpose to succeed, and learned that the spirit of the all-merciful Judge was with them. So they embarked, and began the dangerous journey across the channel and sailed quickly with a smooth sea and favorable wind to the coast of Brittany. Here they rested for a while to recover their strength and discussed their plans anxiously, until finally they decided to enter the land of Gaul. They wanted zealously and shrewdly to inquire into the disposition of the inhabitants in order to remain longer if they found they could sow the seeds of salvation; or in case they found the hearts of the people in darkness, go on to the nearest nations.

11.
Accordingly, they left Brittany and proceeded into the Gallic lands. At that time, either because of the numerous enemies from without, or on account of the carelessness of the bishops, the Christian faith had almost departed from that country. The creed alone remained. But the saving grace of penance and the longing to root out the lusts of the flesh were to be found only in a few. Everywhere that he went the noble man preached the Gospel. And it pleased the people because his teaching was adorned by eloquence and enforced by examples of virtue.

So great was his humility and that of his followers, that just as the children of this world seek honor and authority, so they, on the contrary vied with one another in the practice of humility, mindful of that saying: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted," and of the text in Isaiah: "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Such piety and love dwelt in them all, that for them there was only one will and one renunciation.

Modesty and moderation, meekness and mildness adorned them all in equal measure. The evils of sloth and dissension were banished. Pride and haughtiness were expiated by severe punishments. Scorn and envy were driven out by faithful diligence. So great was the might of their patience, love and mildness that no one could doubt that the God of mercy dwelt among them. If they found that one among them was in error, they strove in common, with equal right, to restrain the sinner by their reproaches. They had everything in common. If anyone claimed anything as his own, he was shut out from association with the others and punished by penances. No one dared to return evil for evil, or to let fall a harsh word; so that people must have believed that an angelic life was being lived by mortal men. The holy man was reverenced with so great gratitude that where he remained or a time in a house, all hearts were resolved to practice the faith more strictly.

12.

Finally, the reports about Columban spread to the court of king Sigibert, who at this time ruled with honor over the two Frankish kingdoms of Austrasia and Burgundy. [*Sigibert died in 575 and was king only of Austrasia] The name of the Franks was held in honor above that of any of the other inhabitants of Gaul. When the holy man with his companions appeared before the king, the greatness of his learning caused him to stand high in the favor of the king and court. Finally, the king begged him to remain in Gallic territory, not to go to other peoples and leave him; everything that he wished should be done. Then he replied to the king that he did not wish to be enriched with the treasures of others, but as far as he was not hindered by the weakness of the flesh to follow the command of the Gospel "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

Then the king answered and said: "If you wish to take the cross Christ upon you and follow Him, seek the quiet of a hermitage. Only Of be careful, for the increase of your own reward and for our spiritual good, to remain in our kingdom and not to go to the neighboring peoples." As the choice was left to him in this manner, he followed the king's advice and chose for himself a hermitage. At that time there was a great wilderness called Vosagus, [*the Vosages] in which there was a castle, which had long been in ruins, and which had been called for ages, Anagrates.[Anegray]. When the holy man came to that place, he settled there with his followers in spite of the entire loneliness, the wilderness and the rocks, mindful of the proverb that, "Man shall not live by bread alone," but shall have sufficient food from the bread of life and shall never hunger.

13.

While the man of God was in that place with his companions, one of the brethren, either as a test or because of some sin, began to be chastised by a violent fever. Since they had no food except such as the barks and herbs furnished, they began with one mind to desire that all should give themselves up to prayer and fasting for the sake of the welfare of their sick brother. Having now fasted for three days and having nothing to refresh their wearied bodies, suddenly they saw a certain man standing before their gate with horses loaded with a supply of bread and condiments. He said that he had been led by a sudden impulse of his heart to bear aid from his own substance to those who were, for Christ's sake, suffering from so great poverty in the wilderness. Therefore, having presented to the man of God what he had brought he began to ask earnestly that the holy man should pray to God in behalf of his wife, who for a whole year had been burning with so violent a fever that it now seemed impossible that she could be restored to health. As be made his request with an humble and contrite heart, the man of God was unwilling to deny him any comfort, and having called together the brethren he invoked the mercy of God in behalf of that woman. When he and his companions had completed their prayer, the woman who had been in such imminent peril of death, was immediately restored to her health. When her husband had received the benediction from the man of God and had returned home, he found his wife sitting there. He questioned her as to the time when the fever left her and learned that she had been healed at the very hour when the man of God had prayed to the Lord in her
14.

Therefore, after a brief space of time in which they piously endeavored to propitiate Christ and to atone for their evil thoughts, through mortification of the flesh and extreme fasting, they mortified their members to the glory of God, and desired to preserve the inviolate state of their religion. By their extreme severities every lust of the flesh was expelled, so that the plunderer and robber of all virtues fled. Nine days had already passed in which the man of God and his companions had taken no other food than the bark of trees and the roots of herbs. But the compassion of the divine virtue tempered the bitterness of the food. A certain abbot, named Caramtoc, who ruled over a monastery of which the name was Salicis, was warned by a vision, that he should bear the necessities of life to God’s servant Columban, dwelling in the wilderness. Therefore, Caramtoc rising called his cellarer, Marculf by name, and told him what had happened. The latter replied, "Do as you have been told." Caramtoc therefore ordered Marculf to go and prepare everything that be could, to carry to St. Columban. Marculf accordingly, having loaded his wagons started out. But when the hour of darkness came on, he sought in vain for a way to continue his journey. Nevertheless, he thought that if the command was from God, the power of the Commander would show the way to the horses, if they were left to their own guidance. Wonderful power! The horses, advancing, followed an unknown road and in a direct course proceeded to Anegray to the doors of St. Columban. Marculf amazed followed the tracks of the horses, came to the man of God and presented what he had brought. The latter returned thanks to his Creator because He did not neglect to prepare a table for His servants in the wilderness. Therefore, having received a benediction from him, Marculf returned by the path by which he had come and disclosed to all what had happened. Then crowds of people and throngs of the infirm began to crowd about St. Columban in order that they might recover their health and in order to seek aid in all their infirmities. When he was unable to rid himself of their importunities, obeying the petitions and prayers of all, through his prayers and relying upon the divine aid, he healed the infirmities of all who came to him.

15.

While the holy man was wandering through the dark woods and was carrying on his shoulder a book of the Holy Scripture, he happened to be meditating. And suddenly the thought came into his mind, to which he would prefer, to suffer injuries from men or to be exposed to the rage of wild beasts. While he thought earnestly, frequently signing his forehead with the sign of the cross and praying, he decided that it was better to suffer from the ferocity of wild beasts, without any sin on their part, than from the madness of men who would lose their souls. And while he was turning this over in his mind he perceived twelve wolves approaching and standing on the right and on the left, while he was in the middle. He stood still and said: "Oh, God, come to my aid. Oh, Lord, hasten to aid me!" They came nearer and seized his clothing. As he stood firm they left him unembittered and wandered off into the woods. Having passed through this temptation in safety, he continued his course through the woods. And before he had gone far he heard the voices of many Suevi, wandering in the hidden paths. At this time they were robbing in those places. And so at length by his firmness, having dismissed the temptation, he escaped the misfortune. But he did not know clearly whether this was some of the devil's deceit or whether it had actually happened. At another time he withdrew from his cell and entering the wilderness by a longer road he found an immense cliff with precipitous There he perceived a hollow sides and rocky paths difficult for men, in the rock. Entering to explore its hidden recesses he found in the interior of the cave the home of a bear, and the bear itself. He ordered the beast to depart and not to return to that place again. The beast mercifully went, nor did she dare to return again. The place was distant from Anegray seven miles more or less.

16.

At one time he was living alone in that hollow rock, separated from the society of others and, as was his custom, dwelling in hidden places or more remotely in the wilderness, so that when the feasts of the Lord or saints' days came, he might, with his mind wholly free from disquieting cares, devote himself to prayer, and might be ready for every religious thought. He was so attenuated by fasting that he scarcely seemed alive - Nor did he eat anything except a small measure of the herbs of the field, or of the little apples which that wilderness produces and which are commonly called bolluca. His drink was water. And as he was always occupied with other cares, he could not get this regularly ; at least during the time when he was performing his vows.

A little boy named Domoalis was in his service. This boy went alone to tell the father when certain events happened at the monastery and to carry back his directions to the brethren. When this boy had remained for several days in the hollow of this lofty rock, which was difficult of approach from all directions, he began to complain because he could not get water quickly. It tired his knees to bring it with so great labor through the difficult mountain paths. Columban said to him: "My son, get to work; make a little bole in the back of the
rock. Remember the Lord produced streams of water from a rock for the people of Israel." He obeyed and attempted to make a hole in the rock. The holy man immediately fell upon his knees and prayed to God that He would aid him in his need. At length his prayers were heard; great power came to him, piously praying. And soon the fountain of water began to flow regularly and it remains to this day.

And not undeservedly has the merciful Lord granted the prayers of His saints, who on account of His commands have crucified their own wills, and who have so great faith that they do not doubt that they will obtain what they demand from His mercy. Because He has promised. If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." And elsewhere: "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye will receive them, and ye shall have them."

17.

As the number of monks increased greatly, he sought in the same wilderness a better location for a convent. He found a place formerly strongly fortified, which was situated about eight miles from the first abode, and which had formerly been called Luxovium [*Luxeuil, in the department of Haute Saône]. Here were baths constructed with unusual skill. A great number of stone, idols, which in the old heathen times had been worshipped with horrible rites, stood in the forest near at hand. Here then the excellent man began to build a monastery. At the news of this people streamed in from all directions in order to consecrate themselves to the practice of religion, so that the large number of monks scarcely had sufficient m. The children of the nobles from all directions strove to come thither; despising the spurned trappings of the world and the pomp of present wealth, they sought eternal rewards. Columban perceived that the people were rushing in from all directions to the remedy of penance and that the walls of one monastery could with difficulty hold so great a throng of converts. Although they were of one purpose and heart, yet one monastery was insufficient for the abode of so great a number. Accordingly be sought out another spot especially remarkable for its bountiful supply of water and founded a second convent to which he gave the name of Fontanas [*Fontaines]. In this he placed men whose piety could not be doubted. After he had settled the bands of monks in these places, he stayed alternately at the two convents, and full of the Holy Ghost, he established the rule which they were to follow. From this rule the prudent reader or listener may learn the extent and character of the holy man's learning. [*The rule can be found in Migne, PL, 80]

18.

At that time a brother, named Autierin, asked to be allowed to make a pilgrimage into Ireland. Columban said, "Let us go into the wilderness and try to learn the will of God, whether you ought to go on the journey as you desire or remain in the assembly of the brethren." Accordingly they went forth and took with them a third youth, named Somarius, who is still alive. They went to the place in the wilderness that had been fixed upon, taking with them only a single loaf. When twelve days had passed, and nothing remained from the fragments of bread, and the time for breaking their fast was approaching, they were commanded by the father to go through the rocky cliffs and down to the bottom of the valleys and to bring back whatever they found that was suitable for food.

They went joyfully through the sloping valleys, down to the Moselle and found some fishes which had been caught previously by fishermen and were floating about on the water. Approaching, they found five large fishes, and taking three, which were alive, they carried them back to the father. But he said, "Why did you not bring five?" They replied, "We found two dead, so we left them." But he said, "You shall not eat of these until you bring those which you left." They, struck with wonder at the fullness of the divine grace, traversed again their dangerous path and chid themselves for leaving the manna which they had found. Afterwards they were ordered to cook the food. For, filled with the Holy Ghost, the father knew that the food had been prepared for himself by God.

19.

At another time he was staying in the same wilderness, but not in the same place. Fifty days had already elapsed and only one of the brethren named Gall was with him. Columban commanded Gall to go to the Brusch and catch fish. The latter went, took his boat and went to the Loignon river. After he had gotten there, and had thrown his net into the water he saw a great number of fishes coming. But they were not caught in the net, and went off again as if they had struck a wall. After working there all day and not being able to catch a fish, he returned and told the father that his labor had been in vain. The latter chid him for his disobedience in not going to the right place. Finally he said, "Go quickly to the place that you were ordered to try." Gall went accordingly, placed his net in the water, and it was filled with so great a number of fishes, that he could scarcely draw it.
20.

At another time he was staying in the hollow of the rock mentioned above, from which he had expelled the bear, and for a long time he had been mortifying the flesh with prayer and fasting. By a revelation he learned that the brethren, who were near Luxeuil, were suffering from various diseases and only enough remained to care for the sick. Leaving his den, he went to Luxeuil. When he saw the afflicted, he commanded them all to rise and to thresh out the harvest on the threshing ground. Then those whose consciences were 'kindled by the fire of obedience arose and going to the threshing-place, attempted, full of faith to thresh out the grain on the ground. The father seeing that they were full of faith and the grace of obedience, said, "Cease and rest your limbs, weakened by sickness." They obeyed, wondering at their recovery, for no trace of the diseases remained and they prepared the tables as he commanded, that all might be strengthened by a joyful banquet. Then Columban chid the disobedient, showed them the inadequacy of their faith and announced The long continuance of their illness. Wonderful revenge! For the disobedient were so ill for an entire year that they barely escaped death. They accomplished the full measure of penance, from the time when they were disobedient.

21.

Meanwhile the time had come for gathering the crops into the storehouses, but the violent winds did not cease to pile up clouds; nevertheless it was urgently necessary to gather the crops so that the ears of grain should not rot upon the stalks. The man of God was at the monastery of Fontaines, where a new field had yielded a very rich crop. Violent blasts piled up the rain-clouds, and the heavens did not cease to pour down the rain upon the earth. The man of God considered anxiously what he ought to do. Faith strengthened his mind and taught him how to command the fitting thing. He summoned all and ordered them to reap the crop. They wondered at the father's command and no one understood his purpose. All came with their reaping-hoods to cut the grain in the midst of the rain and watched to see what the father would do. He placed at the four corners of the field, four very religious men, Comininus, Eunocus and Equanacus, who were Scots, and the fourth Gurganus, a Briton. Having arranged them, he himself with the others cut the grain in the middle. Wonderful virtue! The shower fled from the grain and the rain was scattered in every direction. The warm sun poured down upon those who were reaping in the middle and a strong warm wind blew as long as they heaped up the grain. Faith and prayer were of so great merit that the rain was driven off and they had sunshine in the midst of the storms.

22.

At that time there was a duke named Waldelen, who ruled over the people between the Alps and the Jura. He had no children; in order that, as Juvenecus says of Zachariah and Elizabeth, "the gift might be more welcome to those who had already given up hope." He with his wife Flavia, who was noble both by her family and by her disposition, came from the town of Besançon to St. Columban. Both of them begged of him that he would pray to the Lord on their behalf, for they had great wealth, but no son to whom they could leave it after their death. The holy man said to them: If you will promise to consecrate His gift to the Lord and will give me the child so that I can raise him from the baptismal font, I will invoke the Lord's mercy for you that you may have not only the one whom you consecrate to the Lord, but as many more as you desire." Joyfully they promised what he wished, asking only that he would not cease to implore God to have mercy upon them. The man of God promised that they should soon have what they wished, only they must not desire to break the compact.

Wonderful to relate! hardly had they returned home when the wife felt that she had conceived. When she had borne a son, she brought him to the holy man and returned thanks to God, who had heard the prayers of His servants. Columban consecrated the child to the Lord, raised him from the font and, naming him Donatus, gave him back to his mother to be nursed. Later on, the child was educated in the monastery and taught wisdom. He became Bishop of Besançon, which he still is. Out of love for St. Columban he founded a monastery under Columbarn's rule. From an ancient structure there it was named Palatium.

God fulfilled the promise made by His servant and gave to Waldelen a second son named Ramelen, distinguished for his nobility and wisdom. This son, after Waldelen's death, succeeded to his office, and although a layman was truly filled with the fear of God. For he, too, out of love for the holy man, founded under his rule a monastery in the Jura Mountains on the Movisana River, and placed Siagrius there as abbot. The Lord added to His previous gifts two daughters, who were noble and perfect in the fear of Christ. After the death of her husband Flavia founded a nunnery in Besançon, gave it full protection and collected many nuns together. The grace of the man of God was so strong in them, that despising all the vain pomp of this life, they were zealous in the service of God.

23.
If we try to include some things which may seem of little importance, the goodness of the Creator, who is equally merciful in very small matters and in great, who does not delay to turn His pitying ear to trifling details, just as in the very important matters He grants the desires of the suppliant, will be manifest to those who bawl envious detractions. For on a certain day when the excellent man of God had gone with the brethren to cut the harvest near Calmem, which is called Baniaritia, and they were cutting the crop, while the south wind blew, one of them, named Theudegisil, happened to cut his finger with a sickle, and the finger hung by only a small strip of skin. The man of God seeing Theudegisil standing apart, commanded him to continue the work with his companions. But the latter told the reason for his actions. Columban hastened to him, and with his own saliva restored the wounded finger to its former health. Then he ordered Theudegisil to make haste and put forth more strength. The latter who had grieved for a long time over his cut finger, joyfully began to work doubly hard and to press on before the others in cutting the grain. Theudegisil himself told us of this and showed his finger. A similar thing happened on another occasion at the monastery of Luxeuil.

24.

For a parish priest, named Winnoc, the father of Babolen, who is now abbot of Bobbio, went to St. Columban. The latter was in the forest with the brethren, getting a supply of wood. When Winnoc arrived, and was watching with wonder how they split the trunk of an oak so easily with their mallet and wedges, one of the latter flying from the trunk cut him in the middle of his forehead, so that great waves of blood ran from his veins. Columban, the man of God, seeing the blood flowing, and the bone uncovered, immediately fell on the ground in prayer, then rising healed the wound with his saliva, so that hardly a sign of a scar remained.

25.

On another occasion when St. Columban had come to dine at the monastery of Luxeuil, he laid his gloves, which the Gauls [*should be Franks, i.e. German, who used this word] call Wanti and which he was accustomed to wear when working, on a stone before the door of the refectory. Soon, in the quiet, a thievish raven flew up and carried off one of the gloves in its beak. After the meal, the man of God went out and looked for his gloves. When all were enquiring who had taken them, the holy man said, "There is no one who would venture to touch anything without permission, except the bird which was sent out by Noah and did not return to the ark." And, he added, that the raven would not be able to feed its young if it did not quickly bring back the stolen object. While the brethren were looking, the raven flew into their midst and brought back in its beak the object which it had basely stolen. Nor did it attempt to fly away, but forgetful of its wild nature, humbly in the sight of all, awaited its punishment. The holy man commanded it to go. Oh, wonderful power of the eternal Judge who grants such power to His servants that they are glorified both by honors from men and by the obedience of birds! [*Grote says this miracle "is exactly in the character of the Homeric and Hesiodic age." See his interesting remarks in History of Greece. Vol I. p. 473, note, (Ed. New York, 1865]

26.

Another miracle was wrought by St. Columban and his cellarer, which I shall relate. When the meal-time came, and the latter was ready to serve out the beer (which is boiled down from the juice of corn or barley, and which is used in preference to other beverages by, all the nations in the world-except the Scotch and barbarous nations who inhabit the ocean-that is, in Gaul, Britain, Ireland, Germany and the other nations who do not deviate from the customs of the above) he carried to the cellar a jar, called a tybrum, and placed it before the vat in which the beer was - Having drawn the plug, he permitted the beer to flow into the jar. Another brother called him suddenly by the father's command. He, burning with the fire of obedience, forgot to put in the plug, called a dacicum, and, carrying it in his hand, hastened to the blessed man. After he had done what the man of God wished, he returned quickly to the cellar, thinking that nothing would be left in the vat from which the beer was running. But he saw the beer had run into the jar and not the least drop had fallen outside, so that you would have believed that the jar had doubled in size. Great was the merit of Columban commanding great the obedience of the cellarer, that the Lord thus wished to avert sadness from both of them, lest, if the either had diminished the substance of the brethren al of without needful food ; so the just Judge hastened to wash away the faults of both which had been committed by accident and with the Lord's permission, but which each would have asserted was due to his own remissness.

27.

At that time the man of God, a lover of solitude, happened to be walking through the dense thickets of fruit-trees and found a bear ready to devour the body of a stag which wolves had killed, and the bear was licking up the blood. The man of God approached be fore it had eaten any of the flesh, and ordered it not to injure the hide which was needed for shoes. Then the beast, forgetting its ferocity, became gentle, and fawning
and drooping its head left the body without a murmur, contrary to its custom. The man of God returning told this to the brethren, and ordered them to go and strip the hide from the body of the stag. When the brethren found the body they saw in the distance a great flock of birds of prey approaching, but these did not dare to touch the body, on account of Columban’s command. The brethren waited at a distance for a time to see whether any beast or bird would attempt to take the forbidden food. They saw them come, attracted by the smell, stop at a distance, and, turning as if it was something deadly, and fatal, fly swiftly away.

28.

While Columban on another occasion was staying at Luxeuil, Winnoc, the priest whom we mentioned before, came to him and followed him wherever he went. They came to the storehouse in which the grain was kept. Winnoc, seeing and despising the smallness of the supply, said there was not enough to feed such a multitude, and chid him for his slothfulness in procuring food. St. Columban replied, “If men serve their Creator truly they will never feel need, for as the voice of the Psalmist makes known, “have not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging their bread.” He, who satisfied five thousand men with five loaves, can very easily fill the storehouse with grain.” While Winnoc stayed there that night, the storehouse was filled by the faith and prayers of the man of God. Winnoc, rising in the morning and passing by, unexpectedly saw the storehouse open and the custodian was standing what beasts of burden had brought this grain an before the door. He asked who had ordered this or . The custodian replied, ”It is not as you suppose. For see if the tracks of any animals are imprinted on the ground. The keys did not leave my person last night, but while the door was closed, the storehouse was filled with grain by the divine aid.” Winnoc began to search carefully, with his eyes fixed on the ground, and to seek for traces of pack-animals. When he found nothing at all resembling these, he said, ”The Lord is able to furnish a table for His servants in the wilderness.”

A while after, Columban went to the monastery of Fontaines and found sixty brethren hoeing the ground and preparing the fields for the future crop. When he saw them breaking up the clods with great labor, he said, ”May the Lord prepare for you a feast, my brethren.” Hearing this the attendant said, ”Father, believe me, we have only two loaves and a very little beer.” Columban answered, ”Go and bring those.” The attendant went quickly and brought the two loaves and a little beer. Columban, raising his eyes to heaven, said, ”Christ Jesus, only hope of the world, do Thou, who from five loaves satisfied five thousand men in the wilderness, multiply these loaves and this drink.” Wonderful faith! All were satisfied and each one drank as much as he wished. The servant carried back twice as much in fragments and twice the amount of drink. And so he knew that faith is more deserving of the divine gifts than despair, which is wont to diminish even what one has.

29.

When at one time the man of God was staying at Luxeuil. one of the brethren, who was also named Columban, was stricken with a fever and, lying at the point of death, was awaiting instantly a happy release. When he wanted to draw his last breath, confident of the eternal reward which he had sought in his long service, he saw a man clothed in light coming to him, and saying, ”I am not able now to free you from your body, because I am hindered by the prayers and of your father Columban”. When the sick man heard this, sorrowfully as if he had been awakened from sleep, be began to call his attendant Theudegisel whom we mentioned above, and said, , Go quickly and summon our father Columban to me.” The attendant went swiftly to Columban weeping in the church, asked him to hasten to the sick man. Columban came quickly and asked him what he wanted. The latter told him, saying, ”Why do you detain me by your prayers in this sorrowful world? For those are present, who would lead me away if they were not hindered by your tears and prayers. I beseech you, remove the obstacles which retain me that the celestial kingdom may open for me.” Columban, struck with fear, made a signal that all should come. His joy lessened his grief at the loss Of his holy companion- He gave the dying man the body of Christ as a viaticum, and after the last kiss began the death-song. For they were of the same race and name and had left Ireland in the same company.

30.

And do not wonder that the beasts and birds thus obeyed command of the man of God. the For we have learned from Chamnoald, royal chaplain at Laon, who was his attendant and disciple, that he has often seen Columban wandering about in the wilderness fasting and praying, and calling the wild beasts and birds. These came immediately at his command and he stroked them with his hand. The beasts and birds joyfully played, frisking about him, just as cats frisk about their mistresses. Chamnoald said he had often seen him call the little animal, which men commonly name a squirens from the tops of a tree and take it in his hand and put it on his neck and let it go into and come out from his bosom.

31.
The fame of Columban had already penetrated into all parts of Gaul and Germany, and everyone was praising the venerable man. Theuderich too came often to him and humbly begged his prayers. For Theuderich had succeeded to the kingdom in the following manner: Sigibert had been murdered in the royal estate of Vitry, which is not far from Arras, at the instigation of his brother Chilperich, who was then living in Tournay and was being hunted to death by Sigibert. After the death of the latter, through the influence of his wife Brunhilda, the kingdom passed to his son Childebert (II). When the latter died in his youth, [*AD 596] he was succeeded by his two sons, Theudebert and Theuderich, who ruled together with their grandmother Brunhilda. Austrasia went to Theudebert, Burgundy, to Theuderich, who thought that he was fortunate in having St. Columban in his kingdom.

As he very often visited Columban, the holy man began to reprove him because he sinned with concubine and did not satisfy himself with the comforts of a lawful wife, in order to beget royal children from an honored queen, and not bastards by his concubines. After this reproof from Columban, the king promised to abstain from such sinful conduct. But the old serpent came to his grandmother Brunhilda, who was a from a second Jezebel, and aroused her pride against the holy man, because she saw that Theuderich was obedient to him. For she feared that her power and honor would be lessened if, after the expulsion of the concubines, a queen should rule the court.

32.

St. Columban happened one day to go to Brunhilda, who was then on the estate of Brocarica.[*near Autun]. As she saw him enter the court, she led to him the illegitimate sons of Theuderich. When St. Columban saw her, he asked what she wanted of him. Brunhilda answered, "These are the king's sons; give them thy blessing." He replied, "Know that these boys will never bear the royal sceptre, for they were begotten in sin."

Enraged, she told the boys to go. When after this Columban left the court, a loud cracking noise was heard, the whole house trembled and everyone shook with fear. But that did not avail to check the wrath of the wretched woman.

From that time she began to persecute the neighboring monasteries. She issued an order that none of the monks should be allowed to leave the lands of the monasteries, no one should receive them into other houses or give them any aid. When Columban saw that at the court all were arrayed against him, be hastened to Spissia, where the king was then staying, in order to subdue such defiance by his warnings. When he reached that place, about sunset, and it was announced to the king that Columban was there but would not enter the palace, Theuderich said it would be better with due reverence to offer the needful services to the man of God, than to arouse the wrath of the Lord, by insulting His servant. Accordingly be ordered suitable food to be prepared in the royal kitchen and sent to the servant of God.

When the attendants came to Columban and, in accordance with the king's command, offered him food and drink prepared with royal magnificence, he asked what they meant by it. When they told him that it was sent by the king, he pushed it from him and said It is written, "The Most High is not pleased with the offerings of the wicked." For it is not meet that the mouth of the servant of the Lord should be defiled by the food of him who shuts out the servant of God, not only from his own dwelling, but also from the dwellings of others." At these words all of the dishes broke into pieces, so that the wine and liquor ran out on the ground and the food was scattered here and there. Terrified, the servants announced this to the king. Full of anxiety, he, together with his grandmother, hastened to Columban early in the morning. Both begged him to forgive their past sins and promised amendment. With his fears quieted by this, Columban returned to his convent. But they failed to keep their promises, and very soon the persecutions were renewed. With increased bitterness by the king, who continued in his former sinful course. Then Columban sent him a letter full of reproaches, and threatened him with the ban if he did not amend his conduct.

33.

Now Brunhilda began again to incite the king against Columban in every way; urged all the nobles and others at court to do the same, and influenced the bishops to attack Columban's faith and to abolish his monastic rule. She succeeded so fully that the holy man was obliged to answer for his faith or leave the country. The king, incited by Brunhilda, went to Luxeuil and accused Columban of violating the customs of the country and of not allowing all Christians to enter the interior of the monastery. To these accusations Columban answered, for he was unterrified and full of courage, that it was not his custom to allow laymen to enter the dwelling of the servant of God, but he had prepared a suitable place where all who came would be received. The king replied: "If you wish to enjoy any longer the gifts of our grace and favor, everyone in the future must be allowed free entrance everywhere." Columban answered: "If you dare to violate the monastic rule in any particular, I will not accept any gift or aid from you in the future. But if you come here to destroy the monasteries of the servant of God and to undermine their discipline and regulations, I tell you that your kingdom will be destroyed together with all your royal family." This the king afterward found to be true. In his
audacity, he had already stepped into the refectory; terrified by these words, he withdrew hastily.

But when Columban attacked him with bitter insults, Theuderich said: "You want me to honor you with the crown of martyrdom; do not believe that I am foolish enough to commit such a crime. But I will follow a wiser and more useful plan. Since you depart from the common customs, I will send you back to the home from which you came." At the same time the members of the court resolved unanimously that they would not put up with anyone who was unwilling to associate with everyone. But Columban said that he would not leave his monastery unless he was dragged out by force.

34.

The king now withdrew, but left behind a nobleman named Baudulf. The latter drove the holy man out of his monastery and carried him to Besançon into banishment, until the king had determined what further action to take. While there Columban heard that the prison was full of condemned men awaiting the death penalty. The man of God hastened to them and, having entered the gate without opposition, preached the word of God to the condemned. They promised him that if they were liberated they would amend their lives and do penance for the crimes which they had committed. After this Columban commanded his attendant, whom we have mentioned above [8ch. 16], to take in his hand the iron to which their feet were fettered, and to pull it. When the boy took hold of it and pulled, it broke into bits like the rotten trunk of a tree.

Columban ordered the condemned to leave the prison now that their feet were free and, after preaching the Gospel to them, he washed their feet and dried them with a linen towel. Then he commanded them to go to the church and do penance for the crimes they had committed and to wash away their faults by their tears. They hastened thither and found the doors of the church-fastened.

When the captain of the soldiers saw the fetters of the condemned broken by Columban, through the power of God, and that only the empty prison remained, he started, although aroused from sleep, to follow the tracks of the condemned. The latter, seeing that the soldiers were coming after them and that the doors of the church were shut, hemmed in by the two-fold difficulty, reproached the man of God for having released them. But he, breathing anxiously, raised his face to heaven and prayed to the Lord that He would not permit those whom He had released from the iron by His strength, to be again delivered into the hands of the soldiers. Without delay, the goodness of the Creator opened the doors, which had been securely fastened, and disclosed a way of escape to those in peril. The condemned quickly entered the church. After their entrance the doors were shut without human hands, before the eyes of the soldiers, just as if a custodian with a key had quickly unlocked them and then locked them again. Columban arriving with his followers and the captain coming up at the same time with his soldiers, found the doors shut. They sought the janitor, Aspasius by name, to get the key. When he came with the key and tried to open the doors he said he had never found them more tightly closed. Nor did anyone, after that, dare to do any injury to the condemned, whom the divine grace had liberated.

35.

As Columban now saw that he was not watched at all and that no one did him any injury, (for all saw that he was strong in the strength of the Lord and therefore all refrained from injuring him, in order not to be associated in guilt) one Sunday he climbed to the top of the mountain. For the city is so situated that the houses are clustered together on the side of a steep mountain. Above, the lofty cliffs rise perpendicularly into the heavens. The mountain cut off on all sides by the river Dou, which surrounds it, leaves no path open for travelers. Columban waited till noon to see whether anyone would prevent his returning to his monastery. Then he took the road leading directly through the city.

When they heard of this, Brunhilda and Theuderich were embittered still more. They again ordered a band of soldiers to carry off the man of God by violence and to take him again to his former place of exile. Accordingly the soldiers went with their captain and wandered through the precincts of the monastery seeking the man of God. He was then in the vestibule of the church reading a book. They came repeatedly and passed near him, so that some struck against him with their feet and touched his garments with their garments, but did not see him because their eyes were blinded. And it was a most beautiful sight. He, exulting, perceived that he was sought and was not found. While he saw them, they did not see him sitting in the midst of them. The captain came and, looking through the window, saw the man of God sitting joyfully amid them and reading. Perceiving the power of God, he said: "Why do you go wandering about the vestibule of the church and do not find him? Your hearts are wholly filled with the madness of insanity; for you will not be able to find him whom the divine power conceals. Leave this undertaking and we will hasten to announce to the king that you could not find him." By this it was clearly shown that the captain of the soldiers had not come willingly to do injury, to the man of God, and therefore had menteed to see him.

36.
They told the king. He, impelled by the madness of his wretched purpose, sent Count Bertarius, with the men of his guard, to seek more diligently for Columban, and at the same time Baudulf whom he had formerly sent. They finding the holy man in the church praying and singing psalms with all the brethren, said to him: "Oh man of God, we beg you to obey the king's orders and our own, and to return to the place whence you came to this land." But Columban answered, "I do not think it would be pleasing to my Creator if I should go back to the home which I left because of my love for Christ." When they saw that Columban would not obey them they withdrew. But they left behind several men of rough disposition and character.

Those who remained urged the man of God to have pity on them. Since they had been perfidiously left behind to perform such a task, and to think of their peril. If they did not violently eject him they would be in danger of death. But he, as he had very often asserted, said he would not withdraw unless he was compelled to by violence. The men impelled by fear, since they were in imminent peril in either event, clung to the robe which he wore; others upon their knees besought him not to impute to them the guilt of so great a crime, since they were not following their own wishes, but obeying the commands of the king.

37.

He finally decided to yield, in order not to imperil others, and departed amid universal sorrow and grief. Escorts were furnished him who were not to leave his side until they had conducted him to the boundary of the kingdom at Nantes. Ragamund was their leader. All the brethren followed, as if it was a funeral; for grief filled the hearts of all. The father in anxiety for the loss of so many members, raised his eyes to heaven, and said, "Oh Creator of the world, prepare for us a place where Thy people may worship Thee." Then he comforted the brethren, telling them to put their trust in the Lord and to give great praise to omnipotent God. This was not an injury to him or his followers, but an opportunity to increase the number of monks. Those who wished to follow him and had courage to bear all his sufferings might come. The others who wanted to remain in the monastery should do so, knowing that God would quickly avenge their injuries. But since the monks did not want to be deprived of the guardianship of their shepherd all resolved to go. But the king's servants declared that only those would be allowed to follow him who were his countrymen or who had come to him from Brittany; the others, by the king's command, were to remain in that place. When the father perceived that his followers were violently torn from him, his grief and that of his followers was increased. But he prayed to the Lord, the Comforter of all men, to take those into His own keeping, whom the king's violence tore from him. Among these was Eustasius, the scholar and servant of Columban, who was afterward abbot in this very convent, of which his uncle, Mietius, bishop of Langres, had charge.

38.

So, twenty years after he had come to this place the holy man departed and went by the way of Besançon and Autun to the fortress Cavało. On the way the king's master of horse wanted to kill him with a lance. But the hand of God hindered it and lamed the mail's hand, so that the lance fell on the ground at his feet and be himself seized by a supernatural power fell prone before Columban. The latter, however, cared for him till the next morning and then sent him home healed.

39.

From Cavało he went to the river Chora [*Probably the Cure, a branch of the Jonne (Abel)] where he stayed in the house of a noble and pious lady, named Theudemanda, and healed twelve demonics who came to him. On the same day he went to the village of Chora where he healed five mad men. In Auxerre, which he next went to, he said to his companion, Ragamund, "Know that within three years Chlotar, whom you now despise, will be your lord." But he answered, "Why do you tell me such things, my lord?" The latter replied, "You will see what I have announced if you are still alive."

40.

Then leaving Auxerre, Columban saw a youth possessed by a demon running swiftly toward him. This youth had run twenty miles with all his might. Seeing him, Columban waited until the man, wounded by the devil's art, should come. The latter fell at the feet of the man of God and was immediately cured by his prayers and visibly restored to health. Then with guards preceding and following, Columban came to the city of Nevers in order to go in a boat on the Loire to the coast of Brittany. When they had reached this point and bad gotten into the boat with difficulty, one of the guards, taking an oar, struck one of them, who was named Lua, a most holy and devout man.

The man of God, seeing that one of his followers was struck in his presence, said: "Why, cruel man, do you add to my grief? Is not the guilt of the crime which you have committed sufficient for your destruction? Why do you appear merciless against the merciful? Why do you strike a wearied member of Christ? Why do you
vent your, wrath on the gentle? Remember that you will be punished by God in this place, where in your rage you have struck a member of Christ." The vengeance, soon following, executed the penalty inflicted by that sentence. For as the man was returning again and came to the same place to cross the river, struck by the divine vengeance, he was drowned. Why was it that the just Judge delayed the vengeance a little, unless it was that His saint might not be troubled by the sight of the man’s punishment?

41.

From that place they went to the city of Orleans, where sorrowfully they rested for a time on the banks of the Loire in tents, for by order of the king, they were forbidden to enter the churches. When finally their provisions gave out, they sent two men into the city to get food. One of these was Potentinus, who later on founded a convent in Brittany, near the city of Coutances, [*in the department of La Manches] and who is still alive. When these men entered the city they found nothing, because the inhabitants, from fear of the king, did not dare to sell or give them anything, and they went back on the road by which they had entered the city. They met a Syrian woman in the street. When she saw them, she asked who they were. They explained the state of the case, and said that they were seeking food but had found nothing. She replied, "Come, my lords, to the house of your servant and take whatever you need. For I, too, am a stranger from the distant land of the Orient." They joyfully followed her to her house and sat down to rest until she brought what they sought. Her husband, who had long been blind, was sitting near them. When they asked him who he was, his wife replied, "My husband is from the same race of the Syrians that I am. As be is blind, I have led him about for many years." They said, "If he should go to Columban, the servant of Christ, he would receive his sight through the holy man's prayers." The man having faith in the promised gift, regained his courage, rose and, led by his wife, followed them. They told Columban of the hospitality given to pilgrims. They had not finished their story before the blind man came and prayed the man of God to restore his sight by prayer. Columban, seeing the man's faith, asked all to pray for the blind man, and after lying for a long time prone on the ground, he rose, touched the man's eyes with his hand and made the sign of the cross. The man received his longed-for sight. He rejoiced in his recovered sight, because it was fitting that he, whose soul had been lighted internally by hospitality, should not lack the external vision.

After that a band of mad men, whom demons tortured with savage fury, hastened to the man of God to be cured. Health was granted them by the Lord; for all were healed by the man of God. The people of the city moved by these miracles supplied Columban with gifts secretly, because they did not dare to furnish anything openly on account of the guards, lest they should incur the wrath of the king. Thence Columban and his followers continued on their way.

42.

And proceeding on the Loire, they came to the city of Tours. There the holy man begged the guards to stop and permit him to visit the grave of St. Martin. The guards refused, strove to go on quickly, urged the oarsmen to put forth their strength and pass swiftly by the harbor, and commanded the helmsman to keep the boat in mid-stream. St. Columban seeing this, raised his eyes sadly to heaven, grieving at being subjected to great sorrow, and that he was not permitted to see the graves of the saints. In spite of all their efforts the boat stopped as if anchored, as soon as it got opposite the harbor, and turned its bow to the landing-place. The guards seeing that they could not prevail, unwillingly allowed the boat to go where it would. In a wonderful manner it sped, as if winged, from mid-stream to the harbor, and entering this accomplished the wish of the man of God.

He, truly, gave thanks to the eternal King, who does not disdain to comply with the wishes of His servants. Landing, Columban went to the grave of St. Martin and spent the whole night there in prayer. In the morning he was invited by Leoparius, the bishop of the city, to break his fast. He accepted, especially for the sake of refreshing his brethren, and spent that day with the bishop. When he sat down at table with the bishop, at the hour of reflection, and was asked why he was returning to his native land, he replied, "That dog Theuderich has driven me away from the brethren."

43.

Then one of the guests, named Chrodowald, who was married to one of Theudebert's cousins, but who was a follower of Theuderich, replied in a humble voice to the man of God, "It is pleasant to drink milk than wormwood," and declared that be would be faithful to king Theuderich, as be had sworn, so long as it was in his power. Columban said to him, "I know that you want to keep your oath of fidelity to king Theuderich, and you will be glad to take my message to your lord and friend. if you serve king Theuderich. Announce, therefore, to Theuderich that he and his children will die within three years, and his entire family will be exterminated by the Lord." "Why," said the man, "do you announce such tidings, O servant of God?" "I dare no t conceal what the Lord has ordered me to reveal." All the inhabitants of Gaul saw this fulfilled later, and
this confirmed what had been announced previously to Ragamund.

44.

After the repast, the man of God returned to the boat and found his companions very sorrowful. On enquiring what had happened, he learned that what they had in the boat had been stolen in the night, and also the gold which he had not given to the poor. Having heard this, he returned to the grave of the holy confessor and complained that he had not watched by the relics of the saint in order that the latter should allow him and his followers to suffer loss. Immediately be who had stolen the bag of gold began to be tormented and tortured, and cried out that he had concealed the pieces of gold in this place and that. All his associates rushed to return all that had been stolen and prayed the man of God to pardon the great crime. This miracle struck such terror into all, that those who heard of it did not dare to touch any thing which belonged to the man of God, believing that all was consecrated. After supplying him with food Leoparius said farewell to St. Columban.

45.

Joyfully then they went in the boat to the city of Nantes and there stopped for a short time. One day a beggar cried out before the door of the cell in which the man of God was meditating. Calling an attendant, Columban said: "Give the beggar some food." The attendant replied: "We have nothing except a very little meal." He asked: "How much have you?" The attendant replied that he thought he did not have more than a measure of meal. "Then give it all," he said, "and save nothing for the morrow." The servant obeyed and gave all to the beggar, reserving nothing for the common need.

Already the third day had dawned since they had been fasting, and had had scarcely anything except the grace of hope and faith, by which to refresh their exhausted limbs. Suddenly they heard the door open; when the doorkeeper asked why the ears of the brethren were troubled by the din, he who had opened the door said he had been sent by his mistress Procula. She said she had been divinely warned to send food to the man of God, Columban, and to his companions, who were staying near the city of Nantes. The man said the food would come immediately, and that he had been sent ahead to tell them to prepare receptacles to receive it. There were a hundred measures of wine, two hundred of grain, and a hundred of barley. The doorkeeper hastened to announce this to the father. But the latter said, very well, he knew it, and ordered that the brethren should come together to pray to the Lord in behalf of their benefactress, and at the same time to return thanks to their Creator who never fails to comfort His servants in every need; and after that they would receive the gifts.

Wonderful compassion of the Creator! He permits us to be in need, that He may show His mercy by giving to the needy. He permits us to be tempted, that by aiding us in our temptations He may turn the hearts of His servants more fully to Himself. He permits His followers to be cruelly tortured that they may delight more fully in restored health.

46.

Another equally noble and pious woman, named Doda, sent two hundred measures of corn, and a hundred of mixed grain. This caused very great shame to the bishop of that city, named Suffronius, from whom nothing could be obtained as a gift or even by exchange. While Columban remained there, a certain woman tormented by a demon came to him, together with her daughter who was also suffering from a severe disease. When be saw them, he prayed to the Lord for them; after they had been healed, he commanded them to return home.

47.

After this Suffronius, bishop of Nantes, and count Theudebald made preparations to send St. Columban to Ireland, in accordance with the king's orders. But the man of God said: "If there is a ship here which is returning to Ireland, put my effects and my companions on it. In the meantime I will go in my skiff down the Loire to the ocean." They found a vessel which had brought Scottish wares and embarked all Columban's effects and companions. When with a favorable wind the oarsmen were now rowing the vessel down to the ocean, a huge wave came and drove the vessel on shore. It stuck fast on the land, and the water receding, remained quietly in the channel. The bark remained high and dry for three days. Then the captain of the vessel understood that he was detained in this manner on account of the effects and companions of the man of God, that be had taken on board. He decided to disembark from the vessel all that belonged to Columban. Immediately a wave came and bore the vessel out to the ocean. Then all, filled with amazement, understood that God did not wish Columban to return home. Accordingly he returned to the house in which he bad formerly dwelt and no one opposed him; nay, rather, all aided the man of God with gifts and food, as far as
lay in their power. Nor did he lack defence, because in all things he had the aid of the Creator, and He who keeps Israel under the shadow of His wings never slumbers. Thus truly He shows by granting all things to all men, that He wishes to be glorified by all in proportion to the greatness of his gifts.

48.

Not long after this Columban went to Chlotar, Chilperich's son, who ruled in Neustria over the Franks who lived on the coast. Chlotar had already heard how the man of God had been persecuted by Brunhilda and Theuderich. He now received Columban as a veritable gift from heaven, and begged that he would remain in Neustria, Columban refused and said he did not wish to remain there, either for the sake of increasing the extent of his pilgrimage of avoiding enmities. But he remained some time with the king, and called his attention to several abuses, such as could hardly fail to exist at a king's court. Chlotar cording to Columban's command, for he promised to correct everything ac zealously loved wisdom, and rejoiced in the blessing which he had secured.

In the meantime a strife arose between Theudebert and Theuderich over the boundaries of their kingdoms, and both sent to Chlotar to beg aid. The latter was disposed to aid one against the other, and asked Columban's advice. He, filled with the spirit of prophecy, answered that Chlotar ought not to unite with either, for within three years he would receive both kingdoms. Chlotar seeing that such things were prophesied by the man of God, aided neither, but full of faith awaited the promised time. Afterwards be triumphed victoriously.

49.

Afterwards Columban asked Chlotar to aid him to go through Theudebert's territory, if possible, and over the Alps to Italy. He received escorts who were to conduct him to Theudebert, and entering upon his journey went to the city of Paris. When he arrived there, he met at the gate a man having an unclean spirit, who was raving and rending his garments, while babbling. The latter addressed the man of God complainingly: "What are you doing in this place, O man of God?" From afar he had been crying out for a long time with his growling voice as he saw Columban, the man of God, approaching. When the latter saw him, he said: "Depart, evil one, depart! Do not dare to possess any longer the body washed by Christ. Yield to the power of God, and invoked by the name of Christ." But when the devil resisted for a long time with savage and cruel strength, the man of God placed his hand on the man's ear and struck the man's tongue and by the power of God commanded the devil to depart. Then rending the man with cruel violence so that bonds could scarcely restrain him, the devil, issuing forth amid great purging and vomiting made such a stench that those who stood by believed that they could endure the fumes of sulphur more easily.

50.

Then Columban went to the city of Meaux. There he was received with great joy by a nobleman Hagneric, who was a friend of Theudebert, a wise man, and a counsellor grateful to the king, and was fortified by nobility and wisdom. The latter promised that he would take care of Columban until the latter reached the court of Theudebert, and said it was not necessary to have the other companions who were sent by the king. He declined the aid of the others in order to keep the man of God with himself as long as he could, and in order that his house might be ennobled by the learning of the latter. Columban blessed his house and consecrated to the Lord his daughter Burgundofara, who was still a child, and of whom we shall speak later.

Thence he proceeded to Eussy on the river Marne. There he was received by a man named Autharius, whose wife was named Aiga. They had sons under ten years of age, whom the mother brought to the man of God to be blessed. He, seeing the faith of the mother, consecrated the little children with his blessing. They later, when they grew up, were held in high esteem, first by king Chlotar, afterwards by Dagobert. After they had obtained great glory in the world, they made haste, lest in the glory of this world they should lose the eternal. The elder, Ado, withdrew of his own accord and founded, under the rule of St. Columban, a monastery near Mt. Jura. [*The monastery Jouarre, near Meaux] The younger, Dado, founded, under the rule of the blessed man, a monastery near Brie, on the little river Rébais.

So greatly did the man of God abound in faith, that whomsoever he consecrated, the last day found persevering in good works. And those whom he warned, rejoiced afterward that they had merited immunity. Nor did he, endowed with so great strength, undeservedly obtain an increase of grace, who guided by his learning, was unwilling to deviate from the path of a just life.

51.

From that place Columban proceeded to Theudebert, who received him joyfully. Many brethren had already
come to him from Luxeuil, whom he received as if they had been snatched from the enemy. Now the king promised to seek out beautiful places, suitable for God’s servants, where they could preach to the neighboring people. Columban declared, that if the king was in earnest and would actively support him, he would gladly remain there longer and try to sow the seeds of faith in the hearts of the neighboring peoples. Theudebert commissioned him to choose a suitable place, and, with the approval of all, he decided upon a long-ruined city, which was in the German land commission not far from the Rhine, and which was called Brigantia [Bregenz] But what the man of God did, as he was ascending the Rhine in his boat, must not be passed over in silence.

52.

As they journeyed, they came to the city which was formerly called Maguntiacum. [Mainz] The oarsmen who had been sent by the king to aid the man of God, told him they had friends in the city, who would supply needful food; for already they had long been fasting. The man of God told them to go; but they did not find any. They returned, and in reply to the questions of the man of God said they had been unable to obtain anything from their friends. Then he said "Let me go for a short time to my friend." They wondered how he had a friend there, where he had never been before. But he went to the church and, entering, threw himself on the pavement, and in a long prayer sought the protection of God, the source of all mercy. Immediately the bishop of the city went from his home to the church and, finding Columban, asked who he was. The latter said he was a pilgrim. The bishop answered "If you need food, go to my house and take what you need." After thanking him and also the Creator who had inspired him, Columban hastened to the boat and directed that all the men, except one guard, should go and bring what they wished. But lest this should seem to anyone mere chance, that bishop was accustomed to protest that he had never before given food with so little thought. And he testified that he went to the church that day by divine admonition, on account of the merit of the blessed Columban.

53.

At length they arrived at the place designated, which did not wholly please Columban; but he decided to remain, in order to spread the faith among the people, who were Swabians. Once as he was going through this country, he discovered that the natives were going to make a heathen offering. They had a large cask that they called a cupa, and that held about twenty-six measures, filled with beer and set in their midst. On Columban’s asking what they intended to do with it, they answered that they were making an offering to their God Wodan (whom others call Mercury). When he heard of this abomination, he breathed on the cask, and turning to the learning and faith of Christ, we were baptized by him. Others, who were already baptized but still lived in the heathenish unbelief, like a good shepherd, he again led by his words to the faith and into the bosom of the church.

54.

At that time Theuderich and Brunhilda were venting their wrath not only on Columban, but also on the holy Desiderius, bishop of Vienne. After they had driven the latter into banishment and had done him much evil, they crowned him at last with a glorious martyr’s death. By his deeds, which have been narrated, and by his great adversities he deserved to have a glorious triumph near the Lord.

In the meantime Columban and his companions experienced a time of great need near the city of Bregenz. But although they were without food, they were bold and unterrified in their faith, so that they obtained food from the Lord. After their bodies had been exhausted by three days of fasting, they found so great an abundance of birds—just as the quails formerly covered the camp of the children of Israel, that the whole country near there was filled with birds. The man of God knew that this food had been scattered on the ground for his own safety and that of his brethren, and that the birds bad come only because be was there. He ordered his followers first to render grateful praises to the Creator, and then to take the birds as food. And it was a wonderful and stupendous miracle; for the birds were seized according to the father’s commands and did not attempt to fly away. The manna of birds remained for three days. On the fourth day, a priest from an adjacent city, warned by divine inspiration, sent a supply of grain to St. Columban. When the supply of grain arrived, the Omnipotent, who had furnished the winged food to those in want, immediately commanded the phalanxes of birds to depart. We learned this from Eustasius, who was present with the others, under the command of the servant of God. He said that no one of them remembered ever having seen birds of such a kind before; and the food was of so pleasant savor that it surpassed royal viands. Oh,
wonderful gift of divine mercy! When earthly food was wanting to the servants of Christ, celestial was furnished; as was said of Israel: "He gave to them of the corn of heaven;" when earthly food was brought, the celestial which had been mercifully granted was taken away.

55.

Then Columban was weakening his body by fasting, under a cliff in the wilderness, and he had no food except the apples of the country, which we have mentioned above. A fierce bear of great voracity came and began to lick off the necessary food and carry the apples away in its mouth. When the meal-time came, Columban directed Chagnoald, his servant, to bring the usual quantity of apples. The latter went and saw the bear wandering about among the fruit-trees and bushes and licking off the apples. He returned hastily and told the father, who commanded him to go and set aside a part of the fruit-trees for food for the bear and order it to leave the others for himself. Chagnoald went in obedience to the command, and dividing with his staff the trees and bushes which bore the apples, he, in accordance with Columban's command, set aside the part that the bear should eat, and the other part that it should leave for the use of the man of God. Wonderful obedience, of the bear! It did not venture at all to take food from the prohibited part, but as long as the man of God remained in that place, sought, food only, from the trees that had been assigned to it.

56.

Once Columban though going to the land of the Wends, who are also called Slavs, in order to illuminate their darkened minds with the light of the Gospel and to open the way of truth to those who had always wandered in error. When he proposed to make his vows, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a vision, and showed him in a little circle the structure of the world, just as the circle of the universe is usually drawn with a pen in a book. "You perceive," the angel said, "how much remains set apart of the whole world. Go to the right or the left where you will, that you may enjoy the fruits of your labors." Therefore Columban remained where he was, until the way to Italy opened before him.

57.

In the meantime the compact of peace which Theuderich and Theudebert had made was broken, and each one, priding himself on the strength of his followers, endeavored to kill the other. Then Columban went to king Theudebert and demanded that he should resign his kingdom and enter a monastery, in order not to lose both earthly crown and everlasting life. The king and his companions laughed; they had never heard of a Merovingian on the throne, who had voluntarily given up everything and become a monk. But Columban said, if the king was not willing voluntarily to undertake the honor of the priestly office, be would soon be compelled to do it against his will. After these words the holy man returned to his cell; but his prophecy was soon verified by events. Theuderich immediately advanced against Theudebert, defeated him near Zülpich, and pursued him with a great army. Theudebert gathered new forces and a second battle was fought near Zülpich. Many fell on both sides, but Theudebert was finally defeated and fled.

At that time the man of God was staying in the wilderness, having only one attendant, Chagnoald. At the hour when the battle near Zülpich began, Columban was sitting on the trunk of a rotten oak, reading a book. Suddenly he was overcome by sleep and saw what was taking place between the two kings. Soon after he awoke, and calling his attendant, told him of the bloody battle, grieving at the loss of so much human blood. His attendant said with rash presumption: "My father, aid Theudebert with your prayers, so that he may defeat the common enemy, Theuderich." Columban answered: "Your advice is foolish and irreligious, for God, who commanded us to pray for our enemies has not so willed. The just Judge has already determined what He wills concerning them." The attendant afterwards enquired and found that the battle had, taken place on that day and at that hour, just as the man of God had revealed to him.

Theuderich pursued Theudebert, and the latter was captured by the treachery of his followers and sent to his grandmother, Brunhilda. She, in her fury, because she was on Theuderich's side, shut him up in a monastery, but after a few days she mercilessly had him murdered.

58.

Not long after this Theuderich, struck by the hand of the Lord, perished in a conflagration in the city of Metz. Brunhilda then placed the crown on the head of his son Sigibert. But Chlotar thought of Columban's prophecy and gathered together an army to reconquer the land which belonged to him. Sigibert with his troops advanced to attack him, but was captured, together with his five brothers and great-grandmother Brunhilda, by Chlotar. The latter had the boys killed, one by one, but Brunhilda he had placed first on a camel in mockery and so exhibited to all her enemies round about then she was bound to the tails of wild horses and thus perished wretchedly. As the whole family of Theuderich was now exterminated, Chlotar ruled alone over the
three kingdoms, [*Neustria, Austrasia and Burgundy*] and Columban’s prophecy had been literally fulfilled. For one of the kings and his whole family had been entirely exterminated within three years; the second had been made a clerk by violence; the third was the possessor and ruler of all the kingdoms.

59.

When Columban saw that Theudbert had been conquered by Theuderich, as we said above, he left Gaul and Germany and went to Italy. There he was received with honor by Agilulf, king of the Lombards. The latter granted him the privilege of settling in Italy wherever be pleased; and be did so, by God’s direction. During his stay in Milan, he resolved to attack the errors of the heretics, that is, the Arian perfidy, which he wanted to cut out and exterminate with the cauterizing knife of the Scriptures. And he composed an excellent and learned work against them.

60.

At that time a man named Jocundus appeared before the king and announced that he knew of a church of the holy Apostle Peter, in a lonely spot in the Apennines; the place had many advantages, it was unusually fertile, the water was full of fishes; it had long been called Bobium [*Bobbio*] from the brook that flowed by it. There was another river in the neighbourhood, by which Hannibal bad once passed a winter and suffered the loss of a very great number of men, horses and elephants. Thither Columban now went, and with all diligence restored to its old beauty the church which was already half in ruins.

In this restoration the wonderful power of the Lord was visible. For, when beams of fir were cut amid the precipitous cliffs or in the dense woods, or those cut elsewhere, fell into such places by accident, so that beasts of burden could not approach, the man of God going with two or three companions, as many as the steep paths furnished footing for, placed, in a wonderful manner, on his own and his companions’ shoulders beams of immense weight, which thirty or forty men could scarcely carry on level ground; and where they had hardly been able to walk before, on account of the steepness of the paths, and had moved as if weighed down with burdens, they now walked easily and joyfully, bearing their burden. The man of God, seeing that he was receiving so great aid, urged his companions to finish joyfully the work which they had begun, and to remain in the wilderness with renewed courage, affirming that this was God’s will. Therefore he restored the roof of the church and the ruined walls, and provided whatever else was necessary for a monastery.

61.

During this time king Chlotar, when he saw that the words of Columban had been fulfilled, summoned Eustasius, who was then abbot of Luxeuil, and urged him to go with an escort of noblemen, whom Eustasius himself should select, to the holy Columban and beg the latter, wherever he might be, to come to Chlotar. Then the venerable disciple went to seek his master, and when he found the latter, he repeated Chlotar’s words. But Columban declared, when he heard Chlotar’s request, that he could not undertake the journey again. Eustasius he kept with himself for some time, warned him not to forget his own labors and work, to keep the band of brethren learned and obedient to increase their numbers and educate them according to his own instructions.

To the king he sent a letter full of good advice, and begged him to extend his royal protection and aid to the brethren at Luxeuil. The king received the letter joyfully, as a most pleasing gift and as a pledge of his compact with the man of God. Nor did he forget the latter’s request, but showed his favor in every way to the cloister, gave it yearly revenues, increased its territory in every direction, where the venerable Eustasius desired, and aided its inmates in every way that he could. After a single year in his monastery of Bobbio, Columban the man of God, ended his devout life on the XI. day before the Kalends of December. [*November 21st, probably in 615*] If anyone wishes to learn of his activity, let him seek it in the saints writings. [*these are printed in Migne Patrologia Latinae, Vol 80*] His remains are buried there, [*in Bobbio*] where they have proved their virtues, by the aid of Christ. To Him be glory for ever and ever, world without end. Amen.

END

Edited Dana C. Munro in University of Pennsylvania. Dept. of History: Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European history, published for the Dept. of History of the University of Pennsylvania., Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press [1897?-1907?]. Vol. II. No. 7

See also:

G. Metlake, Life and Writings of St. Columban (1914)
F, MacManus, St. Columban (1963)

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POPE ADRIAN'S BULL "LAUDABILITER" AND NOTE UPON IT

Taken from A History of Ireland by Eleanor Hull

Volume One, Appendix I

"ADRIAN, bishop, servant of the servants of God, to his most dearly beloved son in Christ, the illustrious king of the English, greeting and apostolical blessing."

"Laudably and profitably doth your Majesty consider how you may best extend the glory of your name on earth and lay up for yourself an eternal reward in heaven, when, as becomes a Catholic prince, you labour to extend the borders of the Church, to teach the truths of the Christian faith to a rude and unlettered people, and to root out the weeds of vice from the field of the Lord; and to accomplish your design more effectually you crave the advice and assistance of the Apostolic See, and in so doing we are persuaded that the higher are your aims, and the more discreet your proceedings, the greater, under God, will be your success; because, whatever has its origin in ardent faith and in love of religion, always has a prosperous end and issue. Certainly it is beyond a doubt, as your Highness acknowledgeth, that Ireland and all the other islands, on which the Gospel of Christ hath dawned and which have received the knowledge of the Christian faith, belong of right to St Peter and the holy Roman Church. Wherefore we are the more desirous to sow in them the acceptable seed of God's word, because we know that it will be strictly required of us hereafter. You have signified to us, our well-beloved son in Christ, that you propose to enter the island of Ireland in order to subdue the people and make them obedient to laws, and to..."
root out from among them the weeds of sin; and that you are willing to yield and pay yearly from every house the pension of one penny to St Peter, and to keep and preserve the rights of the churches in that land whole and inviolate.

"We, therefore, regarding your pious and laudable design with due favour, and graciously assenting to your petition, do hereby declare our will and pleasure, that, for the purpose of enlarging the borders of the Church, setting bounds to the progress of wickedness, reforming evil manners, planting virtue, and increasing the Christian religion, you do enter and take possession of that island, and execute therein whatsoever shall be for God's honour and the welfare of the same.

"And, further, we do also strictly charge and require that the people of that land shall accept you with all honour, and dutifully obey you, as their liege lord, saving only the rights of the churches, which we will have inviolably preserved; and reserving to St Peter and the holy Roman Church the yearly pension of one penny from each house. If, therefore, you bring your purpose to good effect, let it be your study to improve the habits of that people, and take such orders by yourself, or by others whom you shall think fitting, for their lives, manners and conversation, that the Church there may be adorned by them, the Christian faith be planted and increased, and all that concerns the honour of God and the salvation of souls be ordered by you in like manner; so that you may receive at God's hands the blessed reward of everlasting life, and may obtain on earth a glorious name in ages to come."

PRIVILEGE OF POPE ALEXANDER III TO HENRY II, CONFIRMING THE BULL OF ADRIAN, 1172

"Alexander, bishop, servant of the servants of God, to our well-beloved son in Christ, the illustrious king of the English, health and apostolic benediction.

"Forasmuch as these grants of our predecessors which are known to have been made on reasonable grounds, are worthy to be confirmed by a permanent sanction; We, therefore, following in the footsteps of the late venerable Pope Adrian, and in expectation also of seeing the fruits of our own earnest wishes on this head, ratify and confirm the permission of the said Pope granted you in reference to the dominion of the

http://www.libraryireland.com/HullHistory/Appendix1a.php
kingdom of Ireland; (reserving to Blessed Peter and the holy Roman Church, as in England, so also in Ireland, the annual payment of one penny for every house;) to the end that the filthy practices of that land may be abolished, and the barbarous nation which is called by the Christian name, may through your clemency attain unto some decency of manners; and that when the Church of that country which has been hitherto in a disordered state, shall have been reduced to better order, that people may by your means possess for the future the reality as well as the name of the Christian profession."

**NOTE.** In recent years the authenticity of Adrian's so-called "Bull" has been disputed by authorities like Cardinal Moran and Cardinal Gasquet. The latter has, in his *Monastic Life in the Middle Ages* (1922), republished an essay originally printed forty years ago in the *Dublin Review* for July 1883, without any alterations, although a number of its dates and statements have been challenged by later writers (cf. Miss Kate Norgate's paper in the *English Historical Review*, vol. viii, pp. 18-52[3]). But none of these writers notices the important fact that through the whole of the Middle Ages and up to late times the Bull was accepted without question as genuine both by the Irish nation and by the Vatican. The Privilege of Pope Alexander III, Adrian's successor, confirmed the Bull, and his letters to the King, to the clergy and bishops of Ireland, and to the nobles, enforced obedience to it. A copy existing in the Book of Leinster, on a fly-leaf (p. 342 of the facsimile), shows that in the thirteenth century, to which date this copy is ascribed, it was looked upon as part of the historical material belonging to that province.

It is most singular that Cardinal Gasquet should state that Pope John XXII was ignorant of the Bull of Adrian. In the Appeal sent by Donal O'Neill and the Irish princes to this Pope, at the time of the invasion of Edward Bruce, they distinctly appeal to this Bull as a reason for the Pope's interference on their behalf. They say: "Adrian IV, your predecessor, an Englishman, more even by affection and prejudice than by birth, blinded by that affection and by the false suggestions of Henry II, King of England, . . . gave the dominion of this our island, by a certain form of words, to that same Henry II, whom he ought better to
have stripped of his own, on account of the above crime" (i.e.,
the murder of St Thomas à Becket). In his reply, consequent on
this Irish appeal, the Pope, writing from Avignon to King Edward
II, in the second year of his pontificate, to recommend to him
the advisability of dealing more leniently with his Irish subjects,
himself refers to Adrian's Bull as follows: [4] "Know then, Son,
that we have received a certain letter directed in the first
instance from the Irish nobles and people to our sons Anselm,
presbyter, of the title SS. Marcellinus and Peter, and Luke,
deacon of St Mary's in the Broadway, Cardinal Nuncios of the
apostolic see, and by them enclosed to us in a letter of their
own. [5] In which we see it stated, among other things, that
whereas our predecessor Pope Adrian of happy memory, did,
in a certain mode and form of grant, which was distinctly
specified in his apostolic letters drawn up in that behalf, convey
to your progenitor, Henry, King of England, of illustrious
memory, the supreme dominion over Ireland, that king himself
and the kings of England his successors, even to the present
time failing to observe the mode and form so set forth, have in
direct violation of them, for a long period past kept down that
people in a state of intolerable bondage, accompanied with
unheard-of hardships and grievances. Nor was there found
during all that time, any person to redress the grievances they
endured or be moved with a pitiful compassion for their
distress; although recourse was had to you . . . and the loud
cry of the oppressed fell, at times at least, upon your own ear.
In consequence whereof, unable to support such a state of
things any longer, they have been compelled to withdraw
themselves from your jurisdiction and to invite another to come
and be ruler over them," etc.

It is clear that in the early fourteenth century both the Irish
and the Popes believed the grant of Adrian to have been genuine.
The appeal of O'Neill founds its complaint on the fact that the
English kings had not fulfilled the conditions on which the grant
was made: it does not dispute the grant. Moreover this epistle
of the Pope, as also the Bull, are quoted in full by two of the
greatest of Irish ecclesiastical authorities, David Rothe, Bishop
of Ossory, in his Analecta Sacra (1616), when he was
secretary at Rome to the Primate, Peter Lombard, and by the
Primate himself in his book De Regno Hiberniae (1632).[6] He
was long resident in Rome and in close touch with the Papal
Court, and his book is dedicated to Pope Urban VIII. Neither of these men had any doubt of the genuineness of the document. A later example of the Papal recognition of the Bull is found in the letter of instructions given by Pope Innocent X to the nuncio Rinuccini, when he was sent from Rome to Ireland during the Confederate Wars in 1645. It contains a brief summary of English dealings with Ireland in the past. In it occur the words: "Henry, desiring to strengthen his empire, . . . wished to subdue the island of Ireland; and to compass this design, had recourse to Adrian, who, himself an Englishman, with a liberal hand granted all he coveted. The zeal manifested by Henry to convert all Ireland to the faith moved the soul of Adrian to invest him with the sovereignty of the island," etc. [7] It is clear that later Popes did not disavow Adrian's act. Nor is the distinction attempted to be drawn by some modern writers between the "Donation" and the "Bull" visible in the writings of these authorities. The so-called Bull was an expression of approval and benediction of Henry's action similar to that bestowed by an earlier Pope on Duke William when he proposed to add the crown of England to his dukedom of Normandy, or to the approval by another Pope of John's visit to Ireland, symbolized by the gift of a crown of peacock's feathers. Pope Alexander's three epistles in 1172 declare that when he heard that Henry, "instigated by divine inspiration," had subjected the Irish people to his dominion he had "returned thanks to Him who had conferred so great a victory." He "has learned with joy" that the Irish kings have taken Henry as their sovereign and he exhorts them to fidelity.[8] His legate, Vivianus, at the synod of Dublin immediately afterward "made a public declaration of the right of the king of England to Ireland" and threatened excommunication against all "who presumed to forfeit their allegiance," an attitude persevered in by the Papal See up to the reign of Elizabeth, when the Reformation introduced new considerations.

The gift of Adrian was partly a consequence of the fatherly concern felt by the Pope for the spiritual welfare of the Irish people, of the moral and spiritual condition of whom St Malachy and St Bernard had recently given a desponding report, and it was partly a move in that Weltpolitik which was gradually extending the power of the Roman curia over every part of Europe. At a far later date Pope Alexander VI put forth a similar
claim in his division of the entire Western world between Spain 
and Portugal. These gifts, while extending the Papal support to 
the recipients in their ambitious projects, at the same time gave 
expression to the assumption of an authority which claimed to 
stand above kings and made them suppliants at the hands of 
the spiritual power.

[1] The original text of this Bull will be found in Dimock's edition 
of the works of Giraldus Cambrensis, vol. v, pp. 317-319 
(1867).

[2] For the original see ibid., pp. 318-319; and Ussher's 
Sylloge, No. 47.

[3] See also G. H. Orpen, Ireland under the Normans (1911), i, 
287-318.

ccccxxii, p. 201.

[5] The two cardinals arrived in England in the summer of 1317, 
more than two years after the landing of Edward Bruce in 
Ireland.


[8] Sweetman, Calendar, i, No. 38, pp. 6, 7; Black Book of the 
Exchequer, Q-R., fol. 8b, 9, 9b.

Taken from A History of Ireland by Eleanor Hull

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The Confession of St. Patrick

St. Patrick
The Confession of St. Patrick

**Author(s):** Patrick St. (c. 390-c. 461

**Publisher:** Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library

**Description:** St. Patrick is a patron saint of Ireland. Although many details of his life are shrouded in mystery and legend, it is clear that St. Patrick had a profound impact upon the people of Ireland. The *Confessions of St. Patrick* is the brief story of St. Patrick’s life, told through his own eyes. The work provides an intriguing glance into one of history’s best-known saints. The *Confessions of St. Patrick* is similar to St. Augustine’s *Confessions*—they are more theological in nature than autobiographical. Scholars have speculated that St. Patrick penned this work in defense of his good name, after having his character attacked by people in power. Regardless, it provides a stirring account of the miraculous ways that God works, and encourages believers into a life of courage and holiness.

Tim Perrine  
CCEL Staff Writer

**Subjects:** Christianity  
Biography
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The “Confessio” of Saint Patrick

From The Robot Wisdom Pages
1. I, Patrick, a sinner, a most simple countryman, the least of all the faithful and most contemptible to many, had for father the deacon Calpurnius, son of the late Potitus, a priest, of the settlement [vicus] of Bannavem Taburniae; he had a small villa nearby where I was taken captive. I was at that time about sixteen years of age. I did not, indeed, know the true God; and I was taken into captivity in Ireland with many thousands of people, according to our deserts, for quite drawn away from God, we did not keep his precepts, nor were we obedient to our priests who used to remind us of our salvation. And the Lord brought down on us the fury of his being and scattered us among many nations, even to the ends of the earth, where I, in my smallness, am now to be found among foreigners.

2. And there the Lord opened my mind to an awareness of my unbelief, in order that, even so late, I might remember my transgressions and turn with all my heart to the Lord my God, who had regard for my insignificance and pitied my youth and ignorance. And he watched over me before I knew him, and before I learned sense or even distinguished between good and evil, and he protected me, and consoled me as a father would his son.

3. Therefore, indeed, I cannot keep silent, nor would it be proper, so many favours and graces has the Lord deigned to bestow on me in the land of my captivity. For after chastisement from God, and recognizing him, our way to repay him is to exalt him and confess his wonders before every nation under heaven.

4. For there is no other God, nor ever was before, nor shall be hereafter, but God the Father, unbegotten and without beginning, in whom all things began, whose are all things, as we have been taught; and his son Jesus Christ, who manifestly always existed with the Father, before the beginning of time in the spirit with the Father, indescribably begotten before all things, and all things visible and invisible were made by him. He was made man, conquered death and was received into Heaven, to the Father who gave him all power over every name in Heaven and on Earth and in Hell, so that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and God, in whom we believe. And we look to his imminent coming again, the judge of the living and the dead, who will render to each according to his deeds. And he poured out his Holy Spirit on us in abundance, the gift and pledge of immortality, which makes the believers and the obedient into sons of God and co-heirs of Christ who is revealed, and we worship one God in the Trinity of holy name.

5. He himself said through the prophet: ‘Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.’ And again: ‘It is right to reveal and publish abroad the works of God.’

6. I am imperfect in many things, nevertheless I want my brethren and kinsfolk to know my nature so that they may be able to perceive my soul’s desire.

7. I am not ignorant of what is said of my Lord in the Psalm: ‘You destroy those who speak a lie.’ And again: ‘A lying mouth deals death to the soul.’ And likewise the Lord says
in the Gospel: ‘On the day of judgment men shall render account for every idle word they utter.’

8. So it is that I should mightily fear, with terror and trembling, this judgment on the day when no one shall be able to steal away or hide, but each and all shall render account for even our smallest sins before the judgment seat of Christ the Lord.
9. And therefore for some time I have thought of writing, but I have hesitated until now, for truly, I feared to expose myself to the criticism of men, because I have not studied like others, who have assimilated both Law and the Holy Scriptures equally and have never changed their idiom since their infancy, but instead were always learning it increasingly, to perfection, while my idiom and language have been translated into a foreign tongue. So it is easy to prove from a sample of my writing, my ability in rhetoric and the extent of my preparation and knowledge, for as it is said, 'wisdom shall be recognized in speech, and in understanding, and in knowledge and in the learning of truth.'

10. But why make excuses close to the truth, especially when now I am presuming to try to grasp in my old age what I did not gain in my youth because my sins prevented me from making what I had read my own? But who will believe me, even though I should say it again? A young man, almost a beardless boy, I was taken captive before I knew what I should desire and what I should shun. So, consequently, today I feel ashamed and I am mightily afraid to expose my ignorance, because, [not] eloquent, with a small vocabulary, I am unable to explain as the spirit is eager to do and as the soul and the mind indicate.

11. But had it been given to me as to others, in gratitude I should not have kept silent, and if it should appear that I put myself before others, with my ignorance and my slower speech, in truth, it is written: 'The tongue of the stammerers shall speak rapidly and distinctly.' How much harder must we try to attain it, we of whom it is said: 'You are an epistle of Christ in greeting to the ends of the earth . . . written on your hearts, not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God.' And again, the Spirit witnessed that the rustic life was created by the Most High.

12. I am, then, first of all, countryfied, an exile, evidently unlearned, one who is not able to see into the future, but I know for certain, that before I was humbled I was like a stone lying in deep mire, and he that is mighty came and in his mercy raised me up and, indeed, lifted me high up and placed me on top of the wall. And from there I ought to shout out in gratitude to the Lord for his great favours in this world and for ever, that the mind of man cannot measure.

13. Therefore be amazed, you great and small who fear God, and you men of God, eloquent speakers, listen and contemplate. Who was it summoned me, a fool, from the midst of those who appear wise and learned in the law and powerful in rhetoric and in all things? Me, truly wretched in this world, he inspired before others that I could be—if I would—such a one who, with fear and reverence, and faithfully, without complaint, would come to the people to whom the love of Christ brought me and gave me in my lifetime, if I should be worthy, to serve them truly and with humility.

14. According, therefore, to the measure of one's faith in the Trinity, one should proceed without holding back from danger to make known the gift of God and everlasting consolation, to spread God's name everywhere with confidence and without fear, in order to leave behind,
after my death, foundations for my brethren and sons whom I baptized in the Lord in so many thousands.

15. And I was not worthy, nor was I such that the Lord should grant his humble servant this, that after hardships and such great trials, after captivity, after many years, he should give me so much favour in these people, a thing which in the time of my youth I neither hoped for nor imagined.
16. But after I reached Ireland I used to pasture the flock each day and I used to pray many times a day. More and more did the love of God, and my fear of him and faith increase, and my spirit was moved so that in a day [I said] from one up to a hundred prayers, and in the night a like number; besides I used to stay out in the forests and on the mountain and I would wake up before daylight to pray in the snow, in icy coldness, in rain, and I used to feel neither ill nor any slothfulness, because, as I now see, the Spirit was burning in me at that time.
17. And it was there of course that one night in my sleep I heard a voice saying to me: ‘You do well to fast: soon you will depart for your home country.’ And again, a very short time later, there was a voice prophesying: ‘Behold, your ship is ready.’ And it was not close by, but, as it happened, two hundred miles away, where I had never been nor knew any person. And shortly thereafter I turned about and fled from the man with whom I had been for six years, and I came, by the power of God who directed my route to advantage (and I was afraid of nothing), until I reached that ship.

18. And on the same day that I arrived, the ship was setting out from the place, and I said that I had the wherewithal to sail with them; and the steersman was displeased and replied in anger, sharply: ‘By no means attempt to go with us.’ Hearing this I left them to go to the hut where I was staying, and on the way I began to pray, and before the prayer was finished I heard one of them shouting loudly after me: ‘Come quickly because the men are calling you.’ And immediately I went back to them and they started to say to me: ‘Come, because we are admitting you out of good faith; make friendship with us in any way you wish.’ (And so, on that day, I refused to suck the breasts of these men from fear of God, but nevertheless I had hopes that they would come to faith in Jesus Christ, because they were barbarians.) And for this I continued with them, and forthwith we put to sea.

19. And after three days we reached land, and for twenty-eight days journeyed through uninhabited country, and the food ran out and hunger overtook them; and one day the steersman began saying: ‘Why is it, Christian? You say your God is great and all-powerful; then why can you not pray for us? For we may perish of hunger; it is unlikely indeed that we shall ever see another human being.’ In fact, I said to them, confidently: ‘Be converted by faith with all your heart to my Lord God, because nothing is impossible for him, so that today he will send food for you on your road, until you be sated, because everywhere he abounds.’ And with God’s help this came to pass; and behold, a herd of swine appeared on the road before our eyes, and they slew many of them, and remained there for two nights, and the men were full of their meat and well restored, for many of them had fainted and would otherwise have been left half dead by the wayside. And after this they gave the utmost thanks to God, and I was esteemed in their eyes, and from that day they had food abundantly. They discovered wild honey, besides, and they offered a share to me, and one of them said: ‘It is a sacrifice.’ Thanks be to God, I tasted none of it.

20. The very same night while I was sleeping Satan attacked me violently, as I will remember as long as I shall be in this body; and there fell on top of me as it were, a huge rock, and not one of my members had any force. But from whence did it come to me, ignorant in the spirit, to call upon ‘Helias’? And meanwhile I saw the sun rising in the sky, and while I was crying out ‘Helias, Helias’ with all my might, lo, the brilliance of that sun fell upon me and immediately shook me free of all the weight; and I believe that I was aided by Christ my Lord, and that his Spirit then was crying out for me, and I hope that it will be so in the
day of my affliction, just as it says in the Gospel: 'In that hour', the Lord declares, 'it is not you who speaks but the Spirit of your Father speaking in you.'

21. And a second time, after many years, I was taken captive. On the first night I accordingly remained with my captors, but I heard a divine prophecy, saying to me: 'You shall be with them for two months.' So it happened. On the sixtieth night the Lord delivered me from their hands.

22. On the journey he provided us with food and fire and dry weather every day, until on the tenth day we came upon people. As I mentioned above, we had journeyed through an unpopulated country for twenty-eight days, and in fact the night that we came upon people we had no food.
23. And after a few years I was again in Britain with my parents [kinsfolk], and they welcomed me as a son, and asked me, in faith, that after the great tribulations I had endured I should not go anywhere else away from them. And, of course, there, in a vision of the night, I saw a man whose name was Victoricus coming as if from Ireland with innumerable letters, and he gave me one of them, and I read the beginning of the letter: ‘The Voice of the Irish’; and as I was reading the beginning of the letter I seemed at that moment to hear the voice of those who were beside the forest of Foclut which is near the western sea, and they were crying as if with one voice: ‘We beg you, holy youth, that you shall come and shall walk again among us.’ And I was stung intensely in my heart so that I could read no more, and thus I awoke. Thanks be to God, because after so many years the Lord bestowed on them according to their cry.
24. And another night—God knows, I do not, whether within me or beside me—. . . most words + . . . + which I heard and could not understand, except at the end of the speech it was represented thus: 'He who gave his life for you, he it is who speaks within you.' And thus I awoke, joyful.

25. And on a second occasion I saw Him praying within me, and I was as it were, inside my own body, and I heard Him above me—that is, above my inner self. He was praying powerfully with sighs. And in the course of this I was astonished and wondering, and I pondered who it could be who was praying within me. But at the end of the prayer it was revealed to me that it was the Spirit. And so I awoke and remembered the Apostle's words: 'Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we know not how to pray as we ought. But the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for utterance.' And again: 'The Lord our advocate intercedes for us.'

26. And then I was attacked by a goodly number of my elders, who [brought up] my sins against my arduous episcopate. That day in particular I was mightily upset, and might
have fallen here and for ever; but the Lord generously spared me, a convert, and an alien, for his name’s sake, and he came powerfully to my assistance in that state of being trampled down. I pray God that it shall not be held against them as a sin that I fell truly into disgrace and scandal.
27. They brought up against me after thirty years an occurrence I had confessed before becoming a deacon. On account of the anxiety in my sorrowful mind, I laid before my close friend what I had perpetrated on a day—nay, rather in one hour—in my boyhood because I was not yet proof against sin. God knows—I do not—whether I was fifteen years old at the time, and I did not then believe in the living God, nor had I believed, since my infancy; but I remained in death and unbelief until I was severely rebuked, and in truth I was humbled every day by hunger and nakedness.

28. On the other hand, I did not proceed to Ireland of my own accord until I was almost giving up, but through this I was corrected by the Lord, and he prepared me so that today I should be what was once far from me, in order that I should have the care of—or rather, I should be concerned for—the salvation of others, when at that time, still, I was only concerned for myself.

29. Therefore, on that day when I was rebuked, as I have just mentioned, I saw in a vision of the night a document before my face, without honour, and meanwhile I heard a divine prophecy, saying to me: ‘We have seen with displeasure the face of the chosen one divested of [his good] name.’ And he did not say ‘You have seen with displeasure’, but ‘We have seen with displeasure’ (as if He included Himself). He said then: ‘He who touches you, touches the apple of my eye.’

30. For that reason, I give thanks to him who strengthened me in all things, so that I should not be hindered in my setting out and also in my work which I was taught by Christ my Lord; but more, from that state of affairs I felt, within me, no little courage, and vindicated my faith before God and man.

31. Hence, therefore, I say boldly that my conscience is clear now and hereafter. God is my witness that I have not lied in these words to you.

32. But rather, I am grieved for my very close friend, that because of him we deserved to hear such a prophecy. The one to whom I entrusted my soul! And I found out from a goodly number of brethren, before the case was made in my defence (in which I did not take part, nor was I in Britain, nor was it pleaded by me), that in my absence he would fight in my behalf. Besides, he told me himself: ‘See, the rank of bishop goes to you’—of which I was not worthy. But how did it come to him, shortly afterwards, to disgrace me publicly, in the presence of all, good and bad, because previously, gladly and of his own free will, he pardoned me, as did the Lord, who is greater than all?

33. I have said enough. But all the same, I ought not to conceal God’s gift which he lavished on us in the land of my captivity, for then I sought him resolutely, and I found him there, and he preserved me from all evils (as I believe) through the in-dwelling of his Spirit, which works in me to this day. Again, boldly, but God knows, if this had been made known to me by man, I might, perhaps, have kept silent for the love of Christ.
34. Thus I give untiring thanks to God who kept me faithful in the day of my temptation, so that today I may confidently offer my soul as a living sacrifice for Christ my Lord; who am I, Lord? or, rather, what is my calling? that you appeared to me in so great a divine quality, so that today among the barbarians I might constantly exalt and magnify your name in whatever place I should be, and not only in good fortune, but even in affliction? So that whatever befalls me, be it good or bad, I should accept it equally, and give thanks always to God who revealed to me that I might trust in him, implicitly and forever, and who will encourage me so that, ignorant, and in the last days, I may dare to undertake so devout and so wonderful a work; so that I might imitate one of those whom, once, long ago, the Lord already pre-ordained to be heralds of his Gospel to witness to all peoples to the ends of the earth. So are we seeing, and so it is fulfilled; behold, we are witnesses because the Gospel has been preached as far as the places beyond which no man lives.

35. But it is tedious to describe in detail all my labours one by one. I will tell briefly how most holy God frequently delivered me, from slavery, and from the twelve trials with which my soul was threatened, from man traps as well, and from things I am not able to put into words. I would not cause offence to readers, but I have God as witness who knew all things even before they happened, that, though I was a poor, ignorant waif, still he gave me abundant warnings through divine prophecy.

36. Whence came to me this wisdom which was not my own, I who neither knew the number of days nor had knowledge of God? Whence came the so great and so healthful gift of knowing or rather loving God, though I should lose homeland and family?

37. And many gifts were offered to me with weeping and tears, and I offended them [the donors], and also went against the wishes of a good number of my elders; but guided by God, I neither agreed with them nor deferred to them, not by my own grace but by God who is victorious in me and withstands them all, so that I might come to the Irish people to preach the Gospel and endure insults from unbelievers; that I might hear scandal of my travels, and endure many persecutions to the extent of prison; and so that I might give up my free birthright for the advantage of others, and if I should be worthy, I am ready [to give] even my life without hesitation; and most willingly for His name. And I choose to devote it to him even unto death, if God grant it to me.

38. I am greatly God's debtor, because he granted me so much grace, that through me many people would be reborn in God, and soon after confirmed, and that clergy would be ordained everywhere for them, the masses lately come to belief, whom the Lord drew from the ends of the earth, just as he once promised through his prophets: “To you shall the nations come from the ends of the earth, and shall say, “Our fathers have inherited naught but lies, worthless things in which there is no profit.”” And again: “I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles that you may bring salvation to the uttermost ends of the earth.”
39. And I wish to wait then for his promise which is never unfulfilled, just as it is promised in the Gospel: ‘Many shall come from east and west and shall sit at table with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.’ Just as we believe that believers will come from all the world,

40. So for that reason one should, in fact, fish well and diligently, just as the Lord foretells and teaches, saying, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men,’ and, again, through the prophets: “Behold, I am sending forth many fishers and hunters,” says the Lord,’ et cetera. So it behoved us to spread our nets, that a vast multitude and throng might be caught for God, and so there might be clergy everywhere who baptized and exhorted a needy and desirous people. Just as the Lord says in the Gospel, admonishing and instructing: ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always to the end of time.’ And again he says: ‘Go forth into the world and preach the Gospel to all creation. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he who does not believe shall be condemned.’ And again: ‘This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached throughout the whole world as a witness to all nations; and then the end of the world shall come.’ And likewise the Lord foretells through the prophet: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days (sayeth the Lord) that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams; yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit and they shall prophesy.’ And in Hosea he says: ‘Those who are not my people I will call my people, and those not beloved I will call my beloved, and in the very place where it was said to them, “You are not my people,” they will be called “Sons of the living God.”’
41. So, how is it that in Ireland, where they never had any knowledge of God but, always, until now, cherished idols and unclean things, they are lately become a people of the Lord, and are called children of God; the sons of the Irish [Scotti] and the daughters of the chieftains are to be seen as monks and virgins of Christ.
42. And there was, besides, a most beautiful, blessed, native-born noble Irish [Scotta] woman of adult age whom I baptized; and a few days later she had reason to come to us to intimate that she had received a prophecy from a divine messenger [who] advised her that she should become a virgin of Christ and she would draw nearer to God. Thanks be to God, six days from then, opportune and most eagerly, she took the course that all virgins of God take, not with their fathers’ consent but enduring the persecutions and deceitful hindrances of their parents. Notwithstanding that, their number increases, (we do not know the number of them that are so reborn) besides the widows, and those who practise self-denial. Those who are kept in slavery suffer the most. They endure terrors and constant threats, but the Lord has given grace to many of his handmaidens, for even though they are forbidden to do so, they resolutely follow his example.

43. So it is that even if I should wish to separate from them in order to go to Britain, and most willingly was I prepared to go to my homeland and kinsfolk—and not only there, but as far as Gaul to visit the brethren there, so that I might see the faces of the holy ones of my Lord, God knows how strongly I desired this—I am bound by the Spirit, who witnessed to me that if I did so he would mark me out as guilty, and I fear to waste the labour that I began, and not I, but Christ the Lord, who commanded me to come to be with them for the rest of my life, if the Lord shall will it and shield me from every evil, so that I may not sin before him.

44. So I hope that I did as I ought, but I do not trust myself as long as I am in this mortal body, for he is strong who strives daily to turn me away from the faith and true holiness to which I aspire until the end of my life for Christ my Lord, but the hostile flesh is always dragging one down to death, that is, to unlawful attractions. And I know in part why I did not lead a perfect life like other believers, but I confess to my Lord and do not blush in his sight, because I am not lying; from the time when I came to know him in my youth, the love of God and fear of him increased in me, and right up until now, by God’s favour, I have kept the faith.

45. What is more, let anyone laugh and taunt if he so wishes. I am not keeping silent, nor am I hiding the signs and wonders that were shown to me by the Lord many years before they happened, [he] who knew everything, even before the beginning of time.

46. Thus, I should give thanks unceasingly to God, who frequently forgave my folly and my negligence, in more than one instance so as not to be violently angry with me, who am placed as his helper, and I did not easily assent to what had been revealed to me, as the Spirit was urging; and the Lord took pity on me thousands upon thousands of times, because he saw within me that I was prepared, but that I was ignorant of what to do in view of my situation; because many were trying to prevent this mission. They were talking among themselves behind my back, and saying: ‘Why is this fellow throwing himself into danger among enemies who know not God?’ Not from malice, but having no liking for it; likewise,
as I myself can testify, they perceived my rusticity. And I was not quick to recognize the
grace that was then in me; I now know that I should have done so earlier.

47. Now I have put it frankly to my brethren and co-workers, who have believed me
because of what I have foretold and still foretell to strengthen and reinforce your faith. I
wish only that you, too, would make greater and better efforts. This will be my pride, for ‘a
wise son makes a proud father’.

48. You know, as God does, how I went about among you from my youth in the faith
of truth and in sincerity of heart. As well as to the heathen among whom I live, I have shown
them trust and always show them trust. God knows I did not cheat any one of them, nor
consider it, for the sake of God and his Church, lest I arouse them and [bring about] perse-
cution for them and for all of us, and lest the Lord’s name be blasphemed because of me,
for it is written: ‘Woe to the men through whom the name of the Lord is blasphemed.’

49. For even though I am ignorant in all things, nevertheless I attempted to safeguard
some and myself also. And I gave back again to my Christian brethren and the virgins of
Christ and the holy women the small unasked for gifts that they used to give me or some of
their ornaments which they used to throw on the altar. And they would be offended with
me because I did this. But in the hope of eternity, I safeguarded myself carefully in all things,
so that they might not cheat me of my office of service on any pretext of dishonesty, and so
that I should not in the smallest way provide any occasion for defamation or disparagement
on the part of unbelievers.

50. What is more, when I baptized so many thousands of people, did I hope for even
half a jot from any of them? [If so] Tell me, and I will give it back to you. And when the
Lord ordained clergy everywhere by my humble means, and I freely conferred office on
them, if I asked any of them anywhere even for the price of one shoe, say so to my face and
I will give it back.

51. More, I spent for you so that they would receive me. And I went about among you,
and everywhere for your sake, in danger, and as far as the outermost regions beyond which
no one lived, and where no one had ever penetrated before, to baptize or to ordain clergy
or to confirm people. Conscientiously and gladly I did all this work by God’s gift for your
salvation.

52. From time to time I gave rewards to the kings, as well as making payments to their
sons who travel with me; notwithstanding which, they seized me with my companions, and
that day most avidly desired to kill me. But my time had not yet come. They plundered
everything they found on us anyway, and fettered me in irons; and on the fourteenth day
the Lord freed me from their power, and whatever they had of ours was given back to us
for the sake of God on account of the indispensable friends whom we had made before.

53. Also you know from experience how much I was paying to those who were admin-
istering justice in all the regions, which I visited often. I estimate truly that I distributed to
them not less than the price of fifteen men, in order that you should enjoy my company and I enjoy yours, always, in God. I do not regret this nor do I regard it as enough. I am paying out still and I shall pay out more. The Lord has the power to grant me that I may soon spend my own self, for your souls.

54. Behold, I call on God as my witness upon my soul that I am not lying; nor would I write to you for it to be an occasion for flattery or selfishness, nor hoping for honour from any one of you. Sufficient is the honour which is not yet seen, but in which the heart has confidence. He who made the promise is faithful; he never lies.

55. But I see that even here and now, I have been exalted beyond measure by the Lord, and I was not worthy that he should grant me this, while I know most certainly that poverty and failure suit me better than wealth and delight (but Christ the Lord was poor for our sakes; I certainly am wretched and unfortunate; even if I wanted wealth I have no resources, nor is it my own estimation of myself, for daily I expect to be murdered or betrayed or reduced to slavery if the occasion arises. But I fear nothing, because of the promises of Heaven; for I have cast myself into the hands of Almighty God, who reigns everywhere. As the prophet says: ‘Cast your burden on the Lord and he will sustain you.’

56. Behold now I commend my soul to God who is most faithful and for whom I perform my mission in obscurity, but he is no respecter of persons and he chose me for this service that I might be one of the least of his ministers.

57. For which reason I should make return for all that he returns me. But what should I say, or what should I promise to my Lord, for I, alone, can do nothing unless he himself vouchsafe it to me. But let him search my heart and [my] nature, for I crave enough for it, even too much, and I am ready for him to grant me that I drink of his chalice, as he has granted to others who love him.

58. Therefore may it never befall me to be separated by my God from his people whom he has won in this most remote land. I pray God that he gives me perseverance, and that he will deign that I should be a faithful witness for his sake right up to the time of my passing.

59. And if at any time I managed anything of good for the sake of my God whom I love, I beg of him that he grant it to me to shed my blood for his name with proselytes and captives, even should I be left unburied, or even were my wretched body to be torn limb from limb by dogs or savage beasts, or were it to be devoured by the birds of the air, I think, most surely, were this to have happened to me, I had saved both my soul and my body. For beyond any doubt on that day we shall rise again in the brightness of the sun, that is, in the glory of Christ Jesus our Redeemer, as children of the living God and co-heirs of Christ, made in his image; for we shall reign through him and for him and in him.

60. For the sun we see rises each day for us at [his] command, but it will never reign, neither will its splendour last, but all who worship it will come wretchedly to punishment. We, on the other hand, shall not die, who believe in and worship the true sun, Christ, who
will never die, no more shall he die who has done Christ’s will, but will abide for ever just as Christ abides for ever, who reigns with God the Father Almighty and with the Holy Spirit before the beginning of time and now and for ever and ever. Amen.

61. Behold over and over again I would briefly set out the words of my confession. I testify in truthfulness and gladness of heart before God and his holy angels that I never had any reason, except the Gospel and his promises, ever to have returned to that nation from which I had previously escaped with difficulty.
62. But I entreat those who believe in and fear God, whoever deigns to examine or receive this document composed by the obviously unlearned sinner Patrick in Ireland, that nobody shall ever ascribe to my ignorance any trivial thing that I achieved or may have expounded that was pleasing to God, but accept and truly believe that it would have been the gift of God. And this is my confession before I die.