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PRE-HISTORIC IRELAND.

(Continued).

In the mythological monuments of Greece, the Olympian gods are preceded by a single race of beings variously known as Titans, Giants, Earth-born ones, beyond which are seen only Night, Heaven, Earth, Chaos, and such physical entities. In the corresponding literature of Ireland we find the gods, whose name in our monuments is Tuatha De Danan, preceded by various mythological races, beyond whom are no physical entities.

I remark that Grote, in his history of Greece, devotes all his opening chapters to a large superficial account of the mythical ages. Of course, such ages being the product of imagination, or springing from sources far deeper than imagination, namely, that whence religion arises, can be only properly studied in the native monuments, but that the student should be supplied with a cursory and general survey of the whole ground is essential for the right examination of any such monuments, or for the perusal of the results of criticism as it deals with them.

Thus, in any event, and no matter how the Irish historical student desires to approach the early history of this country, some such general survey is requisite. In my own treatment it is unavoidable, for I desire both the critical comments of the present series and the epic narrations of the imaginative series to be read in connection with and in reference to the history of those ages, as they have been formulated by the bards and early historians of Ireland.

My first task then, must plainly be to outline that primal mythical period which lies beyond the epoch of the gods, after which I purpose to sketch the history and character of the divine races, the Tuatha de Danan, and thence pass through the region of the semi-divine and heroic into the domain of pure history. Finally, I shall determine, approximately of course, the point at which, working backward, from verifiable facts, history grows dubious, and the point at which it blends with what may have been at one time, and in another form, history, but as it has reached us is plainly mythical.

PRELIMINARY SKETCH OF EARLY IRISH HISTORY, LEGENDARY AND AUTHENTIC.

Before entering minutely into the various branches of the inquiry before us, I think it will not be amiss to supply the reader with a rapid sketch of the general nature and extent of the ground to be traversed.

The traditional bardic history of Ireland commences with an account of various mythical races, cycles of ancient dim-remembered gods and demi-gods, once potent over the imagination and spiritual sensibilities of the people, but who at the time of the final redaction of the history had grown somewhat dim and faint in the distance. These are known as the Ceasairians, early Fomorians, Partholarians, and Nemedians.

As these pass away, there emerges upon the scene a gigantic but hardly supernatural race of Titanic beings named Fir-bolgs or giant men, and who correspond in our history with the Earth-born enemies of the Olympian gods in the traditional history of Greece.

Finally, come the Irish gods, under the title of Tuatha De Danan "concealed in dark clouds," invisible, immortal, wielders of magic power. At Moy Tura in the west they meet in deadly conflict the great host of the Fir-bolgie giants, whom, with a slaughter of one hundred thousand, they finally overthrow, and either expel or enslave. So Ireland passes into what in Greek tradition was known as the golden age, when the gods dwelt visibly in Erin, exercising over the land a material sovereignty.

Now arises either a younger race of the Tuatha De Danan gods, or of semi-divine heroes and champions, the sons of Milesius, Heber, Heremon, and their brethren, who conquer the elder gods and expel them from the material sovereignty of the land, compelling them to take shelter for ever in the veil of invisibility, which was one of their chief attributes.

At the time of the genesis of this portion of the history there was a considerable communication with Spain, although there is little doubt that originally the sons of Milesius were indigenous gods or heroes, the legend so shaped itself that these Milesian conquerors were represented as Spaniards.

In the scholastic and monastic periods the historiographers, eager to connect the ancestry of the Irish with an eastern source, and to abolish the ethnic pedigrees which connected the Milesians with the gods, framed for them a long ancestry, in which the names are ethnic-Irish, but whose alleged origin is Scythian, and whose fabricated history teems with Biblical and classical allusions and incidents.

The next phase of Irish history exhibits a long line of alleged Kings of all Ireland, the explanation of which is as follows:—

At the time of the final redaction of the history, Ireland, penetrated as it was with the fame of gods and heroes, held innumerable cycles of ballad poetry, whose protagonists were such ancient gods and heroes, having a topical fame frequently ascending to universality. A multitude of the more important of these seemed to the early unscientific historians to require mention in the annals of the country as ancient Kings of Ireland. Hence, the long and all but interminable roll of Milesian monarchs, the supposed posterity of Milesius, descending through a period of some twelve hundred years.

(To be Continued).

B E R E F T.

Darling, I sit alone
Waiting for thee.
Where have thy footsteps gone
Darling from me?
Nature seems blurr'd and dim,
Tears make the shadows swim
Round where the red sun's rim
Dips in the sea!

Darkly the shadows fall
Down o'er the west;
Sadly the woodbirds call
Each from its nest:
Darker the clouds that steal,
Sadder the strains that peal
(Woe I would fain conceal)
Deep in my breast.

Ev'ning brings loneliness
Dismal and deep;
Ah! could I miss thee less
Calm might I sleep!
Dreams of my darling dead
Hover around my bed—
Strange that I then should dread,
Strange I should weep!

Darling, I wait in vain
Lone on Life's shore,
Thee whom the grave again
Ne'er shall restore!
Sleep on awhile, my sweet,
Short are the days and fleet
Till we in death shall meet
Happy once more!

S.

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