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The Founding of Emain Macha (Continued)

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These last will have their digging tools with them; let all be ready within an hour."

"May I ask your honour with what purpose?"

"Surely. To raise new entrenchments and a fort for the planting of siege cannon upon a hill hard by the West Port. I shall make a fresh breach there and storm Kinsale, God willing, on that side. I go with you myself to point out the place."

"That proposition was made formerly in the Council by the President of Connaught," replied the Marshal.

"It is now ordered by me," said the Viceroy.

"It is an affair of great moment," said the Marshal. "I would hear it debated at the Council Board."

"Mr. Marshal," replied the young Deputy, "I have had enough of Councils. They have made me the laughing stock of my enemies and a spectacle of cowardice to all Ireland, and will, if suffered, be the overthrow of the realm. I have heard that the only Viceroy who ever served the State effectively told his Council that he would see them riding through the Castle gate on cabbage staves ere they should thwart his will. God's death, man, I am the Queen's Deputy, I will not be clerk to the Council."

"Sir John Perrott lost his life," replied the Marshal with such a look as we can imagine.

"And I will lose mine, if need be. Mr. Marshal, wilt thou obey orders?"

"Your honour shall be obeyed," said Wingfield, and he left the tent.

(To be Continued).

THE FOUNDING OF EMAIN MACHA.

(Continued).

The morning broke clear over the hills and woods of the southern king's territory. As the sun rose high the warriors assembled outside the dun, and sweet was the musical ringing and tinkling of their shields and spears as they moved about, laughing and talking one with another; for the awe of the preceding evening had somewhat worn off in the sunlight of the morning, which had filled them with lightheartedness and joy. Then a herald came forth from the dun, and blew three blasts on a trumpet, and with the blowing of the third blast all had moved inside the dun, where the three kings sat on the high seat at the northern end. Royal was the appearance of the kings that morning, in their brattas of ever-changing colours, and though Kimbaoth was the youngest of the rulers, yet more brilliant were the hues of his bratta, more shining the golden wheel-brooch on his breast and the righ-barr encircling his noble head. Surely, O Kimbaoth, thou too wert of that race, famous in song, who fought at Moytura for freedom from the dark Fomorian tyrants!

When the murmur of voices and the sound of moving feet had ceased Kimbaoth mac Fintaun arose and propounded the project which in sleep had entered and shaped itself in his mind, and this was that henceforth Aedh and Dithorba and himself should not rule separately over a divided land, but should make a compact to rule each for seven years, so that the people of the island would be united and tribal wars avoided. And he furthermore suggested that Aedh Ruaidh should reign first, for his fame as a warlike and just king was throughout the isle. But as he harangued the assembly a murmur of dissension came from some there, and when Kimbaoth ceased one of his warriors arose and said:—

"It pleases us not to be subject to any king save

you, O Kimbaoth, son of Fintaun. This thing we do not like, for if peace reigns in Eire she will no longer have need of warriors; the battle-chariots will grow rusty and useless, the spears and shields will decay in idleness, and we—we shall become as women, and spend our time in brooding and speaking of those days when we were indeed warriors. We do not want to become a nation of bards or druids, for far dearer to us than the singing of men is the singing of demons as they accompany us forth to the battle. Let us remain as aforetime, to battle and feast as of yore."

Loud men rang the shouts of the southern heroes through the great hall, and echoed amid the massive pillars and the far-away rafters supporting the dimly-seen roof. At that shout the brows of Aedh and Dithorba and their followers darkened, and it needed only a word to set the spears flashing and the shields clanging. But round the head of Kimbaoth the righ-barr gleamed more brightly, and undisturbed was his countenance. In his clear voice he spoke again, and chid his rebellious people, and subdued the war-spirit burning in them.

"Would you then always be in arms?" he questioned. "Not thus is the road to the gods you swear by: to immortal Angus and Mannanan, to Lu Lamfada and the Mor Reega. Since you elected me for Ard-Rie have I misled or ill-advised you once, and have you not trust in me now? Peace must alternate with war, and this I know, your arms will not grow rusty through idleness. Before me in the future I see a great battle, such as has not been fought in Eire within remembrance. So make yourselves strong, and train up the youths in sling-ing, in spear-casting, in chariot-driving, and the unfolding of the battle-scythes, that when that day comes we may not be beaten in ignominy from the plains of war. More of this future day I cannot say, nor how nor why the battle will arise, but it will surely be."

His people were silenced, for the king was a seer and knew of the things to be. So the compact was made whereby Aedh should reign seven years, Dithorba seven, and Kimbaoth last of all, at his own request, he being the youngest, though wisest. But when the two elder kings had reigned, and Kimbaoth was ruling, Aedh Ruaidh, dreaming one day in the hot sunlight where the Erne falls and breaks into rainbow-coloured spray by Ballyshannon, heard voices calling to him from the water:—"Aedh, Aedh Ruaidh, we await thee, come with us." And in his dreaming he arose, and fell into the tossing waters, since then called from him Eas-Aedha-Ruaidh (now the Falls of Assaroe).

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