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Gaelic and the Green

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## GAELIC AND THE GREEN.

I fear that of late you have had little time to sit quiet at Archersfield and read over old Gaelic songs, but I know it will interest you to hear that a verse from an old Gaelic poem affected me strangely a short time ago. I was reading the "A. I. R." article on the "Carmina Gadelica," and when I noticed some lines in Gaelic I thought I would say the words aloud to myself. I know only a few sentences in Gaelic, and my pronunciation was picked up from books, so you can imagine how badly I said—

Tha caoidh us caoineadh am beinn a cheo,  
Tha gul us glaothach am beinn a cheo,  
Tha bur us baoghal, tha murt us maoghal,  
Tha fuil ga taomadh am beinn a cheo.

The verse, as I said it over, seemed to hold a mournful sadness, a grief out of long ago, but when I read it a second time there was a sorrow on me heavy as death. I heard the wailing of Red Hugh's clansmen, passionate, despairing as on that night after the lost battle when they learned that he must go to Spain.

O, the chief is leaving us, the chief is leaving us,  
The eagle of the North is going across the sea;  
He will never come back to Tyrconnell again,  
Never, never, never again.

When I recovered my ordinary consciousness I was sobbing aloud in the most idiotic fashion. I took up the "A. I. R." to see what the verse was about, for I didn't know a word of the Gaelic, and found that I had been reading a stanza from a dirge for Glencoe.

I was much interested in H. L.'s letter and your reply; I wish you had been kinder to our green. It is the colour of the Dagde Nior, whose harp music brought Spring and Summer over the world. He is, I believe, called the Green Harper even to this day amongst the Gaelic people; they speak too of Green Fire of inspiration—fire connected, I fancy, in some way with the flame beneath the Dagdas cauldron which was kept alight by the breath of nine maidens. This cauldron afterwards became the Holy Grail, so the knight who sets forth on Galahad's quest may well bind the green about his helmet. The Dagdas cauldron had no gift for a coward or a liar, the Grail punished heavily those who sought it with their sins upon them and the green, which the country people call the fairies' colour, brings ill-luck to those who wear it unworthily. You would not have it otherwise, I am sure, Tigcauna.

I learnt a beautiful Gaelic wish lately, "May the road rise to you." That it may, to you, and to all who have Erin's welfare at heart.

So neipigir an botan tuic.

mire,

CILA O'S.

## TO THE EDITOR OF THE ALL IRELAND REVIEW.

SIR—May I add a few disjointed remarks to your interesting article on Ptolemy's Map of Ireland. I shall make them as brief as possible. Modern scholarship has, I think, shown that there is much more to be learned from Ptolemy's Ireland than O'Flaherty thought when he said that to investigate the names was "oleum et operam perdere" and "ventos venari." To begin with the district lying between the Suir and the Barrow, in the very heart of which the breezy "A. I. R." is published, is assigned by Ptolemy to the Oúroíai (Usdiæ), a tribe name which Professor Rhys has identified with Ossraighe (Ossory). The essential elements may be equated—ousd or osd would regularly become by assimila-

tion oss or os—while a Greek termination replaces the Irish one. Again north of the Boyne, in a district which probably included the present county of Armagh, are placed the Ouolountioi or Oudlountioi, a name which became worn down to that of the great people whom we find in the same district in the very dawn of history, viz., the Ulaid (dat Ulaib acc Ulu) the inhabitants of Ulad. The prehistoric fortress of Emain Macha may well be Ptolemy's Regia, though before translating it "royal city" it must be remembered that it is the Greek Eujia, and not the Latin regia, which is presented to us. Possibly, however, the word may represent a derivative of the Irish Ri or Rig, a King. A map of the 2nd century which gives us the Ultonians and Ossorians in their historic territories is not to be thought lightly of.

Besides the Boyne, the Barrow, and perhaps the Shannon, other river names have been traced with more or less certainty. We may connect the river Erne and the Ernai of the Firbolg, according to Irish legend, swallowed up in Loch Erne (Four Masters, A.M., 3751), with the Ecdinoi. I have elsewhere given grounds for suspecting that the river Dabrona should be corrected to Sabrona and may be identified with the Sabrann, the old name for the Lee (of the Sabrina or Severn, Welsh, Hafren). On the banks of this river, perhaps on the site of the city of Cork, may be placed Ivernus the chief seat of the Iverni, who gave their name to the island, and who probably represent the aboriginal inhabitants of Ireland before the arrival of the first wave of Celtic immigration on her shores. A reminiscence of the name occurs in Irish literature in the eponymous Emher or Ebher (—ever) of the Milesian legend. Miss Hickson, a great authority on Kerry topography, has shown reason for thinking that Ptolemy's river Dur has survived in the name Moyderwell, in Tralee (recte Magh dur), and in Bunavoundur, near Killeton (i.e. Bun-abhain-Dur); while it has occurred to me that the name of Ptolemy's Argita river, apparently from its position the northern Bann, may survive in Moyarget (Magh airgead—the silver plain) not far from its mouth.

As to the islands—opposite Eblana (a name which cannot be equated with Dublin, though the position was not far off) is an island, Edros, which probably represents Edar or Benn Edair, the Irish name replaced by the Norse Howth. In Ptolemy's time Howth may possibly have been an island, or at any rate may easily have been mistaken for one. Malæos, the Malea insula of Adamnan, is Mull; and Rikina is Rechra (gen Rechrainn) now Rathlin.

To equate the Gangani with Gann-geni—the posterity of Gann, may be trifling with the subject, but we need have little hesitation in associating the Brigantes with the goddess Brigit. I would add that the latest and most critical editor of Ptolemy, Karl Muller, rejects Nagnata for Magnata, which (if accepted) finally disposes of the suggested identification with Oll-Negmacta, for which indeed there was never much to be said. He suspects, too, that the word Epionpos has here crept in as a sort of gloss on the name as if Magna, for in the 8th book the only two "Epionproi tioleis" are Ivernus and Rhaiba.

There is much more to be said about Ptolemy's Map, but I have probably already exhausted your patience and that of your readers.—Yours, etc.,

GODDARD H. ORPEN.

Monksgrange, Enniscorthy.