Review

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or be the heid burrowis for their commoun menstralis,' are liable to be scourged and burned on the cheek, or even hanged.

There is evidence that these harsh measures were carried out to the full extent, and that members of the Ciar were actually hanged in Edinburgh towards the end of the sixteenth century, a period when their oppressions were most severely felt. That this treatment of the Ciar was considered unduly severe by the Gaelic-speaking people is shown by the proverb applied to any course unusually or needlessly drastic, 'Is miosa so na an là a chrochadh na cliar,' This is worse than the day when the Ciar were hanged.

BOOK REVIEWS

Die Altirische Heldensage *Táin Bó Cúailnge* nach dem Buch von Leinster in Text und Uebersetzung mit einer Einleitung herausgegeben von ERNST WINDISCH. Leipzig: 1905. London: Nutt. 42s.

The great Saga of the Gael, upon which Professor Windisch has been engaged for many years, is here presented to us in a thick volume of 1212 pages large 8vo. It contains the text of the tale as preserved in the Book of Leinster (L.L.), compiled about 1150 A.D., with variant readings from other principal MSS.; a literal translation; an elaborate introduction; voluminous and learned notes; vocabularies and supplements,—all, excepting the Gaelic text and variant readings, in German. The Saga, which is the largest and most elaborate of Gaelic Hero-tales, has been a favourite among the people from earliest times. A copy is found in nearly all the oldest and largest MSS. M. D'Arbois de Jubainville, in his *Essai d'un Catalogue de la Littérature épique de l'Irlande*, enumerates fifteen such, found by him in Dublin and London. The distinguished French *savant* did not examine the Scottish collection of MSS. This collection does not now contain a copy of the *Táin*. One of the oldest Scottish MSS. (No. xxxii), which has been amissing since 1841, did however contain a copy of a considerable portion of this famous composition. Dr. Donald Smith wrote a detailed account of this MS., which is printed in the Report of the Committee on the Authenticity of Ossian's Poems (pp. 285-293). Smith assigns the MS. to the eighth century, and quotes the prefatory note to the *Táin*, which enumerates the four points essential to a Gaelic literary work, viz. the *loc* or place, the *aimser* or time, the *pearsa* or author, and the *tucaid* or cause, of the composition. It is easy to gather even from Smith's short excerpt, which may not be too accurately transcribed, that that scholar antedated the lost MS. by several hundred years. Professor Zimmer indeed thinks that he finds evidence (Kuhn's *Zeitschrift*, xxviii. p. 432) that the MS. could

not be older than the fifteenth century. As is well known, the old Gaelic scholars borrowed largely from Latin, not merely the technical terms of grammar, but many of the marks of contraction used in writing Latin MSS. Thus a graph not unlike the numeral 2 represented *est*; 7 stood for *et*; $\bar{s}$ for *sed*, etc. etc. Later transcribers of MSS. used the same marks, whether as words or syllables, to represent not merely the original Latin combinations, but the equivalents of these in Gaelic. Thus 2 came to stand for Gaelic *ta* (*da*), as well as for its equivalent, the Latin *est*; 7 for *ocus* (*agus*) as well as for *et*, and $\bar{s}$ for *acht* (*ach*) as well as for *sed*, the context fixing the correct reading of the mark of contraction in each particular case. By the fifteenth century this practice, not unknown earlier, became common. In Smith's extract the name of the writer of the Tale is given as *Toirpda*. Zimmer at once saw that the name must have been originally written *Toirp2*, and states that the extension of 2 by *da* instead of *est* could not be made earlier than the fifteenth century. What the acute critic evidently overlooked for the moment was that we have now only Dr. Smith's transcript, and that in all probability it is he and not an earlier transcriber who is responsible for the blunder of writing *Toirpda* for *Toirpeist*. To us now the point is of no value in fixing the age of the lost MS. Mr. Ewen M'Lachlan of Aberdeen also read the same MS. This scholar regarded it as the oldest in the Scottish collection at that time. Mr. M'Lachlan wrote a detailed analysis of the portion of the *Tàin Bò Chuailgne* preserved in the MS., from which we find that it began 'with an enumeration of all the forces of the Irish at Cruachan in Connaught, and their march to Ulster under the leadership of Oilill and Meave and Fergus MacRoigh,' and ended with the slaying of Ferbaeth, corresponding to L.L., lines 160-2153, or rather less than one-third of the text, which occupies 6210 lines in Windisch's pages.

Of the fifteen MSS. recited by D'Arbois de Jubainville, Professor Windisch is unable to trace five, but he has made large use of a most important MS., somehow missed by the French author, the Yellow Book of Lecan (Y.B.L.) written in 1391 A.D. Windisch, following Max Nettlau (*Rev. Celt.*, x. 334), arranges the MSS. containing the *Tàin* in three groups, according to the degree of similarity of their several texts. First come *Leabhar na h-Uidhri*, transcribed before 1106 A.D. (L.U.); Y.B.L.; and the Egerton (Eg.) MSS. (Brit. Mus., London), Nos. 1782 and 114. Next in order of date is L.L., which contains the fullest text, and which is here printed; Stowe (St.) No. 984 (Dublin); H. 1, 13 (Dublin); Eg. 209; and Additional (Add.) 18748 (Brit. Mus.). Large portions of the Saga, found in H. 2. 17 (Dublin) and Eg. 93, form the third group.

The genesis and development of these old-world Gaelic Tales, like those of all peoples, bristle with difficulties. It is easy to see that L.U. and Y.B.L. are copies of a common original, now lost. And it can be asserted with confidence, from the old linguistic forms preserved in these two MSS., that their lost original must have been committed to writing in the old period of the language,—in the ninth century, if not even in the eighth. As it

happens, it is Y.B.L., which was not transcribed until nearly three hundred years after L.U., that preserves the old forms best. So with the other groups. They had each a common origin, and it is not always the oldest dated MS. that adheres most closely to the common original. A more obscure question is the relationship of these three groups to each other, and to the archetype of which presumably they all are variants. In all the versions, the Tale, as we have it now, is written, like nearly all the old Gaelic Tales, for the greater part in prose, while now and again the main features of an important incident are gathered up and repeated in verse. Not only so, but the most stirring events are expressed in a literary form which is neither prose nor verse, as we now understand these terms, but which partakes of the character of both. The old editors used to call this literary form *Retoric* (*rhetoricum*), sometimes *Rosg*, but it is known among Scottish Gaelic reciters as *Ruith* or 'Run.' Very probably the old Gael, before they acquired a knowledge of *line* and *rhyme*, constructed their poetry in this literary form, which may well have been, like the Welsh *Englyn*, as Principal Rhys maintains (*Y Cymmrodor*, vol. xviii.), a reminiscence of Latin metres preserved by the Romanised Britons and transmitted by them to the Gael. Quite possibly, as Professor Windisch suggests (lxxx.), this Saga and similar Tales were at first preserved in the professional and popular memory in detached *Retorics* or 'Runs,' while at a later date poets and *scelaidhes* of eminence filled in the interstices in continuous prose. (It will be observed that the death of *Róen* and *Roi, dá shenchaid Tána* 'the two historians of the *Táin*,' by the hand of Cuchulainn is recorded in the Saga itself (p. 197), and according to H. 2. 17 this accounts for the Tale being lost for so long.) In this view of the matter, the old and persistent tradition of Senchan Torpeist's connection with the *Táin Bó Cúalnge* acquires additional interest and importance. When still a very young man, Senchan was selected to pronounce the funeral oration of Dallan Forgaill, chief poet of Ireland and panegyrist of St. Columba, who died in 598 A.D. The young poet acquitted himself so well on this occasion that he was there and then unanimously elected Dallan's successor. Senchan held the office for a long time; he was *ard-ollamh* in the time of King Guaire of Connaught, who died in 659 A.D. One of the first tasks which the poet imposed upon himself was to recover the lost *Táin*. He could find fragments of it everywhere, but the Saga in its entirety nowhere. Various accounts are given of his adventures in this quest, the most detailed being that recorded in *Imtheacht na Tromdhaimhe*, 'The Proceedings of the great (Bardic) Company,' printed in the *Transactions of the Ossianic Society*, vol. v. Senchan, after searching Ireland in vain, passed over to the Highlands of Scotland with a large retinue whose demands upon the hospitality of a comparatively poor district were such that we have reminiscences of *Clíar Shenchain* to this day. He did not obtain the *Táin* in Alba. On another occasion the indefatigable *ollamh* journeyed to the Isle of Man, when he made the acquaintance of a *Torpeist* or 'monster,' an epithet by which the poet has since that time been remembered, in the shape of an

'ill-visaged,' exceedingly loathsome youth, who afterwards appeared as 'a young hero, kingly, radiant, a long eye in his head, his hair golden-yellow : fairer than the men of the world was he, both in form and dress'; and whom the Bards took to be the Genius of Poetry (cp. Cormac's *Gloss*. s.v. 'prúll'). But the great Saga was not to be found in any part of Gaeldom. When the living failed the energetic Senchan, recourse was had to the dead. By the intercession of the Saints of Ireland, Fergus MacRoigh, a chief actor in the Ulster war, and according to many the prime author of the great Tale, was raised from the dead. That hero good-naturedly recited the *Táin* from beginning to end, while by one account Senchan wrote it down, by another this task was performed by St. Ciaran, who utilised the hide of his favourite dun cow (*an odhar*) for the purpose, whence the name—*Leabhar na h-Uidhre*—'The Book of the Dun (Cow).' The persistent association of Senchan's name with this Saga, sometimes as the author of it, but more frequently as its recoverer or redactor, may well mean that the famous *ollamh* bore a leading part in weaving the *disjecta membra* of this great Tale into a connected whole as we now have it.

A much more important question than the origin and development of the Tale as a literary composition is the historical value of its contents. It is by far the most elaborate of the numerous Hero-tales of the Cuchullin or Ulster cycle, placed by the traditional chronology about the beginning of the Christian era, and professes to give a detailed account of the life of the people in that far-off time. Are these traditions in any degree reliable? Much has been written upon the subject, in great part highly controversial, and, it must be allowed, charged on both sides with ignorance and prejudice. Up till the publication of Macpherson's *Ossian* in 1762-3, the Legends of the Gael were regarded by the people themselves as in the main genuine history. An inevitable reaction set in, and among non-Gaels these traditions were contemptuously rejected wholesale as pure fiction. Thereafter among good scholars of the older generation, such as O'Donovan and O'Curry, a large faith abounded, and this no doubt helped to make the earlier disciples of the Zeussian school more sceptical than their master. Because these, or the more impetuous among them, found innumerable inconsistencies in details, they were rather apt to reject in large measure the whole. In his Introduction Professor Windisch examines this problem in its many aspects. He passes under review the accounts which Greek and Latin writers give of the Celtic people and their ways,—a phase of the question which Miss Eleanor Hull has so well handled in this *Review* (vol. iii. pp. 62, 138); the Mythology of the people as compared with that of the other members of the Aryan family, a subject capably discussed by Rhys, Nutt, and others; in short, a comprehensive view of the problem all round. And perhaps it would be difficult to name a safer guide through the tangled maze than this distinguished Celtologist who has read and digested every authoritative utterance on the subject, and who possesses in unusual degree the gifts of clear and orderly statement combined with a

calm, dispassionate judgment. The conclusion arrived at is that with much that is fanciful in detail, and not a little that on the face of it is impossible, the old Gaelic Sagas, and pre-eminently this one, give on the whole a not inaccurate representation of the life of the Gaelic aristocracy in prehistoric times, their manners and customs, their beliefs and methods of government. They were an intellectual race, quick witted, devoted to literature, and, unlike the greater number of modern European nations, with their beliefs and traditions not affected by a Roman occupation.

To most of our readers the contents of the *Táin Bó Cúalnge* are known through the labours of Keating, O'Curry, and especially Miss Hull and Miss Faraday. The subject is the great war between Ulster and the other provinces of Ireland. Among a people who as a rule required no great excuse for fighting, there were no doubt sufficiently weighty reasons for entering upon this war, but the immediate occasion, according to L.L., was here, as frequently elsewhere, trivial enough. In a *Comrád chindcherchaille*, 'pillow-end talk,' or curtain lecture, Oilill and Meave of Connaught took one night to discussing the value of their respective possessions, married women among the Gael, be it observed, requiring no special statute to enable them to hold property. After each article was enumerated and appraised, it was found that the means and estate of the royal couple were exactly equal in value, save only in one item. The king possessed a white-horned bull—*Fíndbennach*—for which no match could be found among the queen's herds. The annoying thing to Meave was that this animal was reared by herself, but in course of time the lordly 'Whitehorn,' disdaining to be owned by a woman, albeit a queen, transferred his services to the king. In her chagrin Meave consulted her factotum Mac Roth, who informed her that he knew of a bull in every way superior to 'Whitehorn,' the *Donn* or 'Brown' of Cualnge in Ulster, and that no doubt the owner might be induced to part with it for a consideration. The queen forthwith despatched Mac Roth to Dare's residence, with attendants carrying valuable presents and promises of more to follow, if Dare, the owner of the bull, agreed to part with the animal. The yeoman was too glad to oblige the queen, and he entertained her messengers all too hospitably. In the course of the evening one of these, in his cups, remarked that it was very handsome of Dare to oblige Queen Meave so readily, when his neighbour retorted: 'Little thanks to him, seeing we would otherwise drive away the animal by force.' Dare's steward was passing through the room at the time; he overheard the remark, and repeated it to his master. The latter was indignant, and next morning he dismissed the queen's messengers with ignominy, informing them that their character as messengers alone saved their heads. When the haughty Meave heard the report of her steward, Mac Roth, it was her turn to become furious. The bull she would have thought Ulster should smoke for it. She summoned the other provinces of Ireland to her aid, in order to avenge the insult. Fergus MacRoigh and Cormac, son of Conchobar, with the exiles of Ulster,

collectively known as the *Dubloinges*, and numbering 3000 (? 1500) warriors, were at Cruachan at the time, and these joined the expedition. The march of the allies from Connaught to Ulster is given in detail, and is of supreme value in the *Topography of Ancient Ireland*. The Ultonian heroes, with the exception of Cuchullin, who escaped the curse, were suffering from the *cess noinden Ulad* at the time, and it fell to the great hero to meet in single combat the braves of the allied forces. Among these the most famous was Ferdiad, of Firdomnann race, and an old companion-in-arms of Cuchullin. The fight of these two heroes at the Ford, and the lament of Cuchullin over the body of his quondam comrade, are worthy of a place alongside the masterpieces of description of chivalrous warfare (pp. 436-599). Meanwhile the Ultonians recover from their debility. They advance to meet the allied hosts. Mac Roth, the scout, sees Conchobar with his leaders and chiefs approaching. He describes them to Fergus, who recognises them and, like Helen on the walls of Troy, tells of their fame to Oilill and Meave. The dress, armour, weapons, insignia, and trappings of the leaders of the Ulster host,—King Conchobar, the *ollamh* Fercertne, the chief poet Athairne, the chief physician Fingin, the chief druid Cathba, the chief councillor and peacemaker Sencha, together with the hero warriors, are described in detail, and form one of the most interesting and valuable chapters of the Tale. 'Lochs and rivers run dry when Fercertne satirises them; they fill again when he praises.' 'No one must refuse anything to Athairne.' Fingin is a greater physician than even Dr. Hornbook, and it must be allowed that MacRoigh is a greater master of chaste hyperbole than Burns. 'If,' says Fergus, 'Fingin only hears the patient's sigh, or even sees the smoke that issues from the house where he lies, he can diagnose the disease and cure it.' As the Ulster host advances, the ever watchful queen sees to it that the *Donn* of Cualnge is sent safely to Cruachan. In the general engagement which follows, the Ulster army is victorious. The allied forces are routed, and find their way back to whence they came as best they can.

As an artistic production the Saga ends somewhat lamely. The Tale concludes with the fight of the two bulls, and here again the victory is with Ulster. The 'Brown' chases 'Whitehorn' all over the country, leaving a limb of him here and there. After he had disposed of his rival in this fashion the *Donn* turned towards his old home in Cualnge, and in his fury committed great slaughter among the women and children who were mourning his absence. Thereafter he turned his back to a hill, and with a blood-burst (! 'like the crack of a nut') his heart broke in his chest. With this incident the *Táin bó Cualnge* ends.

To Gaelic and English readers the one drawback of this book is that it is written in German. Many of us can, no doubt, spell our way through the volume with more or less facility; but it is only the few who are able to use the foreign tongue with such ease as to fully appreciate the wide learning and sound judgment shown on every page of this great work, the

most important contribution to Celtic scholarship since the publication of the *Thesaurus Palaeo-Hibernicus*. DON. MACKINNON.

NOTE

The Latheron Ogam-Stone

This is the latest-found Scottish ogam-stone of which I have heard. From a paper of Dr. Anderson's, which he has kindly sent me, I learn that it was found in 1903 'in the wall of an old byre in Latheron,' Caithness: it is now in the National Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh. A photograph of it was sent me on October 8, 1903, by the Rev. Dr. J. M. Joass of Golspie, but I was then too busy to attack it. In September 1904, however, I saw the photograph again at his house, and he gave it to me: there was also a much larger photograph, but in my opinion much less clear.

My reading is

dunnodnnatmeiqnahnhto

The only differences I find in Dr. Anderson's reading are these:—(1) He does not interpret the unique sign (=ei) after the *m*, nor does he give it so extended an outline as I do; (2) for the three strokes making *ahh* he reads four strokes making *e*, but in a letter to me he admits that the *e* is not certain.

The stone is flaked away just after the last *o*, and broken off altogether a little above it (as well as a little below the first *d*); but with the addition of *nn* necessary to complete the last word the sense is perfect, and I do not believe anything more was written.

The inscription runs up the left side of the stone (the normal direction in the ogam-stones of Scotland, Orkney, and Shetland). The face of the stone exhibits two men riding on horseback, the front one carrying a spear; above them, a bird holding a fish in its claws; above these, interlaced work forming the lower part of a cross.¹

All such stones in Scotland and the northern isles are 'concerned with the ownership or occupation of lands or dwellings. Some, found near to churches, bear a cross to show that the church was owner or occupier';² and the figures of armed laymen on the same side as the cross (as seen also in the Fordun stone of a church of St. Ernan³) should indicate that they were the grantors or lords of the soil, or less probably that they were tenants from the church.

¹ It may be said, 'If this is the shaft of a cross, why is it narrowed at the bottom?' A complete cross with the same peculiarity is in Mr. J. Romilly Allen's *Early Christian Symbolism*, p. 120, and the crucifix on p. 142 will show that the narrow part originally represented the feet and ankles of Jesus, projecting from under a broad wrap which covered the rest of the legs.

² From my *Keltic Researches*, p. 65.

³ *Keltic Researches*, pp. 65-6.