Michael V. Duignan, ‘Historical Introduction’, in Lord Killanin & Duignan, *The Shell Guide to Ireland* [2nd edn.] (1967)

Prehistoric Ireland

Hunters and Fishers

Two skeletons found in 1928 in Kilgreany cave, Co. Waterford, show us that about the close of Late Glacial times, perhaps before 9000 B.C., Final Palaeolithic hunters were living in the south of Ireland. We know nothing else about them, but the animals on which they preyed may well have included the great Irish Elk (Giant Deer)—now long extinct—and the reindeer.

Shortly after 6000 B.C., by which time Ireland was an island, Mesolithic hunter-fishers were living in the densely wooded Bann valley, as well as by the Antrim seashore close to inexhaustible supplies of excellent flint. Because of the abundance of their flints at Larne, these people have been called Larnians. We are still uncertain of their origins and know little of their culture; but in the course of the next three thousand years or so we find them spreading coastwise as far west as the mouth of the Garvogue on the borders of Co. Roscommon and Co. Sligo. At their camping places on the Leinster coast we find them accompanied by the hunting dog, though the food they ate by the sea was mostly shell fish in rich variety.

Farmers and Tomb-builders

Before 3000, perhaps as early as 3500, Neolithic stock-raisers and grain-growers had joined the hunter-fishers in the heavily forested island. Their pottery and other evidence show that these first Irish farmers belonged to the so-called Western Neolithic cultural complex which, spreading northwards from the mainland, flooded so much of the British Isles in !he later fourth and earlier third millennia B.C.

While it is in the south that we might expect to find the earliest signs of the presence of the neolithic farmers, the evidence to date suggests that they reached the north no later than the south. That evidence demonstrates the co-existence of two contrasting neolithic provinces. In the southern two-thirds of the island, south that is of a line from Clifden Bay in the west to Dundalk Bay in the east, the Western Neolithic is represented by a few scattered ritual and settlement sites (the most notable on the light limestone soils about Lough Gur) of varying date, none of which need represent the initial stage of colonisation there; likewise by a very few single-burial graves such as pit-graves (which may be under the floor of the dwelling) and stone cists (which may be under round mounds). The origins and relationships of this southern neolithic complex have yet to be unravelled.

In the northern third of the island is a Western Neolithic province distinguished first and foremost by long-cairn collective-burial chamber tombs of the kind here called court graves (alias court cairns). Remains of some three hundred of these survive, widely distributed, but noteworthy for marked concentrations in the neighbourhood of certain port; half a dozen outliers have been recorded in South Galway, north Clare, north Tipperary, south Kilkenny, and south-west Waterford. The specialists are still divided as to the homeland of the tomb-builders. Some would bring them from Britain to east Ulster via ports like Carlingford Lough; others visualise them as coming from Atlantic France, by-passing the southern two-thirds of Ireland, and landing on the northern shores of Connacht.

Inside the court-grave province, probably in mid-Ulster, there developed a simpler form of tomb, the portal grave (portal dolmen), whose funerary deposits confirm its architectural kinship with the court grave. These portal graves—about one hundred and fifty survive—spread widely throughout the court-grave province, and south of it as well, particularly down through the eastern counties as far as Co. Waterford. From eastern Ireland they spread to Britain.

A major complication was added to the Irish Neolithic by the arrival (c. 2500 B.C.?) of a fresh, and itself complex, collective-tomb element, one characterised by round-cairn passage graves. Commonly cruciform, the Irish passage graves include some of Europe’s most impressive prehistoric monuments (see Newgrange). Their first builders, who also colonised Anglesey, came up the Irish Sea to enter the country in the Liffey-Boyne area. Thereafter passage graves and their simple polygon relatives about one hundred all told—spread mainly north-westwards into the court-grave province as far as Sligo Bay. A scatter of tombs through the eastern half of Ulster as far as Fair Head marks a second substantial penetration of the court-grave province. From west Wicklow isolated outliers trail southwards into Cos. Kilkenny, Tipperary, and Limerick.

The builders of the passage graves favoured hill-top sites, and often grouped their tombs in cemeteries where the clustering of satellites about major monuments is a recurring feature. In each of these respects, as likewise in the matter of their hieratic art, the passage graves present noteworthy contrasts with every other class of Irish chamber tomb.

The passage graves themselves, and their art, suggest that Brittany was the home of the new colonists. At the same time, some of the grave goods point beyond Brittany to Iberia, where the Atlantic passage graves originated. Unlike the court graves and the portal graves, the passage graves continued in use (or were re-used) in the Bronze Age. Indeed, their arrival in Ireland may be said to herald the coming of metallurgists, for, while metal objects have never been recorded in an Irish passage-grave context, the passage-grave builders of southern Iberia were acquainted with copper, and some at least of the Irish tombs were in the neighbourhood of copper deposits. (One of the passage stones at Newgrange seems to have been dressed with a metal claw.) Moreover, Irish passage-grave art includes motifs which recur among the rock-scribings so abundant in the copper-bearing region of south Kerry and south-west Cork. These southern scribings (cup-marks, cup-and circle devices, concentric circles, “map- patterns”, etc.) find their closest counterparts in the Galician region of Portugal and Spain, and suggest the arrival in Munster of metallurgists from that quarter.

In its Irish environment, where it was open to influences from native mesolithic traditions as well as from various quarters overseas, the Neolithic gradually assumed a local complexion and developed into a new amalgam. In their turn, the Neolithic farmers and tomb-builders influenced the ancient hunting and food collecting societies which, as a result, spread much more widely through the wooded interior of the island, adopting neolithic ideas and equipment, and generating vigorous -secondary- neolithic cultures whose traditions are still discernible in the Bronze Age.

Metallurgists, Traders, and Warriors

At an advanced stage of the Irish Neolithic it was overtaken by the arrival of Beaker Folk, their traces being found in all four provinces. The newcomers may have arrived in two waves, a small one (before 2000 B.C.?) from Atlantic Europe (Brittany?), a much stronger one, around or after 2000, from Holland the Rhine (and Central Europe?) by way of Britain.

Whereas in Middle Europe and in Britain generally the Beaker Folk are among representatives of the Single-burial tradition, in Iberia, Brittany, the Channel Islands, and part of Scotland their distinctive beakers are found in collective-burial tombs. In Ireland Beaker ware-both early and late-has been found in eight (of fifteen) excavated collective-burial tombs belonging to the wedge-shaped gallery-grave class (below). While this is too small a sample for any valid generalisations, it is noteworthy that, as yet, not one Beaker single-burial has been found in Ireland. Most of the Irish finds of Beaker have, in fact, come from widely scattered habitation sites, much of the pottery in the Lough Gur area occurring in the later levels of sites said to have been occupied without a break from Neolithic to Bronze Age times. Ritual sites, too, have yielded Beaker, sometimes in quantity. Among such sites is an embanked stone circle (see Grange under Lough Gur) which also yielded neolithic-type and Bronze Age pottery. These and other considerations (such as the occurrence of copper or bronze objects in four of the eight Beaker collective tombs) suggest that in Ireland, as elsewhere, the Beaker Folk had to do with the first exploitation of local metal resources. They may well have been responsible for the “Copper Age” or initial phase of the Irish Bronze Age. Beaker traditions certainly contributed to the Irish Bronze Age proper.

The short-cairn wedge-shaped gallery graves, about two per cent of which have yielded Beaker, are at once the most numerous (some four hundred surviving examples) and most widespread of the Irish chamber tombs. The main distribution lies in the south-west, the west, and the north; but a few tombs occur in east Leinster. Once again we are dealing with tombs whose counterparts may be found in north-west France. The Irish tombs continued to be built and used well into the Bronze Age.

The replacement, from about 2000 B.C. onwards, of edged implements of stone by implements of metal was necessarily long drawn out, and brought with it no cultural revolution, no fundamental change in the basic economy established by the neolithic farmers. As soon as that economy had become capable of supplying the food for prospectors and metal-workers it had been only a question of how soon Ireland’s gold and copper resources, exceptionally abundant for North-west Europe, would lure prospectors and exploiters from regions, like South-West and Middle Europe, where the demand for metal was steadily increasing. Inevitably, therefore, when her own Bronze Age proper began (in the seventeenth century?) Ireland quickly became a major focus of metal manufactures and trade.

The Galician rock-scribings of Munster suggest an Iberian contribution to early Irish metallurgy. Some early Irish metal types do the same. Others mirror Beaker connections with Britain, yet others contacts with Middle Europe. Before very long, however, Ireland began to make her own distinctive contributions to Bronze Age Europe and Irish craftsmen-traders were peddling their wares in many lands—Britain, Iberia, France, the Low Countries, Central Germany, the West Baltic area where their competitors sometimes found it worth their while to imitate Irish products. Prominent in this early Irish export trade were *lunulae* (crescentic neck ornaments of Portuguese ancestry) and "sun-discs" of sheet gold, halberds (weapons of Middle European ancestry) of copper, and axes of bronze.

In exchange Ireland acquired special products (daggers, axes, halberds, amber, beads of glass and of faience)—as well as new techniques from Portugal, Britain, Central Europe, the Baltic, and the eastern Mediterranean. After a time Irish initiative seemingly weakened, and in the fifteenth century or thereabouts the Irish metal industry is markedly influenced by Central European ideas reaching her, in the main, via Southern England.

The brilliant earlier phase of the Irish Bronze Age proper ended in the fourteenth century, to be followed by a couple of centuries during which the skill of the local craftsmen was devoted to the progressive development of established metal types rather than to the devising of new ones, centuries that is, in which the invigorating connections with the mainland seemingly slackened and were feebler than was the case in Southern Britain. Thereafter, however, came (c.1200-900 B.C.) a truly vigorous and wealthy period which strongly reflects the lively stimulus of the Nordic Bronze Age of Denmark and North-west Germany on Southern England. These centuries are marked by a revitalising and reorganising of Irish industry (exemplified by new techniques, by an elaboration of the craftsman's equipment, and perhaps—by a new trading system); by an abundance of repoussé and bar-gold ornaments (torques, ear-rings, bracelets, pins; &c.) in which Nordic influences are conspicuous, East Mediterranean and West European not insignificant; and by the adoption of new bronze types (notably the socketed axe and—towards the end—the leaf-shaped slashing sword) which thereafter figure prominently in the archaeological record. While the socketed axe, of Central European ancestry, reached Ireland via Britain, the first swords seem to have come from France.

Between the tenth century and the eighth intimate connections with the English Channel area led to a further reorganisation of the Irish metal industry. (Accompanying the first signs of manufactures on an unprecedented scale is a significant increase in the number of slashing swords.) Then, in the eighth century, comes the climax of the Irish Late Bronze Age.

The Late Bronze Age, like the ensuing Early Iron Age critical for the emergence of the Gaelic Ireland of history, remains obscure in several important respects, largely owing to the paucity of known settlements and burials and to the fact that the pottery available is not commensurate with the exotic metal types.

One outstanding feature of the Late Bronze Age is the evidence for a technological and industrial revolution that is linked with a much wider range of contacts with the outside world, not so much now with Britain as with West-central Europe, North Germany, South Scandinavia, Iberia, and the Mediterranean. Of particular note are the connections with Denmark, and with Central Europe of the Late Urnfield phase of the Bronze Age and of the initial (Hallstatt) phase of the Celtic Iron Age. It is sometimes assumed that the intrusive metal types imply a succession of invasions; but, in the earlier stages at any rate, the exotic types in question can be explained by trade relations involving, at most, the arrival of smiths belonging to Continental schools.

Thanks to the external stimuli, the output of the Irish metal industry now reached its peak, a peak characterised by the enormous output of the gold and armament industries, by technological innovations (e.g. the making of shields and buckets of sheet bronze), and by an extended range of artificer's tools. At the same time a noteworthy increase in the number and size of hoards buried in the earth by merchants and metal-founders suggests a likelihood that life had become less secure, a suggestion strengthened by some few fortifications (all very late?) as well as by the increase in the output of weapons of war. Round about 600/500 B.C. a fresh exotic element is revealed by the first of forty-odd bronze swords indicating contacts with the Hallstatt world. These swords join with a few personal ornaments in signalling the approach of the Iron Age.

Despite its recurring phases of close contact with the outside world, the Irish Bronze Age, viewed as a whole, provides little evidence of substantial immigrations after the arrival of the Beaker Folk, for much of the pottery of the earlier phases—Food Vessels and Cinerary Urns—can be traced to local Neolithic-Beaker origins. Thus the Irish Bowl variety of Food Vessel, frequent in the earlier Single-burial graves, represents a fusion of native Neolithic and incoming Beaker traditions. However, the Yorkshire Vase type of Food Vessel points to immigration from Britain via Ulster; as does also the encrusted variety of Cinerary Urns found with so many of the cremations typical of the developed Bronze Age; but these two classes of pottery likewise have their roots in the insular Neolithic. (In its turn the Irish Bowl spread to north and west Britain, where it exerted its own influence. A small group of late collective tombs, the V-shaped passage graves of the Tramore district whose counterparts are found in the Scilly Isles and in France, points to immigration from Europe.

By and large the later Bronze Age pottery carries on the established traditions. The few innovations assignable to the closing phases are imperfectly understood. Of these the most conspicuous are large urns of Knocknalappa and Flat-rimmed Ware. Knocknalappa urns seem to have been suggested by Late Urnfield sheet-bronze buckets which found their way to both Britain and Ireland in the eighth century and were speedily imitated in insular workshops. The Flat-rimmed Ware is hold to belong to a family already present in seventh century Britain and likewise thought to indicate contact with Late Urnfield Europe.

In Ireland, as elsewhere, a noteworthy contrast between the Neolithic and Bronze is provided by the evidence for social grading and for the ever increasing role of warfare. In the Neolithic, apart from whatever may be implied by the collective tombs, we have little that points unmistakably to social grading. By contrast, already in the earlier Bronze Age we have occasional single-burial [graves containing a dagger] and other graves which recall, however feebly, the rich “chieftains’ graves”. of contemporary Wessex, Brittany, and Saxony. The Neolithic record includes no weapons primarily devised for combat, no fortifications, no defended homesteads. On the other hand, in the Bronze Age the dagger and the clumsy halberd are early conspicuous, and are soon joined by the spear, the dirk, and the stabbing sword (rapier), all three evolved from the dagger, itself perhaps initially a personal hunting eating knife. In time the spear (like the dagger and the arrow not solely a fighting weapon) acquires an added importance which is expressed by new varieties as well as by increasing numbers. In the later Bronze Age the warlike evidence rises to a prehistoric climax revealed by the abundance and quality of the weapons and few, very late, fortifications. Among the weapons, spears and slashing swords take pride of place, but with them go shields—sometimes ornate—of sheet-bronze, leather, and wood, shields which are among the signs of contact with Mediterranean and Urnfield Europe. The extravagance of a few spears and the quality of the best shields unite with the abundance of gold ornaments and of bronze buckets and cauldrons to suggest the presence of a warrior aristocracy, precursors of the Iron Age heroes of Emain Macha (see under Armagh) and Cruachu (see Rathcroghan). For all that, in the Final Bronze Age the farmer was still the prop and support of whole economic and social fabric, his surplus wheat, barley, cattle, sheep, and pigs, supplying the wherewithal for craftsman, merchant, and warrior alike.

As yet we know little about the homesteads of the Neolithic and Earlier Bronze Our clearest picture comes from Munster, particularly from the limestone slopes about Lough Gur. There farmers, from Neolithic into Bronze Age times, and herdsmen lived on the same sites in isolated dwellings of several kinds, rectangular, round, and irregular. While the wall footings might be of stone, the walls themselves seem always to have been of timber or wattle or other organic material. One rectangular house was an aisled, timber-post structure of a kind known also in Devon and the Isle of Man. Some of the Lough Gur houses were enclosed by stone-kerbed ring walls. In Carigillihy, near Glandore, an oval dry-masonry hut stood in a small oval enclosure bounded by a massive wall of dry masonry; the pottery resembled early Bronze Age ware found at Lough Gur. In Rathjordan, Lough Gur, and on the shore of Lough Gara (near Boyle), small circular *crannógs*—“artificial islands”—and lake-shore house-sites have been discovered. Neolithic and earlier Bronze Age lake-dwellings have also been found in Ulster; but it is uncertain if these were *crannógs* in the accepted meaning of the term. At a few places in Ulster crannógs and waterside settlements (little groups of circular timber-post huts, &c.) belonging to users of the Cinerary Urn have recently been discovered.

The dwellings of the later Bronze Age also included *crannógs* and other waterside settlements. In Ballinderry, Co. Offaly, remains were found of a roomy rectangular structure supported by a substantial framework of excellent joinery. A *crannóg* in Lough Gara is thought to have had about ten small circular huts, each with a central hearth.

Undefended homesteads leave little above ground to excite the imagination of the layman, to whom funerary and ritual monuments normally make a more immediate appeal. A few classes of such Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments have already been mentioned. A few others merit passing reference, e.g. derivative and degenerate chamber tombs, non-chambered cairns and tumuli, ritual circles, stone alignments, and standing stones (pillarstones).

The derivative and degenerate tombs include such impressive monuments as those of Sess Kilgreen and Knockmany near Clogher, tombs whose hieratic art links them with the passage graves.

The non-chambered mounds, of several classes, vary considerably in scale. Some cover single burials on the ground; others cover single burials in short cists or in pits; yet others are cemetery mounds containing single-burial graves of various kinds. (Flat cemeteries too are known, particularly in the mature Bronze Age.) While the cemetery cairn and tumulus seem to be confined to the Bronze Age, the low ring-barrow appears to be represented in all periods from the Neolithic onwards. As the Bronze Age advanced, whatever the type of funerary monument in use, cremation became the prevailing burial rite.

Like the funerary monuments, the ritual circles—"open air temples"—found in all four Provinces include some impressive monuments, though nothing comparable to the greater circles of Britain. Some are circles of stones (pillarstones or boulders), others are earthen rings; yet others are circles of earth and stones. Some have an external fosse, some an internal one; yet others have no fosse. A few have a central chamber tomb, or cairn, or tumulus, or other grave; others have a central stone which may mark a grave; yet others have no visible central feature of any kind. Some stone circles have stone outliers; some have tangent or other alignments. At Beaghmore near Cookstown stone circles combine with alignments and small cairns in a complex covering several acres. In parts of Cork and Kerry there are numerous small stone circles with a single recumbent stone; they may have outliers. Very few Irish circles have been excavated; fewer still have yielded satisfactory dating evidence. The great circle in Grange, Lough Gur, yielded Neolithic as well as Beaker and Food Vessel sherds. Drombeg recumbent-stone circle near Glandore enclosed a central dedicatory pit-burial with a Bronze Age type of urn. Earthen circles, including the kind known as "henges" in Britain, are also found in Ireland. None have been examined.

Little as we know about the Irish ritual circles, we know even less about the pillar-stones and alignments. Some pillar-stones mark Bronze Age graves, others had an uncertain cult significance. Comparable monuments, but with ogham inscriptions or Christian symbols, or both, were still being erected in protohistoric and early historic times. Ireland has nothing which compares with the concentrations of alignments found in Brittany or on Dartmoor, or with the famous English "avenues" of standing stones.

Kings and Heroes

Gaelic epic, which mirrors the Ireland of the closing centuries of the prehistoric Iron Age, shows us a country of chariot-riding kings and heroes whose aristocratic culture displays many of the features reported in Classical accounts of the Continental Celts. The archaeological evidence, such as it is, of the Irish Iron Age proper, is consistent with the testimony of the Heroic tales.

Although the Irish Iron Age lasted several centuries—perhaps from the third century B.C. to the firm establishment of Christianity, say about 500 A.D.—it is but meagrely represented in the archaeological record. Once again we are hampered by the paucity of known dwelling places and burials. Once again there is no unambiguous evidence of significant immigration.

Archaeologically speaking, the outstanding feature of the period is the highly sophisticated abstract ornament applied to fine metalwork and to a few stone carvings. This ornament is in the La Tène style characteristic of the specifically Celtic phase of the European Iron Age. That phase opened on the Middle Rhine in t lie later fifth century B.C. By the third century La Tène immigrants were beginning the first of a succession of movements into Britain, and there are signs of Irish contacts with several phases of their culture.

Some of the La Tène manifestations in Ireland, notably the decorated cult-stones of Turoe (see under Loughrea), Castlestrange (see under Athleague), Killycluggin (see under Ballyconnell), and Mullaghmast (now in the National Museum), have no counterpart in Britain and may represent direct connections between Ireland and Europe—conceivably only Continental craftsmen working for native clients. A few stray metal finds also suggest possible Continental contacts of one kind or another.

On the other hand, a small series of ornate sword scabbards is generally taken to imply an influx of warriors from northern Britain into Ulster in the later first century B.C. (Details of the Turoe stone itself could also be interpreted as reflecting first century links with Britain.) Some argue, however, that the earliest La Tène metalwork in Ulster represents the same third century movement from Europe as does the first insular style of La Tène work in Britain. However they originated, the scabbards combine with other parade equipment, including trappings for pairs of ponies, to indicate the presence of chariot-riding warriors in Ireland.

One of the many striking contrasts between the British Iron Age and the Irish is presented by the abundance of hill forts in Britain and their rarity in Ireland. Few as are the Irish forts—less than a couple of dozen all told—we still know little factual about them. One of them is the Emain Macha of Irish epic, a royal seat which may still have been flourishing as late as the fifth century A.D. (see Navan Fort under Armagh). Others (see Tara, Greenan Elly under Derry, and Dún Ailinne under Kilcullen) are associated with early historic dynasties.

The so-called ringfort, the classic farmstead of early Irish history, was already known in the prehistoric Iron Age. Normally the visible remains consist of a bank set inside its quarry ditch and enclosing a circular farmyard (about one hundred feet in diameter) in which had stood dwelling house and outhouses; on rocky terrains the bank of earth, or of earth and stones, was of necessity replaced by a rampart of dry masonry. Only a very small percentage of "ringforts", those with strong or multiple ramparts, deserves the name "fort".

The crannóg too was known in the Irish Iron Age, but we are still without particulars of the excavated examples.

In the course of the centuries Irish traditions and the Irish environment combined with external stimuli to modify and attenuate the La Tène elements in the later Iron Age material, stimuli from abroad which operated through raiding and trading Roman provinces and, towards the end, through Gaelic colonies in Wales and in Scotland. By the close of the Iron Age the Gaelic-speaking nation of early history had evolved, a nation needing only the inspiration of Christianity to play an important rôle in Dark Age Europe, a nation with a distinctive civilisation that is all the more fascinating because it is archaic in so many respects. Major roots of that civilisation lie in the Celtic Iron Age, whence its distinctive social and political institutions, its art, its epic literature, derive. Its patriarchal warrior aristocracy, only finally overthrow by the Tudors, preserved to the last something of the heroes of Emain and Cruachu. Its poets, maintained to the end by that aristocracy, were in a real sense the heirs of the *druides*, *vates*, and *bardi* of La Tène Europe.

Gaelic Ireland, c. 500-1165

"Island of Kings"

The Romans omitted Ireland from their conquests. No Germanic migrants violated her shores until the Viking age. Gaelic Ireland, therefore, presents us with the unique example of an archaic, Iron Age, Celtic society operating unchanged—save in so far as it has been affected by Christianity—in the light of history. Therein lies much of its fascination.

The primary aggregate of Gaelic society was the *túath*, a tiny pastoral and agricultural community ruled by a king (*rí*). The precise number of *túatha* at any particular stage seems impossible now to determine, but most of the two-hundred-odd "baronies" still shown on the Ordnance Survey sheets represent ancient *túatha*.

The *túatha* tended to cluster together in "over-kingdoms" acknowledging the superiority of the king of the dominant *túath*. (Many of the ecclesiastical dioceses organised in the twelfth century represent over-kingdoms of that time.) The over-kingdoms in turn grouped together in major federations. Heroic literature, which mirrors the conditions obtaining towards the close of the prehistoric Iron Age, shows us five such major federations, "the Five Fifths of Ireland", viz. Ulaid (whence "Ulster") in the north, Mide (whence "Meath") in the eastern midlands, La(i)gin (whence "Leinster") in the south-east, Mumha (Mumhain, whence "Munster") in the south, and Connachta (whence "Connacht", "Connaught") in the west.

"The Field of Royal Niall"

When—in the later sixth century—the fogs obscuring the earlier historic centuries begin to clear, two of the "Fifths" have undergone major changes. The Midlands have been parcelled out among the southern branches of a dynastic stock called Uí Néill ("The Descendants of Niall") after Niall Nine-Hostager who died about 427(?). The Ulster federation has been reduced to little more than the area of the three small dioceses which today represent its principal historic kingdoms: the diocese of Down representing Dál Fiatach, or Ulster proper; the diocese of Dromore representing Uí Echach; the diocese of Connor representing Dál nAraidi and Dál Riada. (Dál Riada, in north Antrim, has a particular interest in that its ruling stocks had overflowed in the fifth century into Scotland, much of which thereafter belongs to the Gaelic world.) The rest of the North, from the Bann westwards to the Atlantic, is now in the hands of the northern branches of the Uí Néill and their tributary Airgialla (Oirghialla, whence "Oriel", "Uriel") kinsfolk, Ulster's Heroic Age capital, Emain Macha (see Navan Fort under Armagh) having been destroyed by these conquerors from the Midlands in the previous century (c.

450?). Together with the Airgialla, the Southern and Northern Uí Néill constitute a new "Fifth" which covers the Midlands as well as the North, a "Fifth" which is the largest and most powerful federation in the country. The acknowledged head of head of this federation bears the title King of Tara (see Tara) and is pre-eminent among the over-kings.

Though a St Adomnán (see Raphoe), writing in the seventh century, can describe a sixth-century King of Tara as "ruler of all Ireland consecrated by the authority of God" (see Rathmore under Antrim), the King of Tara in act is not even titular King of Ireland. he may, it is true, overawe Connacht and Leinster, but he is accorded no primacy by the jurists. Neither is his superiority recognised by the second-greatest federation Munster, whose over-king, the King of Cashel, is also the head of a widely distributed royal stock, the Eóghanacht. (Unlike the Uí Néill, the Eóghanacht have a strong sense of dynastic solidarity, and succession to their over-kingship is remarkably peaceful.)

The notion of a supreme King of Ireland long remained foreign to the Gaelic mind, to which the Church could impart no political message, no Roman ideas of order and unity. (Rather was it Gaelic society which remoulded the organisation of the Church to its own image.) This is something which admits of no single, simple explanation. In addition to the weight of traditions constantly expounded by jurist and poet, we have to reckon with the operation of the law of succession which, at one and the same time, fragmented the Uí Néill, incited faction among them, and caused the Kingship of Tara to oscillate between the strategic "heart-land" of Meath and the remote, marginal domains of the Northern Uí Néill. Nor must we overlook the effects on a relatively prosperous and relatively civilised country of centuries of immunity from external aggression. It is only when that immunity has ceased that the idea of a national monarchy, prompted perhaps by the example of the Emperor Charlemagne (with whose court Ireland was in contact), is seen in active operation.

Gaelic Society

For the ordinary everyday purposes of life it was the *túatha*, not the over-kingdoms or the major federations, which mattered. Each *túath* was an aristocratic hierarchical community. As its head stood the king, president of the public assembly of freemen and commander of the armed hosting of freemen. In pagan times he had been a sacred personage of divine ancestry, and at his inauguration had been mystically wedded to the local goddess by ancient fertility rites. In modified form such rites survived as long as traditional Gaelic kingship survived at all.

Below the king were stratified grades of noblemen. Every nobleman was the vassal (*céle*, companion) of the king, or of some other social superior, who was his (*flaith*) and protector. His own rank was determined by the amount of his property, or the number of his vassals, or his function in society, as well as by his birth. Together, the royal and noble grades formed the warrior aristocracy of the *túath*; the aristocracy whose pedigrees were preserved by the genealogists and on whose patronage the literati and superior craftsmen depended, the aristocracy whose final defeat and dispersal in the seventeenth century cleared the way for the anglicisation of the island.

Supporting the social superstructure were the free commoners, lesser landowners tilled the soil and raised livestock, paid food-rent to the king, had a voice in public assembly of the *túath*, served with the armed hosting, and were normally vassals a of some nobleman or other.

Intercalated between the free commoners and the nobles, but associated more with the latter, were "the men of art" (*áes dána*), jurists, poets, leeches, superior craftsmen, historians, harpers, clerics, Latin scholars, in a word all whose superior knowledge or skill had raised them above their birth. At the foot of the social scale were various servile and semi-servile classes, including tenants-at-will, serfs bound to the soil, and slaves.

Save where they had been secured to him by formal treaty, the freeman, whether noble or commoner, had no legal rights outside the bounds of his ancestral *túath*. Within the *túath* his rights came to him, not as an individual. but as a member of a blood-group called *fine* (family, legal kin, friends) which was the Gaelic counterpart of the Indo-European "great family". At the head of the *fine* was the patriarchal *áige fine*, Gaelic counterpart of the Roman *paterfamilias*. In a society where the administration of justice was not a function of the "state", a prime function of the blood-group was to protect and avenge its members. With the development of *Célsine* (see below) this function of the *fine* tended to become obsolete. For this and other reasons the rigid organization of the *fine* withered gradually away. Previously a five-generation group, the fine has already been reduced to the four-generation *derb-fine* ("certain family") in the oldest stratum of customary law, where it is the normal unit for all major legal purposes such as inheritance, the sharing of liabilities, and the pursuit of blood-feuds to protect its members; it is also the ultimate land-owning unit, with a contingent interest in the ancestral real property of all its members. By the middle of the eighth century the *derb-fine* has been replaced for most purposes by the three-generation *gel-fine* (“clear family”). By the second half of the ninth century the jurists themselves no longer understand the original organisation of the *fine*.

The normal freeman owned his own private parcel of land. This he would have inherited from his father, and would in due course leave to his sons, to be divided equally among them. His *fine*, however, had a contingent interest in his ancestral land, so that he could not alienate it, or burden it with liabilities, without the consent of the adult members. To his daughters he could leave only chattels and land acquired otherwise than by inheritance.

Kingship, like real property, ultimately belonged to the *fine*. Unlike property, it could not be divided. The king therefore had to be chosen—how precisely we know not—from the “sacred” royal stock, in practice from the *derb-fine* of a previous ruler. The method of choice operated so as to favour succession through collaterals rather than in the direct line. This occasioned endless strife and, in the case of the Kingship of Tara, hindered the emergence of a national monarchy. On the other hand, invaders, when they came, found it next to impossible to exterminate the ramified dynasties that opposed them.

While the Gaelic polity engendered strife and disorder, the pre-Viking warfare was seldom serious, for it was limited, at all levels, by ritual, taboo, and legal convention, which combined to maintain the established political and social structure: warriors grounded their arms once their king had fallen; the victor did not normally dethrone the “sacred” dynasty of the vanquished, or annex even part of its territory; “sanctuaries” immune from attack—monastic settlements and the lands of the *áes dána*—were numerous; legal enactments safeguarded women, clerics, and children.

Célsine: Gaelic “Feudalism”

Every freeman was normally the *céle* (companion, client, vassal) of a social superior who was his *flaith* (lord). Initially the contract between lord and vassal had been strictly personal, contractual, and terminable; it could, moreover, be impugned by the vassal’s fine. In time, however, the relationship tended to become hereditary. The essence of the contract was the advancing of a fief (normally of livestock, but occasionally of land) by the lord to the vassal. The latter became thereby the lord’s debtor, bound to pay him interest, and his “companion”, bound to do him homage, to render him personal services such as accompanying him to war and on public occasions, and to provide him with one night’s *cóe* or entertainment (the “coshering” so sharply denounced by the English) in the period between New Year’s Day and Shrove. On the other hand, the lord became the vassal’s protector, bound to support him in all his causes.

The relationship is clearly but the Gaelic version of that ancient system of the commendation of the weak to the protection of the strong which spread far and wide in late Roman and post-Roman Europe to culminate in the fully feudal relationship of lord and vassal. In Gaelic Ireland the institution and development of such a relationship point, not only to the absence of state justice, but also to the decay of tribal institutions, in particular the decay of the *fine* as the protector and avenger of its members.

Gaelic Literati

Classical accounts of the Continental Celts name the *druidis*, *vatis*, and *bardus* (druid, seer, and bard) as the principal exponents of Celtic oral tradition and literature. While all three were concerned with the poetic art, the druid’s primary concern was with religion, the seer’s with prophecy and divination, the bard’s with the making of poems praising his patrons “as regards birth, bravery, and wealth”.

All three survive in early Gaelic Ireland, though time and circumstance have altered their relative importance and their social functions. The druid (*drui*) is now but an easily discomfited magician, doomed to disappear from the scene. The bard (*bárd*) retains his ancient office but acts also as the chanter of compositions by the beer, who is himself not above adapting the bard’s “crooked lays” to his own purposes. (Between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries the bard’s influence as a maker of praise-poems exerts a tremendous influence on the struggle for Gaelic survival and provokes the bitter hostility of the foreigner.) The seer (*fili*; less usually *fáith* = *vatis*) has become the lord of the learned and literary world. Originally a diviner and weaver of spells, he is now professional story-teller, antiquary, jurist, and court poet. As story-teller he is a weaver of new tales as well as master of the traditional canon. As jurist he is at once assessor, arbitrator, and custodian-teacher of the corpus of customary law. As antiquary (*senchaid*) he is expert in *senchas*, which comprises the history, topographical lore, and antiquities of the Gael. As court poet he is a maker of didactic and mantic verse recounting the pedigrees and achievements of his patrons and their ancestors. He is also an expert in Irish grammar, in “etymology”, in ogham, and in the secret language of his order. A heathen odour still clings to his office, and all fear his satire, not only for the loss of face occasioned by its recital throughout all the Gaelic lands, but also for the blisters it can raise on the victim’s very countenance, or the death it may bring.

The Coming of Christianity

By the opening of the historic period Ireland is substantially Christian, the first Country outside the Roman world to be won for the new faith; but the beginnings Irish Christianity are hidden from us. The first recorded missionary, Palladius, had been sent from Rome in 431 as bishop “to the Irish believers in Christ”. By that time much of the South and East may already have been Christianised by emigrants returning from Britain, as well as by British missionaries. Of the work of Palladius himself, and of the missionaries who, presumably, had preceded him, we know nothing. for the fame of all has been eclipsed by that of Bishop Patrick, a Romanised British Celt who, taken to Ireland as a youthful slave, had dedicated his adult life to the conversion of his captors. Patrick’s mission is usually dated to the period 432-61, but these dates are still the subject of controversy, as is also the extent of Patrick’s labours. According to ancient tradition Patrick established his principal church at Armagh, close to Emain Macha, the capital of the prehistoric Fifth of the Ulaid.

Other missionary bishops were: Secundinus (Sechnall) of Dunshaughlin (Domhnach Sechnaill) near Tara, who died in 447/8, Auxilius of Killossy (Cell Auxli, Cell Aussaili) near the Leinster royal seat at Naas, who died in 459/60; Iserninus of Old Kilcullen (near the Leinster royal hill-fort called Dún Ailinne) and of Aghade (near Rathvilly, another Leinster royal seat), who died in 468,

The coming of Christianity was of tremendous cultural significance. The remote, peripheral, island was reintegrated into the West European fabric. The artistic repertoire was enlarged with new media and enriched with new motifs and new techniques that stimulated the last, and finest, flowering of insular Celtic art. To the Church Ireland owes her first true architecture, to the Church her introduction to the treasury of Mediterranean thought and letters, to the Church that early written literature in the Gaelic vernacular which is one of the boasts of her heritage.

“Island of Saints”—Primitive Monasticism

The expansion of the heathen Germanic nations, in particular their conquests in Britain and Gaul, had severed Ireland’s connexions with Latin Europe and left the Irish mission-field to the churches of Celtic Britain. It was kindred British, not alien Roman, influences which were decisive in shaping the Irish ecclesiastical structure, in fitting it to the inchoate Gaelic polity. In their isolation the insular churches, set in closely related social and cultural environments, inevitably developed Celtic eccentricities of organisation, discipline, and practice. Some ecclesiastical institutions atrophied, others became distorted, yet others acquired an exaggerated significance. When, in the seventh and eighth centuries, the Irish Church emerges into daylight, we find that a wave of monasticism has well-nigh obliterated all traces of the primitive episcopal framework, and that the typical focus of regional jurisdiction is no longer the episcopal see, but the monastery ruled by a priest-abbot. (There are bishops, but their office is now purely sacramental.) In addition, the Irish Church adheres to an outmoded method of computing, the date of Easter, and to an outmoded tonsure. Curiously enough, it is these minor eccentricities of the *computus* and the tonsure which rouse the ire of the orthodox abroad.

The phenomenal growth of Irish monasticism in the sixth and seventh centuries was primarily due to the influence of the great British saints, some of whom founded monasteries in Ireland and attracted Irish disciples to Wales, whence they returned home to found new monasteries themselves. Foremost among such Irish founders were Éanna (“Enda”) of Killeany in Aran, who died about 530, and Finnian of Clonard, “Tutor of the Saints of Ireland”, who died in 549. Other celebrated founders were: Colum (Columba) of Derry and Iona best known as Columcille, Comgall of Bangor, Finnian of Moville, Colum (Columba) of Terryglass, Ciarán of Clonmacnois, Ciarán of Seir, Kevin of Glendalough, Brendan the Navigator of Clonfert, Mo-Ling of Timolin, and Finnbárr of Cork. Three all-Ireland women saints were Brigid of Kildare, Íde of Kileedy, and Samthann of Clonbroney. Men and women such as these fired the imagination of thousands and inspired them to follow in their footsteps, so that in a brief space the Gaelic lands were covered with hundreds of monastic and anchoritic foundations. Houses—however widely dispersed—which revered a common founder tended to form leagues under a supreme abbot, leagues to which the name *paruchia* (Ir. *fairche*) was transferred from the moribund dioceses. The greater the prestige of the founder, the greater the prestige of his *paruchia*. The fame of Columcille could, for a time, overshadow that of Patrick, the hegemony of Iona eclipse that of Armagh.

“Exiles for Christ”

For the Gaelic saints, passionately attached to home and kindred, to go into exile “for the love of Christ” was to make the supreme sacrifice, to suffer martyrdom. And so we find them sailing away in their frail boats to the Orkneys, to the Faroes, and even to distant uninhabited Iceland, as well as to Britain, France, the Germanies, and Italy. The best known names in the countless roll of these “exiles for Christ” are those of Columcille (Columba) of Iona, Colmán (Columbanus) of Bangor, Luxeuil, and Bobbio, Aidan of Lindisfarne, Fursa of Cnobersburgh and Peronne, Gall (Gallus) of St Gallen, Fergal (“Vergilius”) of Aghaboe and Salzburg, and Cilian (Kilian) of Würzburg.

Columcille left his beloved Ireland in 563 “to make a pilgrimage for Christ” in Irish Scotland (Dál Riada), where he settled on the barren, but strategic, island of Iona. His monastery there became a base for the conversion of Pictland and of Northumbria, a prop of the Gaelic monarchy in Scotland, and a clearing-house through which important cultural and artistic influences passed—in both directions—between Ireland and England. (Scottish Dál Riada was as Irish a kingdom as any in Ireland, Iona as Irish a monastery as, say, Clonmacnois.)

About 635 King Oswiu of Northumbria applied to Iona for missionaries, Iona sent him Aidan, a monk-bishop who fixed his see on the island of Lindisfarne. Before his death (651) Aidan saw Christianity firmly established north of the Humber. From Northumbria the Iona mission spread into Mercia and to the Middle Angles, even into Sussex and Essex. Contacts with representatives of the Augustinian mission to England inevitably led to wranglings about tonsures and the date of Easter. The issue was brought to a head in 663 at the Synod of Whitby, where the intransigence of the Iona party led to the withdrawal of Aidan’s successor, Bishop Colman of Lindisfarne, together with the more stubborn of his Irish and English disciples (see Mayo), from Northumbria. Their departure marked the end of Ireland’s spiritual hegemony in the northern half of England. It did not put an end to Irish missionary activities in England, or to Irish influence in non-controversial spheres.

On the European mainland the great Irish name is that of the Colmán, alias Columbanus, who set out from Bangor with the traditional company of twelve disciples in 590. In Burgundy he founded monasteries at Annegray, Luxeuil, and Fontaine. Expelled after twenty years by an offended king, he eventually made his way to Bregenz on Lake Constance, and there preached the Gospel to the heathen Alemanni. From Bregenz, too, he was driven away and, in 614, crossed over the Alps to Bobbio. There he founded his last monastery and there he died the following year. Irish influence and Irish connexions remained potent at Bobbio throughout the seventh and eighth centuries, and occasional Irish contacts persisted down to the eleventh.

Columbanus revived religion wherever he went. He gave a special impetus and direction to European monasticism and was responsible for the European adoption of the practice of private and frequent confession. His letters and poems reflect the relatively high quality of Latin studies in the Ireland of his day.

St Fursa, whose celebrated *Visions* of Heaven and Hell were to influence medieval European literature, spent the earlier part of his exile at Cnoberesburgh (Burgh Castle, Suffolk). About 640/44 he passed over to France, where his brothers (Ultán and Foíllán) founded famous monasteries at Peronne (“Peronne of the Irish”), Lagny-sur-Marne, Nivelles, and Fosse.

Other Irish exiles made their way to the heathen and semi-heathen lands beyond the Rhine: Thuringia, Franconia, Swabia, Bavaria, and Carinthia. Here the best-known Irish names are those of St Cilian of Würzburg and St Fergal of Salzburg. Cilian was martyred with two Irish companions in 689. Fergal, who had been abbot of Aghahoe, appears about 743 at the court of Pippin the Short, whence he was sent Salzburg, where he became abbot of St Peter’s. St Boniface, English apostle of Germany, sought to have him condemned as a heretic, but he became bishop of Salzburg and ruled the diocese for more than forty years.

The Viking onslaught gave a fresh impetus to the dispersion of Irish monks and to the multiplication of Irish monasteries and hospices in Europe. Now, however, in the ninth and tenth centuries, the typical Irish exile is the Latin scholar rather than the ascetic or the missionary; Clemens Scottus (“The Irishman”), Latin scholar and Alcuin’s successor as head of Charlemagne’s celebrated palace school; Dícuil, grammarian, geographer, astronomer, and teacher in the palace school; Sedulus Scottus, a Leinster scholar active between 848 and 858 at Liège, Metz, and Cologne, where he proved himself an outstanding Ciceronian and an accomplished maker of gay drinking songs; Johannes Scottus (Eriugena), intellectual giant of his age, who appears at the court of Charles the Bald in 845.

“Island of Scholars”—Monastic Culture

The Irish monasteries quickly won international renown for their scholarship, so that the descriptions “Irishman” (Scottus) and “scholar” came to be synonymous, and that princes, nobles, prelates, priests, and monks flocked from overseas for training in the several branches of Christian learning as well as in the religious life. Students from Anglo-Saxon England were particularly numerous, among them several whose names were to become famous in English history.

The texts and treatises studied being in Latin, a good grounding in that language was a primary requirement. The study of Latin awakened an interest in profane Latin literature, including the writings of Cicero, Horace, and Virgil, an interest so fruitful that some of the Irish scholars have to be numbered among the foremost Classical scholars of their time, while others rank among the finest Latin poets of the Carolingian age. The true genius of that age was John The Irishman (Johannes Scottus, alias Johannes Eriugena), poet, grammarian, philosopher, and theologian; a superb Latinist, an excellent Greek scholar, and a master dialectician. The attainments of such men are fully appreciated only when we recall that Ireland, unlike Britain and France, had never formed part of the Roman Empire and thus had no tradition of Latin culture.

A unique feature of the Latin culture of the Irish monasteries was the fact that it proved in no way inimical to the development of a written literature in the Gaelic vernacular. On the contrary, it was monks who adapted the Latin alphabet and Latin verse-forms to Gaelic requirements and who created the vernacular written literature. St Columcille was a famous protector of the *fili*, and an elegy on him by one of them, Dallán Forgaill, is the oldest securely dated (597) Irish poem we have. St Colmán of Cloyne was himself the author of some of the oldest surviving examples of the new verse. That lovely ancient tale, *The Voyage of Bran*, was first committed to writing in the monastery of Bangor. The *célé Dé* movement of the eighth and ninth centuries has left us a body of personal lyrics, intimate nature poems which still delight. Clonmacnois and Terryglass have left us the oldest of our collections of secular tales. Not until the introduction of Continental Rules and Orders in the twelfth century did the written canon—as we may call it—of Gaelic secular lore finally pass into the guardianship of the famous secular families who conserved it throughout the rest of the Middle Ages. And even they conserved that canon as it had been arranged in the monastic codices.

The arts, too, owed much to the monasteries. Most of the finest metalwork of the period, exemplified by such masterpieces as the Ardagh Chalice (National Museum, Dublin), was produced for them and, like the other manifestations of ecclesiastical art, reflects their foreign connexions. Metalwork was an ancient, pre-Christian craft. So, too, was the stone-carving exemplified by gravestones, cross-slabs, and High Crosses (below). Both these crafts were probably practised in monastic ateliers; proof, however, is lacking. Book-painting, on the other hand, was an entirely new, and essentially monastic, art; and here there is no doubt about who produced it. The supreme masterpiece is the *Book of Kells* (Trinity College, Dublin).

The early monastery differed markedly from the highly organised monastery, with buildings of well-developed architecture, which was diffused throughout middle and western Europe from Carolingian times onwards. In essence it was but an adaptation to monastic purposes of the larger ringfort, and its primitive character accorded well with the ascetic temper of the early Irish Church: an enclosure ringed by one or more ramparts of earth or stone; within it one or more tiny churches or oratories, of the simplest form and, at first, of timber wherever possible; and series of rude huts for the monks; similar structures for kitchen and refectory, as also for library, workshops, and school, where such existed; a series of crosses and cross-pillars; a cemetery with gravestones which might be decorated with delightful cross-patterns and whose inscriptions are normally in Irish, not Latin; from the tenth century onwards a lofty, free-standing, conical-roofed, circular belfry (Round Tower) whose impregnable strength and remote doorway made it also a convenient refuge when danger threatened. In time the timber churches were translated into stone, to give small, ill-lit, and usually single-chamber, buildings whose remains are normally devoid of ornament. However, a seventh century description of the church at Kildare, with its glowing shrines, its painted pictures, and its hangings, reminds that such remains are but fleshless skeletons of the dead. (So, too, for all their elaboration of ornament, are the remains of the Romanesque churches associated with the twelfth century reformation.)

Some monastic sites are noteworthy for their High Crosses, great freestanding crosses of stone whose elaborate carvings were doubtless picked out in colour. An early group, exemplified at Kilclispeen near Carrick-on-Suir, is characterised by predominantly abstract, overall ornament. A second group, nobly represented at Monasterboice, dates from the ninth or tenth centuries and may be linked with the *célé Dé* movement (below); it is characterised by panelled figurations of Scriptural themes.

Monastic Decay; The *céle Dé* Movement

The missions abroad had quickly drawn attention to the eccentricities of the early monastic churches, and the Easter Controversy had led to the eclipse of Iona at the Synod of Whitby and to the withdrawal of Colmán of Lindisfarne from the English mission. The same controversy had involved Colmán of Luxeuil with the bishops of Burgundy. The irony of the situation was that the two namesakes had been defending positions already being abandoned at home.

Of greater moment than a wrongly calculated Easter, or an outlandish tonsure. were the evils which sprang from the Gaelic social system, and from the growth of the monasteries in privilege, wealth, and power. Some of the greater monasteries, notably those with schools, scriptoria. and ateliers, gradually grew into town-like centres inhabited by craftsmen, farm-workers, lay-tenants, and the like; that is to say, developed into corporations whose economic and political significance was bound to attract the attention of secular potentates. And always in the background as was the concept of the continuing interest of the founder's *fine* in the headship of a monastery, of the continuing interest of the patron's *fine* in its landed property. Small wonder if the headship of the monasteries tended to become hereditary and to fall into the hands of lay members of the ruling stocks.

While the decay of primitive simplicity and piety was enormously aggravated by the Viking wars, it was not caused by them. In the later eighth century, well before the first recorded Viking raids, monastic offices were already passing from father to son, and monasteries were already engaging in battle, even with other monasteries, to safeguard their material interests.

Reaction to such evils found expression in the *célé Dé* ("culdee") movement, which came to the fore in the eighth and ninth centuries, a movement characterised by anchoritic asceticism, puritanical idealism, and strict supervision by spiritual superiors. With these were combined choral duties and care of the poor, of the sick, and of travellers. The Viking wars arrested the natural development of the movement and, by the time they had subsided, few culdee houses survived. In its heyday, the movement had been one of great significance for art and literature, and has left as its memorials the great High Crosses of the ninth and tenth centuries and a remarkable body of personal lyrics (natural poems).

EDITING

Norse Pirates and Traders

Ireland's freedom from serious foreign aggression ended in 795 with a Viking raid on Lambay Island. Two centuries of devastation and destruction followed.

At the outset the heathen ravagers came in small independent bands, and confined their "tip-and-run" forays to the seaboard. The attack entered on a more serious phase with the arrival, in 837, of a large fleet on the Boyne and Liffey, which became bases for plundering expeditions deep into the heart of the country. That year, too, a great Viking, Thorgestr ("Turgesius"), assumed the leadership of the scattered raiding parties. Even more ominous, Vikings set up a semi-permanent camp near the mouth of the Liffey. Two years later, Thorgestr brought a fleet to Lough Neagh and ravaged the North. In 841 he occupied Armagh, by then the ecclesiastical capital of Ireland. That same year, the Viking camp by the Liffey became a permanent settlement, soon to grow into the seaport town of Dublin. In 844 Thorgestr established himself on Lough Ree, from which he wasted Meath and Connacht. The great monasteries of Inis Cealtra, Lorrha, Terryglass. Clonfert, and Clonmacnois, all were pillaged, Thorgestr's wife. Ota, pronouncing pagan oracles from the principal altar at Clonmacnois. The following year, Melaghlin I (Máel-Shechlainn, "Malachy") of Meath captured Thorgestr and drowned him.

In 847, Melaghlin succeeded to the kingship of Tara. His reign (847-62) was to prove a landmark in Irish history. About this time, Scandinavian activity in both Britain and Ireland was rising to a climax. Worse, Melaghlin found himself faced more than once with alliance between Gaelic king and Norse plunderer, even with alliances between Uí Néill rivals and the Norse. He proved himself the outstanding Irish king of the century, and raised the Uí Néill kingship of Tara to its greatest height, compelling Munster in 859 to concur in the transfer of the important kingdom of Ossory to the hegemony of Meath and, of greater moment still, to acknowledge for the first time the supremacy of a king of Tara (see Rahugh under Tullamore). The next year Munster forces marched alongside those of Connacht, Leinster, and Meath in Melaghlin's campaign against rebellious Tír Eóghain.

By this time, Dublin was on the way to finding a place in Gaelic polity, and alliance—often by marriage—with the heathen was becoming a normal feature of the policy of the Gaelic kings. On the Norse side, trade was assuming an ever increasing importance, though raiding and plundering still took place as opportunity offered. The Battle of Killineer (near Drogheda) in 868 marks a critical stage in the Norse-Irish struggle, as well as exemplifying the new Norse r61e in Irish affairs. Here, Melaghlin's successor, Áedh Finnliath of Tír Eóghain (862-79), who himself had not scrupled to join with Norse Dublin against Melaghlin, was confronted with a Leinster-Dublin-East Meath combination. He won the day, and was able to follow up his success by destroying for ever the Scandinavian strongholds in the North. Nevertheless, the disruption of the old order was now far advanced, and in 873, 876, 878, and 879 Aedh was unable to convene Aonach Tailteann (see Teltown under Donaghpatrick). Thereafter. the great annual assembly of the U N6i11 federation lapsed repeatedly.

The forty years after 876 were marked by a comparative lull in major Norse activity, a fresh phase of which opened with the arrival (914, 915) of fleets which set up a new raiding base at Waterford. In 919 came the disastrous Battle of Dublin, where the King of Tara (Niall Glúndub, eponymous successor of the O Néills of Tír Eóghain) was slain. This was followed by widespread campaigns of plundering and wasting based on new settlements (Limerick, Cork, Wexford) as well as on old. Luckily for Ireland, about this time (918-54) the Dublin Norse were dissipating their strength in efforts to get control of the Scandinavian kingdom of York.

The Norse wrought untold harm to Ireland. Mercilessly efficient, they were trammelled in their search for lands and booty by neither Christian principle nor Gaelic convention, but slaughtered and laid waste all about them. Having learnt to counter like with like, the Irish kings soon began to apply Viking methods to their traditional quarrels also, and to discard the shackles which had rendered those quarrels harmless. From the ninth and tenth centuries onwards Gaelic battles too became ruthless; all over the country weaker stocks were forcibly subjected to stronger; ecclesiastical liberties were invaded; kings were dethroned and replaced by "strangers in sovereignty"; long-established landowning families were displaced by the kindred of conquerors; ancient federations were broken up. In the end the old Gaelic order was wrecked, and the strongest king in the country could make himself high-king of all.

Organised religion suffered too: the monasteries, treasure-houses of art and nurseries of Latin learning and of Gaelic civilisation, were foremost among the victims of the Scandinavian plunderers-and of their Irish emulators; secularisation of the greater foundations was intensified; hundreds of minor houses and churches were turned into lay hereditaments claiming monastic privileges and exemptions.

(There was, of course, a credit side to the account: the Scandinavian contribution to Irish trade, to Irish town life, and, in the twelfth century, to Irish art styles. The seaport towns, however, had their sinister aspect, for they prepared the way of the Normans and provided them with secure bases through which periodically to renew their strength.)

One of the first signs of a serious break in the established Gaelic tradition was the challenge (944) to the declining, now faction-ridden, Eóghanacht supremacy in Munster by Cennótig, king of the obscure Dál Chais (eastern Clare). Twenty years later Cennétig's son and successor, Mahon, captured Cashel and made himself, in effect, over-king of Munster. Three years after that, Mahon and his brother, Brian Boru, routed the Limerick Norse at Solohead (near Tipperary) and sacked their city. The sequel was the collapse of both Eóghanacht and Norse power in Munster (976-8) and the unchallenged supremacy of Brian Boru in the South by 979.

Brian's triumph in Munster coincided with the accession (980) of Melaghlin II of Meath to the Kingship of Tara. Rivalry between the two kings was inevitable. They were, however, for a time evenly matched, and it was not until 997 that Melaghlin surrendered the claims he had inherited from Melaghlin I and acknowledged Brian's supremacy in the southern half of Ireland, including Leinster. The two kings signalised their accord by joint action against the Norse settlements the following year.

King Máel-Mórdha of Leinster proved no more submissive to Brian than he or any of his predecessors had been to the Kings of Tara. He found a ready ally in Norse Dublin, which by now had become more or less a permanent dependency of Leinster. Brian, however, trapped the Leinster-Dublin army in Gleann Márna on the western side of the Wicklow mountains and won a resounding victory (999) which he followed up by plundering Dublin, and by forcing Máel-Mórdha to give the customary hostages for good behaviour.

Brian's way was now clear for a final contest with Melaghlin. The tussle between them dragged on until 1002, when Melaghlin, unable to rally Uí Néill support, bowed to the inevitable. The northern kings, however, though riven by dissension, would have none of Brian, and it required several expeditions against them to force their submission. By 1005, however, Brian was strong enough to go to go to Armagh, the ecclesiastical capital, there to present himself in the great church as Imperator Scottorum, "Emperor of the Irish". Only Tír Connaill refused to submit.

Brian was the most famous king in early Irish history, and the legends which grew around him make him first and foremost a life-long leader of resistance to the Norse. They also credit him with active measures to restore religion, learning, and civilisation, and with endeavouring in every way to undo something of the damage the Scandinavians had wrought. The account may be exaggerated, but the achievement must have been substantial. In the political sphere his one innovation was the nominal high-kingship. In fact he seems to have respected the traditional rights of the over-kingdoms. Notwithstanding this, Leinster continued to chafe at the bit and in 1013 set about organising a widespread rebellion against him. The midlands were soon the scene of moves and countermoves, in the course of which Melaghlin attacked Dublin territory. Leinster sprang to Dublin's aid and forced Melaghlin to appeal to Brian for help. The latter harried Leinster and Ossory with Munster-Connacht forces and blockaded Dublin, but had in the end to withdraw without satisfaction. Both sides then set about gathering forces for a decisive encounter.

Brian's call for support was answered only by two of the South Connacht kingdoms, by the Mór-máer (Earl) of Marr in Scotland, and by Melaghlin; and Melaghlin withdrew before battle was joined at Clontarf outside Dublin on Good Friday 1014. On the opposing side were ranged the forces of North Leinster and Dublin, reinforced by Norse contingents from Man and the Orkneys. The battle—the greatest in early Irish history—lasted all day and was stubbornly contested. It ended in complete victory for the high-king's army; but Brian himself, his son Murchad, and his grandson Turloch were slain.

Reorganisation of the Church

When the Scandinavian tempest died away in the eleventh century, there set in a new phase of Irish pilgrimages to Rome and other holy places abroad, and of Irish monastic foundations on the Continent (even in Rome itself). In this way Irish kings, as well as ecclesiastics, made contact with the Cluniac and Hildebrandine movements which were reorganising monasticism and freeing bishops and popes from subservience to secular rulers to raise them to unprecedented heights of authority. Irish participation in the movements quickly followed, kings and churchmen uniting to improve private morals, to cleanse and revive monasticism, and to provide the country with a normal diocesan system. To help in the undertaking they invited the assistance of the great European orders of monks, notably of the Tironian, Savigny, and Cistercian Benedictines and of the Canons Regular of St Augustine. Ominously enough, the assistance sometimes came from monasteries in Normandy and in Norman England.

To the establishment of the diocesan system the Norse settlements, now Christian, made a significant contribution, for their first bishops, as well as being the first bishops in Ireland to rule clearly defined dioceses, ominously acknowledged the primacy of Canterbury, and that despite the fact that they were all native-born Gaels.

Giolla Easbuig ("Gilbert"), who became bishop of the Norse diocese of Limerick in 1105, appears to have been the initiator of Hildebrandine reforms in Ireland. His active zeal led to his appointment as papal legate, in which capacity he presided in 1111 over a synod held at Rath Breasail in the presence of Muircheartach O Brien, contender for the high-kingship. Other reforming synods followed, the last being the synod of Kells (1152) which gave the Irish Church its enduring diocesan system under the primacy of Armagh. (It was not without significance that obstacles had been placed in the way of the papal legate *a latere*, Cardinal Paparo, on his journey across England.)

The greatest of the Irish reformers was undoubtedly St Máel M'Aedhóig ("Malachy") Úa Morgair (see Bangor and Armagh). His journeys to Rome as representative of the Irish bishops brought him into contact with the Augustines of Arrouaise and with St Bernard of Clairvaux, and so led to the introduction of both Arrosians and Cistercians into Ireland. Canons Regular of St Augustine are said to have been in Armagh by 1126. Máel, M'Aedhóig seems to have introduced them to Bangor, Downpatrick, and Saul about 1135-40. Benedictines were brought from Savigny in Normandy to Carrick (Erynagh; see under Downpatrick) as early as 1127 by Niall Mac Dunleavy, King of Ulster, and St Mary's Abbey, Dublin, was founded for the same order in 1139. Tironians are said to have been at Holy Cross Abbey (see under Thurles) and at Fermoy before 1135. In 1142 Máel M'Aedhólg brought the first Cistercians to Mellifont. In 1158 steps were taken to organise the remaining Columban monasteries in a single congregation under the abbot of Derry. The Norman invasion wrecked this particular project, and all the surviving monasteries of ancient foundation seem to have become houses of Augustinian Canons Regular.

This eleventh and twelfth century reformation made a distinctive contribution to the arts, the most important development being in architecture. The need for diocesan cathedrals stimulated the adoption of the Romanesque style—in a distinctively Irish guise. The first dated example, Cormac’s “Chapel” at Cashel (1127-34) exemplifies not only the Continental and English influences at work, but also the small size of the buildings needed to meet the social and economic conditions of the time. Despite its unique towers, this tiny cathedral is only a nave-and-chancel structure. Indeed, the small, aisleless, nave-and-chancel church appears to have been the utmost of which the twelfth century Irish mason was capable (and in many of the Romanesque churches the chancel is an addition). In due course, the great Orders, notably the Augustinians and the Cistercians, introduced Transitional-style monasteries, cathedrals, and churches of the highly organised, elaborate kinds to which they were accustomed. To do so, they had to bring over experienced masons; but the Irish craftsmen soon imparted a local stamp to buildings which, by European standards, were modest in size.

Closely related to the Romanesque churches was a new style of sculpture well-represented (at such places as Cashel, Kilfenora, and Tuam) by High Crosses which are characterised by large figures and by Scandinavian (Urnes) style ornament. Urnes influence is also a feature of the art-metalwork of the time, outstanding examples of which are the Cross of Cong (National Museum, Dublin) and St Manchán’s Shrine (Boher Church, see under Clara).

The vitality of the contemporary literati is also well attested. Secular and religious literature were gathered into great bibliotheca like the so-called Book of Leinster, compiled by an abbot of Terryglass, and Lebor na hUidre (“The Book of the Dun Cow”), compiled at Clonmacnois. In this period, too, ballad poems made their first recorded appearance, Finn tales found their way into the canon of upper-class literature, and early Gaelic story-telling reached its culmination in *Acallamh na Senórach* (“The Colloquy of the Ancient Men”).

The Close of the Gaelic Epoch

Brian’s high-kingship marked the end of the old Gaelic order. Unfortunately, with Murchad amid Turloch dead, there was no one in Dál Chais capable of filling Brian’s place, and his high-kingship collapsed. Not until 1073 could any real attempt be made to replace it. In that year, Dál Chais having recovered the hegemony of Munster, Turloch Mór O Brien (Ó Briain “descendant of Brian”), found himself strong enough to enforce the submission of Meath and Connacht. An attempt to force the submission of the North led to his defeat at Ardee, a defeat, however, which could not prevent him from installing a kinsman in the : kingship of Teallach Óg in Tír Eóghan itself, just as he installed his son Muirchertach in the Norse kingship of Dublin. These were classical examples of “strangers in sovereignty”.

Turloch’s death in 1086 was followed by more than twenty years of intermittent struggle for supremacy between Dál Chais and Tír Eóghain. Then a new actor, Connacht, moved to the front of the stage. By an obscure process, the O Conor kings of Connacht had been advancing in strength and winning control of lands outside their domestic territories. By 1118, King Turloch Mór O Conor was strong enough to partition Munster between the Eoghanacht and Dál Chais. This division of the southern over-kingdom into Desmond (South Munster) and Thomond (North Munster) was to prove as lasting as it was fatal. Turloch next (1125) invaded Meath and partitioned that strategic kingdom between three local rulers of his own choice; this partitioning, too, was to prove disastrous for Gaelic Ireland. Dynastic rivalries in Leinster enabled him to lead his armies at will through that kingdom, and to emulate Turloch Ó Brien by imposing first (1126) his son Conor, later (1127) a North Leinster prince, on the Norse of Dublin. He also endeavoured to impose his son on Leinster itself, and later, on Meath. His most faithful adherent was Tiernan O Rourke of Breany, one of the stronger and expanding sub-kingdoms of Connacht (roughly Cos. Leitrim and Cavan). Him he rewarded with large tracts of Meath. Further designs on Meath were indicated by the erection (1129) of a fortress (“the first castle in Ireland”) to command the Shannon crossing at Athlone, gateway to the Midlands. Athlone lay outside the historic lands of the O Conors, as also did Tuam, which about this time became the royal seat of Connacht and was soon to become the ecclesiastical capital as well. The zenith of Turloch’s power was reached in 1152, when he presided as high-king over the national synod of Kells in the presence of the papal legate.

When Turloch’s reign came to a close in 1156, Muirchertach Mac Lochlainn asserted the claims of Tír Eóghain to the high-kingship. Leinster had acknowledged him as far back as 1145, but Connacht and Munster resisted him at first. In 1161, however, Connacht too submitted, the price being Muirchertach’s acknowledgement of Connacht supremacy in the western half of Meath. Five years later, Muirchertach was overthrown, in consequence of a crime which shocked his supporters, and Rory O Conor, son of Turloch and his successor on the throne of Connacht, became high-king. As such, he presided in 1167 over the national synod of Tlachtga (Hill of Ward, near Athboy) and in 1168 over a national assembly at the site of Aonach Tailteann. The downfall of Gaelic Ireland was at hand, but no one in Ireland had eyes for the portents long visible. .

Medieval Ireland, 1165-1690

The Coming of the "Franks"

By his misdeeds and his ambitions Dermot II (Dermot Mac Murrough) of Leinster had made many enemies. Of these the most dangerous were the O'Conors of Connacht, whose Mac Lochlainn rival he had supported. The accession of Rory O'Conor led inevitably to Dermot's dethronement, and in 1166 he fled to Henry II of England, his mind full of a childish project for recovering Leinster and seizing the high-kingship.

For Henry, Dermot's naive appeal for help was indeed timely. A decade or so previously, within a couple of years of the Synod of Kells, the Norman bishops and "religious men" of England had combined with the magnates to get ready an army for the purpose of invading Ireland and making Henry's brother king. Henry had had the project deferred, but in 1155-6 had himself sought papal permission to conquer Ireland, professing a Hildebrandine purpose, viz. the proclamation of the truths of religion among a rude and barbarous people. Overzealous Irish reformers had already reported to Rome the "enormities of the vices" of their people. Not surprisingly, therefore, Pope Adrian IV, animated by Hildebrandine ideals and political notions worthy of a St Bernard, had readily acceded to Henry's request and had invested him with the government of Ireland. (Had not Alexander II, for comparable reasons, authorised William the Conqueror's invasion of England ninety years earlier?)

The time not being ripe, Henry II had therefore neither published his papal commission nor taken any steps to implement it. Now, however, he gave Dermot leave to recruit volunteers. These Dermot found in south Wales, at that time full of Normans of broken fortune or of none. For his principal lieutenant he chose Richard de Clare, Earl of Pembroke, better known as Strongbow. To him he promised the hand of his beautiful daughter, Aoife, and the succession to the kingship of Leinster, this latter in utter disregard both of Gaelic law and of the loyalty of some of his kinsfolk; lesser recruits he enlisted with the promise of lesser prizes. In the history books Dermot's allies are conventionally labelled "Anglo-Normans". To the Irish chroniclers, they were "Men from overseas", "Foreigners" or, more precisely, "Franks". And Franks, i.e. French, their leaders were in language, customs, and institutions, if not wholly in blood. (Henry II himself was French, and French the kings of England and their officials in Ireland were to remain until well into the fourteenth century.) The rank and file of Dermot's allies were mostly Welsh and Flemings.

In 1167 Dermot returned home with the foreign vanguard. The obtuse high-king was content to accept his hostages and leave him in possession of Hy Kinsella, his ancestral kingdom in south Leinster (capital, Ferns). Dermot, of course, was merely biding his time, while Rory's attention was absorbed by the Synod of Tlachtga (over which he presided that same year) and by the revival of Aonach Tailteann (over which he presided in 1168). Even the arrival of substantial reinforcements for Dermot in 1169 failed to rouse Rory from his stupor, and it was the coming of Strongbow in 1170 with two hundred armoured knights and a thousand men-atarms which first spurred him to action. But even then the enemy struck faster.

Dermot and his allies had promptly stormed Waterford, where Aoife was married to Strongbow. Dublin was their next objective. King Rory had meantime blocked the normal route to Dublin from the South. Dermot simply came another way, and on 21 September 1170 the vital seaport was in Leinster-Norman hands.

Dermot now announced his intention of making himself high-king, but he died suddenly on 1 May 1171. Backed by Dermot's adherents in Hy Kinsella, Strongbow act about making good his own illegal claim to Leinster. He soon found himself sore pressed. King Rory mustered an Irish army; Earl Asgall of Dublin recruited Norse mercenaries; Waterford revolted. Fortunately for the Normans, the Norse struck at Dublin prematurely and were cut to pieces. Rory nevertheless blockaded the city for two months. When all seemed lost a despairing sortie found the Irish hosting off guard and dispersed it.

In the meantime, Henry II of England, alarmed at the facile success of his barons in Leinster, had rushed across to thwart any notions they might have of setting up an independent kingdom and to hoodwink the Irish kings and prelates into peaceful acknowledgement of his papal grant. His first act on reaching Ireland was to confirm Strongbow's title to Leinster, but as a fief to be held of the Crown of England. At the same time he reserved to that Crown the vital Norse seaports. Dublin was to remain until 1921 the seat of England's power in Ireland.

Almost at once the Gaelic kings began to come in and make their submission, influenced, no doubt, by Adrian's Bull and by the naive belief that they were simply exchanging one high-king for another. Only the high-king himself and the Northern Uí Néill kings of Tír Eóghain and Tír Chonaill held aloof. Acceptance of their submissions bound Henry to respect the rights of the Gaelic kings himself and to protect them against attack by others. Henry, however, had his own concept of honour.

The Irish Church, too, at a synod held in Cashel, obeyed the papal instructions and acknowledged Henry's authority. The synod decreed a number of reforms. Most of these had been initiated before ever Henry set foot in the country.

The following year Pope Alexander III commended the Irish rulers for submitting peacefully to Henry, instructed the bishops to support his authority,, and formally conferred on him the Lordship of Ireland.

Before leaving Ireland Henry appointed one of his followers, Hugh de Lacy, to be Justiciar of Ireland, i.e., representative and principal law officer of the English Crown. At the same time, in defiance of law and honour, he granted to him the whole of the former kingdom of Meath. The Irish kings were having their first lesson in English statecraft, a lesson they were singularly slow to learn.

The Conquest, 1171-1280

Henry's bad faith in regard to Meath, soon to be repeated in the case of other kingdoms, was promptly emulated by the invading barons. And so began a long-sustained policy of deceit, aggression, and murder which in eighty years was to make the invaders masters of three-fourths of Ireland. At the outset the credulous Irish—lightly armed, occasional fighters who wore no armour, and whose foolish custom it was to disperse their short-term levies once a battle had been won or a fortress overthrown—were no match for the seasoned forces of the enemy, an enemy who employed murderous bowmen as well as mail-clad cavalry and men-at-arms, an enemy who promptly secured every foothold by erecting a motte castle. The persistence of Irish credulity is well exemplified by the Treaty of Windsor, 1175, whereby King Rory at last submitted to Henry who, for his part, undertook to maintain Rory in the high-kingship as well as in the kingship of Connacht.

In the long run the speed and extent of the conquest were to prove its undoing. At first, however, all seemed more than well, and great tracts of the richer lands quickly fell to the invaders. These they organised into feudal manors, planted with castles, monasteries, villages, and towns, and colonised with tenants lured from England with the offer of special privileges and easy tenures.

In 1177 Henry II created his younger son, John, Lord of Ireland. At the same time, shamelessly disregarding his obligations, he granted Desmond (i.e. South Munster) to Robert Fitz Stephen and Milo de Cogan and Thomond (i.e. North Munster) to Philip de Braose, reserving to the Crown the cities of Cork and Limerick. King Dermot Mac Carthy of Desmond was forced to surrender Cork and seven of his best cantreds, and to promise tribute for the twenty-five cantreds left to him. Donal Mór O'Brien of Thomond, on the other hand, proved too strong to be disturbed.

That same year, 1177, John de Courcy, a venturous young freebooter, overran the little kingdom of Ulster (Cos. Down and Antrim) with dazzling rapidity, planting motte castles all over the place. The venture had been undertaken without licence from Henry II who, however, made no attempt to honour his obligations by either checking or recalling de Courcy. The latter, therefore, set himself up as more or less independent Prince of Ulster and, with future conquests in mind, "granted" the Tír Eóghain seaboard (in Co. Derry) to the Norman Lord of Galloway.

Eight years later the young Lord of Ireland paid his first visit to his new dominion and trusting Gaelic rulers came to him to reaffirm their submissions. John's entourage included three men who were to found great Anglo-Irish families and lordships: Bertram de Verdun, John's Seneschal; Theobald Waiter, his Butler; and Waiter de Burgo. To them and to others John proceeded to grant vast territories including south-east Uriel as well as Ormond (East Munster) and other parts of the kingdom of Thomond. The attack on Thomond was resumed when Donal Mór died in 1194. Among those who shared in the spoil were Theobald Waiter, ancestor of the Butlers of Ormond, Thomas fitz Gerald, ancestor of the Earls of Desmond, and Walter de Burgo (ancester of the Burkes), who was already planning the conquest of Connacht.

When he succeeded of the Butlers of Ormond, Thomas fitz Gerald, ancestor of the Earls of Desmond, and Walter de Burgo (ancester of the Burkes), who was already planning the conquest of Connacht.

When he succeeded his father, John endeavoured to secure effective authority for the English Crown in Ireland. With this object in view he set up a royal administration and courts of law; tried to create a new, subservient baronage; conceded Connacht to King Cathal Crovderg O'Conor, Rory's successor, and what was left of Thomond to Donnchadh O'Brien; sought to make the Church an instrument of state by the appointment of non-Irish, feudal prelates; clipped the liberties of Norman lordships of Leinster and Meath; and expelled de Courcy from Ulster, which he made into an earldom for Hugh II de Lacy.

This policy inevitably aroused discontent among magnates heretofore unbridled, and drove some of them into rebellion. In 1210 John had himself to conduct a campaign against de Braose and the de Lacys. At its conclusion he held a council of his barons, at which English law was extended to Ireland and many Gaelic rulers made formaI submission. But the kings of Tír Eóghain and Tír Chonaill were not among them. About this time the O'Neills and O'Donnells were getting a hold on the succession to the Northern Uí Néill kingships, and they were to maintain their ancestral kingdoms for another four hundred years.

The Norman attempts on these kingdoms had heretofore ended in failure, but just now new and graver threats were mounting against them. Castles were being erected on their southern and eastern marches, and de Courcy's grant of the Tír Eóghain seaboard to the Lord of Galloway was confirmed by John's Justiciar. Away to the south the FitzGeralds and others were overrunning faction-ridden Desmond and girdling it with castles. By 1215 only Thomond, Connacht, Tír Chonaill, Tír E6ghain, and western Uriel remained outside the "English land".

The turn of Connacht came in 1227, when Richard de Burgo obtained a shameful grant of the western kingdom. De Burgo's first efforts proved abortive, but in 1235 he mounted a supreme attack supported by the Justiciar and the whole feudal levy. King Felim O'Conor salvaged what he could of the wreckage by submitting to de Burgo, who left him the O'Conor domain in Roscommon. The rest of the Connacht lowlands was at once parcelled out among the victors, de Burgo retaining for himself the limestone plains of Galway and Mayo. On the conquered lands the usual manors, villages, and towns were founded, and colonies of Welshmen, Flemings, and other foreigners established. In less than a century the countryside was to revert to the Gaelic order, but towns like Galway were to remain enduring citadels of English royal authority and of foreign speech.

Tír Eóghain was attacked in 1238, but with little result, and three years later Brian O'Neill overthrew the last Mac Lochlainn to rule that kingdom. From 1241 until 1605 the proud names of Tír Eóghain and O'Neill were to remain synonymous. In 1247 Tír Chonaill was invaded from Connacht for the second time. This attempt likewise failed, as did five further attacks between 1248 and 1257 on one or other of the two neighbouring kingdoms. The attack of 1257 was made memorable by the presence in the Tír Chonaill army of galloglas (*gall-óglách*, foreign soldier), mail-clad Norse-Gaelic mercenaries from the Kingdom of Argyll and the Isles (the Lordship of the Isles). The Irish kings were now beginning to employ standing armies of galloglas, whose hereditary captains received estates by way of payment. The importation of Hebridean fightingmen was to continue for three centuries, so that they came to form an appreciable element of the Gaelic-speaking population. In time the Norman magnates too, and the Dublin government itself, saw fit to employ them.

In 1258 Tír Eóghain moved into the forefront of the Gaelic resistance, for in that year Aodh O'Conor of Connacht and Tadhg O'Brien of Thomond formally acknowledged the ancestral claims of Brian O'Neill to the high-kingship of Ireland. Unfortunately, Donal Óg O'Donnell of Tír Chonaill elected to signalise his accession by holding aloof from the combination, in breach of an O'Neill-O'Donnell alliance which had operated since 1201. Despite O'Donnell's defection and O'Brien's death, O'Conor and O'Neill invaded Ulster in 1260, only to be disasterously routed at the First Battle of Down (14 May 1260). Despite this set-back, O'Néill power continued to grow and in 1264 Brian's successor. Aodh Buidhe, ancestor of the Clann Aodha Buidhe ("Clannaboy") O'Neills, extended extended Tír Eóghain sovereignty over Uriel (the Monaghan-Fermanagh region). After his time O'Neill of Tír Eóghain calls himself *Rex Ultoniae—Ri Uladh*, "King of (Great) Ulster", i.e. king of the whole of the prehistoric Fifth, not just of the tiny historic Ulster.

The year after the Battle of Down, Finghin (of Rinn Róin; see under Kinsale) MacCarthy won a resounding victory in Desmond. He and his brothers having begun to raze the Anglo-Norman castles there, John fitz Thomas FitzGerald rallied the whole feudal levy against them. At Callan near Kenmare, on 24 July 1261, the MacCarthys routed the Norman host with heavy loss. Nine years later Aodh O'Conor and Turloch O'Brien won a comparable victory over de Burgo and the Justiciar at Athankip near Carrick-on-Shannon. Eight years after that King Donnchad again routed the invaders of Thomond at Quin. The tide was on the turn at last.

Decline of the Colony and Gaelic Resurgence, 1280-1400

The first attempt to conquer the whole of Ireland had resulted in a threefold division of the island which was to endure until the Tudor conquest: (a) an ever-shrinking “English land”, or “land of peace”, i.e. the few shires effectively controlled by Dublin; (b) the Liberties of the feudal magnates who acknowledged the English Crown, but were opposed alike to encroachment on their privileges and to government from England, and who inclined more and more to Gaelic speech and ways; (c) the unconquered Gaelic kingdoms which, during the next two centuries, were to recover much ground at the expense of both the feudal Liberties and the “English land”.

To this stalemate a variety of causes had contributed, among them the speed and thinness of the conquest, the absorption of the English Crown in domestic strife and Continental wars, the thwarting of English Crown policy by the self-seeking AngloIrish baronage, the repeated passing by marriage of great feudal fiefs to absentee lords unable to defend them, the revolt of cadets against such transferences, the impossibility of extinguishing any Gaelic ruling stock because the *derb-fine* always provided heirs capable of continuing the kingship, and the creation of Gaelic standing armies.

A major crisis for the Norman colony arose from Scotland’s victory over England at Bannockburn (1314). In pursuance of a projected Scottish-Irish-Welsh alliance against the common foe, Edward Bruce brought a veteran army to Ireland in May 1315. He was promptly joined by King Donal of Tír Eóghain and other adherents, Gaelic and Norman, and a year later was solemnly invested as King of Ireland on Knocknamelan near Dundalk (1 May 1316). The king of Tír Eóghain and other Gaelic princes addressed a celebrated Remonstrance to Pope John XXII, indicting the behaviour of the English kings and the Norman baronage in Ireland, and informing him that they had made Bruce their king. The Pope replied by excommunicating Bruce and his adherents. In the meantime Bruce was campaigning more or less at will through Ulster, the Midlands, and Leinster, his successes setting off a chain of local uprisings against the Normans. Of these the most serious was in the West, where Thomond and Gaelic Meath joined forces with the King of Connacht, only to be disastrously routed outside Athenry, by the baronage of Meath and Connacht, 10 August 1316.

This reverse was offset the following month by the arrival of King Robert of Scotland at the head of a large army. In February 1317 the Bruces marched on Dublin, only to be baulked by lack of a siege train. They then marched back and forth at will as far as Limerick, wasting the countryside and destroying many small towns as well as villages and castles, but achieving nothing of military vaule.

In the hope of holding the loyalty of the Norman magnates, Edward II of England had created Edmund Butler Earl of Carrick in September 1315 and Thomas FitzGerald (baron O’Faly) Earl of Kildare in April 1316. Now, in April 1317, Edward’s Lieutenant, Roger Mortimer, Earl of March and absentee claimant of the lordships of Trim and Laois, brought a strong army to Ireland. The Earl of Kildare joined forces with him and helped him to overawe the new King of Connacht and to force Edward Bruce back into Ulster to await further reinforcements from Scotland.

1318 bid fair to redress the balance in Bruce’s favour, for, on 10 May, Muircheartach O’Brien of Thomond, by a decisive victory at Dysert O’Dea, turned back the Norman tide which for forty years had been threatening to engulf his kingdom. On 14 October, however, Bruce was slain at Faughart near Dundalk. With him fell Gaelic Ireland’s last hope of an independent monarchy.

The Bruce episode shook the whole Anglo-Norman colonial fabric. Many inland towns and settlements were destroyed for ever. Great areas were recovered for Gaelic civilisation, a fact well exemplified by the restoration in 1327 of the Mac Murrough kingdom of Leinster that had been in abeyance since the death of Dermot II in 1171. The Norman magnates too were enlarging their privileges by maintaining standing armies of native Irishmen, and by exacting from their “English” tenants services which aggravated the exodus set off by the 1315-18 campaigns. And the English Crown was powerless to check them, or even to punish those who had joined Bruce. The growing power of the magnates is reflected in the creation of the Earldom of Ormond (1328), with great privileges, for James Butler, Earl of Carrick, and of the Earldom of Desmond (1329), with palatine jurisdiction over Kerry, for Maurice, son of Tomis an Apa, FitzGerald. The Earls of Desmond were to lead the Home Rule Party of the “Middle Nation” and to incline more and more to Gaelic culture. The Earls of Ormond, on the other hand, were eventually to lead the English Party among the colonists. (Butler policy can be explained in part by Butler-Geraldine rivalry, in part by three notable Butler marriages: the first earl of Ormond himself married a grandaughter of Edward I, thereby acquiring rich estates in England and making his descendants "cousins" of the King; the fifth earl was to marry a sister of Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Somerset; the seventh earl's heiress married Sir Thomas Boleyn, grandfather of Anne Boleyn, the mother of Elizabeth I of England.)

The year 1333 was marked by a grave blow to the English interest. William de Burgo, "Brown" Earl of Ulster and Lord of Connacht, was murdered in the course of a family feud. The title to his vast possessions passed to his infant daughter, who was to convey it by marriage to the absentee Duke of Clarence, from whom it would descend to the absentee Mortimers and so, ultimately, to the English Crown. In the meantime the Earldom of Ulster was leaderless against the northern Irish, who made the most of their opportunities. Their great hour came in 1375, when Niall O'Neill of Tír Eóghain, great-grandson of Brian of the Battle of Down, routed the feudal levy of Ireland at the Second Battle of Down. Of the Norman supremacy established in Ulster by John de Courcy only Carrickfergus now remained. In less than fifty years after the "Brown" Earl's death the ancient Uí Néill stocks dominated the whole of the North as never before, and Tír Eóghain had pushed its eastern frontier across the Bann into Ulster itself, where the Clannaboy O'Neills were to remain the foremost stock until the seventeenth century.

In Connacht too the Gaelic order made a spectacular recovery. There, semi-Gaelicised de Burgo cadets seized the "Brown" Earl's lordship and estabished the Norman-Gaelic families known to history as Mac Uilliam Íochtair (Lower Mac William Burke, in Mayo) and Mac Uilliam Úachtair (Upper Mac William Burke, alias Clann Riocáird—Clanrickard, in Galway). The lesser barons also became Gaelicised, while the ancient Gaelic stocks recovered substantial portionsof their patrimony. In efflect, the whole of the West, apart from the town of Galway, was won back to Gaelic speech and culture.

Even in the Midlands the Gaelic tide was turning. Here the most notable successes were won by the O'Mores of Laois, the O'Connors of Éile, and the O'Kennedys of north Ormond.

In 1361 Lionel, Duke of Clarence and husband of the "Brown" Earl's heiress, came to Ireland as Lieutenant of the English king. The sole enduring relic of his five years of effort to hold back the tide were the notorious, unenforceable, Statutes of Kilkenny designed to prevent the colony, its laws, language (now largely English), and culture from succumbing to Gaelic arms and Gaelic civilisation. The statutes were themselves an admission of a factual threefold division of the island between the "Irish enemies", the "degenerate English", and the "land of peace". By implication, four-fifths of the island are abandoned to the "Irish enemies" and "English rebels", though the feudal titles to them are not surrendered and, centuries later, will be unjustly resurrected as opportunity offers (see Leighlinbridge).

The reign (1375-1418) of Art Óg Mac Murrough of Leinster, with its widespread assaults on the dwindling "land of peace", presented English authority with a crisis of such magnitude that Richard II felt impelled to resolve it himself. Richard's threefold aim was to induce "the wild Irish"—other than the unspeakable Mac Murrough—to submit with honour on a guarantee of just treatment, to win back the "Irish [i.e. Norman] rebels", and to consolidate the shrinking "English land" and plant it with fresh colonists. For the success of this last, Mac Murrough and his vassals should quit Leinster and settle on lands to be won from the "king's rebels and enemies".

To give effect to this ambitious programme Richard came in person in 1394 with the largest English army (perhaps 10,000 men) to land in medieval Ireland. Blockaded by land and sea, his forces pinned down by a network of garrisons, his land laid waste, Mac Murrough was compelled to accept Richard's terms. Eighty other Gaelic rulers hastened to make formal submission to the English king. But it was all a sham, for Richard had hardly reached home when Mac Murrough, Desmond, O'Neill, O'Brien, and the rest took up arms once more. Three years after Richard's departure his Lieutenant, cousin, and heir, Roger Mortimer, Earl of March and pretender to the vanished earldom of Ulster and the lost lordships of Connacht, Meath, Laois, and Ossory, was routed and slain by Leinster Irish at Kellistown near Tullow. Richard came back to Ireland (1399), resolved to be avenged and to finish Mac Murrough. This time, however, the Leinster king beat him all along the line and, before he had accomplished anything, Richard was called home by Bolingbroke's usurpation. Art Óg had, indeed, "wrecked English unity for a hundred years". The English king's Lordship of Ireland collapsed, not to be restored until Tudor times, for from 1399 to 1534 the effective authority of the English Crown in Ireland was hedged into the little Pale, outside of which Gaelic kings and Norman magnates ruled the land. A succession of these magnates nominally represented the Lord of Ireland, but they behaved as independent princes.

Anglo-Norman Home Rule; Gaelic Resurgence continues, 1400-1534

Fifteenth century England's preoccupation with foreign and dynastic wars played into the hands of the Irish potentates, Gaelic and Norman. Some of the more spectacular manifestations of Gaelic resurgence were in the North. Thus in 1423 Tír Eóghan, Tír Chonaill, and Ulster combined to rout Henry VI's Lieutenant at Dundalk, and in 1430, with Tír Eóghain at the zenith of its power, Eóghan O'Neill, as "King of Ulster", was receiving the submissions of Midland Normans as well as of Midland Gaels. Hand in hand with political recovery went a religious revival exemplified by the Observant movement among the Augustinian, Franciscan, and Dominican friars, for it was the Gaelic lands which first, and most widely, adopted the Observant reforms.

Among the Normans, by now speakers of English (and Irish) rather than French, the counterpart of the Gaelic resurgence was the Home Rule movement which had manifested itself as far back as 1326, when—so his enemies later alleged—Maurice of Desmond had engaged in the first of many conspiracies to make himself King of Ireland, and which now, under the leadership of the fourth earl of Ormond (1405-52), took a constitutional course. Ormond supported the House of Lancaster, and was several times head of the King's government in Ireland. Not unnaturally, "Lancastrian Constitutionalism" was welcomed by him and his supporters, the more readily since it could be used to their own advantage. From Ormond's viceroyalty of 1441-4 onwards it was the Home Rule Party that ruled Ireland, controlled its parliament, shared the offices of state, and exercised the prerogatives of the Lord of Ireland.

In the Wars of the Roses the earls of Desmond and Kildare, backed by their Gaelic relatives and allies, actively espoused the Yorkist cause. Like Ormond, they too made the most of their opportunities to advance the Home Rule cause, and when Richard of York fled for refuge to Ireland the colonial parliament constrained him (1460) to acknowledge the independence of the "land of Ireland", save only for the personal link with the English Crown. When Richard returned in triumph to England, he left Kildare as his Deputy in Ireland.

By 1465 the English Pale had shrunk to Dublin and the nearer parts of Louth, Meath, and Kildare. The ever-present fear of successive English kings, even Yorkist kings, was that some feudal magnate or other would set himself up as King of Ireland with the support of Gael and Norman. In 1467 Edward IV sought to forestall such a disaster by sending over Sir John Tibetot to assert the royal authority. Tibetot shocked the Anglo-Norman colony by having Desmond and Kildare attainted for treason, felony, and alliances with the Irish. Desmond was at once beheaded, but Kildare made his escape to England.

This shrewd blow at the Home Rule party proved premature, for the Yorkist cause was still in need of support from Ireland. Three years later Kildare was appointed Justiciar, not by the English government, but by the colonial parliament of Ireland. The only real consequence of Tibetot's brutal action was the permanent estrangement of the House of Desmond from the English Crown.

In the days of their supremacy (1470-1534) the Earls of Kildare were Kings of Ireland in all but name, clothing their doings with legality by acting with the authority of a subservient parliament. The zenith of their power, and the zenith of colonial Home Rule, was attained under the eighth earl, Gearóid Mór—Gerald the Great—whose sister and daughters allied him by marriage with three great Norman and four great Gaelic stocks, among the latter the O'Neills of Tír Eóghain. With such backing he was safe even from Lancastrian Henry VII Nevertheless, the advent of the Tudors and the introduction of firearms spelled the doom of feudal earl and Gaelic king alike.

It was Yorkist conspirators and impostors who opened Henry VII's eyes to the dangers threatening the new absolute monarchy of England from a Home Rule and Yorkist Ireland and from the continuing erosion of the English Pale. Clearly the immediate necessity was to secure the English bridgehead and to nullify the colonial parliament. Both objectives were secured in the brief Deputyship (1494-6) of Sir Edward Poynings, whose "packed" parliament adopted the necessary measures, including a sweeping Act of Resumption (which gave the Crown the appointment of all officers of state) and the notorious "Poynings' Law". The latter could was to hamstring every Anglo-Irish parliament until 1782 by providing that no parliament could thereafter assemble without prior English approval of its proposed enactments and unless it was summoned under the Great Seal of England. Poynings' parliament also re-enacted the Statutes of Kilkenny, with the significant exception of those against the use of the Irish language.

Poynings' task completed, Kildare was restored, and retained in office until his death (1513). He was succeeded as Lord Deputy by his heir, Gearóid Óg (Young Gerald), third successive earl of Kildare to hold the chief governorship. But Cardinal Wolsey, Henry VIII's chief minister, and the zealous Butlers were bent on the downfall of the House of Kildare, and filled Henry's ears with endless complaints against Gerald's rule. Henry therefore replaced him for two years (1520-22) by the Earl of Surrey, who advised a new conquest and a new English plantation as the only solution of the Irish problem. Henry preferred to restore Kildare and to adopt a policy of Surrender and Regrant whereby the Gaelic magnates (and those Old English whose titles to their land were poor in feudal law) were to be induced to surrender their land to the Crown and receive it back as estates-in-tail.

In 1534 Kildare was summoned to London, for the third time, to answer the charges of his enemies, leaving as his deputy his eldest son, Silken Thomas. Thomas was deliberately goaded into rebellion by false rumours of his father's death in the Tower. Though O'Conor Faly and O'Carroll of Éile rallied to their kinsman's support, the rebellion was speedily crushed by a great English army equipped with heavy guns. The earl died, Silken Thomas and his five uncles were executed, and the sole survivor of the ancient and powerful house of Kildare was a fugitive boy of ten.

The Tudor Conquest, 1534-1603

With much of Leinster subjugated and, by a legal fiction, forfeit to the Crown, more active policies directed to the subjugation of the whole island seemed feasible. Their implementation was to prove slow, arduous, and costly.

The first steps were to give Henry VIII control of the Church and to provide him with capital by dissolving the monasteries; the next to make him King of Ireland, free from the shackles of papal grants of simple lordship. And so the state "Church of Ireland" was called into being in 1537, the "Kingdom of Ireland" in 1541. (In 1555 Pope Paul legitimised the Kingdom of Ireland for Henry's daughter, "Bloody Mary".) From first to last (1541-1800) the Kingdom of Ireland was governed from England through English viceroys and officials responsible to London. From first to last (1537-1869) the state Church of Ireland was the church of a minority, for Protestantism was something alien introduced by New English officials and planters.

His legal titles acknowledged, Henry VIII was, on the whole, content to let events drift to their logical outcome. While the ultimate Anglicisation of the whole island was an explicit objective of both his secular and his ecclesiastical policy, he was normally content to allow the Gaelic magnates (once they had acknowledged the Crown by treaties of surrender and regrant) to rule their countries by Gaelic law. Not until the reign of Mary was the next major step taken, the adoption of the long debated plantation policy.

In 1556 the inland Leinster territories of Laois and Uí Failghe were shired as Queen's County and King's County, and the eastern two-thirds granted to English and Welsh settlers. For Laois a Crown title through the Mortimers was fabricated. For Uí Failghe, O'Conor Faly's share in the rebellion of Silken Thomas afforded the lawyer's pretext. The victims fought desperately to retain their ancestral lands and only finally laid down their arms in 1603.

English attention was next directed to Tír Eóghain. Conn Bacach O'Neill had, in a disingenuous game of bluff, acknowledged Henry VIII and had accepted the title Earl of Tyrone (1541-2). On Conn's death (1559), however, his second son, Seaán an Diomais (John the Proud), had, in accordance with Gaelic law, been installed as O'Neill, as King of Tír Eóghain. Elizabeth I ordered him to be crushed forthwith. Seaán gave arms to the common folk "the first that ever did so of an Irishman"—and could not be brought to bay. Attempts to have him murdered miscarried. Neither could he be cajoled or deceived. In the end it was the O'Donnells who broke Great O'Neill, the Mac Donnells of Antrim who murdered him (1567). The English at once had him attainted, the title O'Neill pronounced extinguished, and—somewhat prematurely—the land of Tír Eóghain declared forfeit to the Crown.

In the meantime the attack was switched to the old earldom of Ulster, for which also a Crown title through the Mortimers was devised. The Clannaboy O'Neills and the Mac Donnells were declared to have no rights there, and schemes were set afoot for planting the Ards peninsula (1572) and Glens of Antrim (1574) with English settlers. The projects had to be abandoned, but not before the Earl of Essex had perpetrated loathsome massacres.

About the same time Desmond was attacked, the 15th Earl made prisoner for engaging in battle (Affane, 1565) with his traditional enemy, the Earl of Ormond, and the palatinate jurisdiction of Kerry abolished. About this time too the possessions of the Old English in Munster (and elsewhere) began to be threatened by Devon-Somerset adventurers like Sir Peter Carew (see Leighlinbridge) and Sir Walter Raleigh. In 1569 the Pope at long last excommunicated Elizabeth I for her share in making England Protestant, whereupon Desmond's cousin, Sir James Fitzmaurice, headed an Old English revolt in defence of the Catholic religion and of ancestral property. The rebels were soon joined by Gaelic lords like MacCarthy Mór. In Wicklow too, and in Laois-Uí Failghe, men sprang to arms. No major actions took place, but when several Munster castles had been taken with merciless slaughter the revolt died away, Fitzmaurice surrendering in 1573 and departing for the Continent.

In 1579 Fitzmaurice returned and tried to rally the south in defence of Catholicism, but very few joined him. In Leinster, however, the indomitable O'Mores and O'Conors of Laois-Uí Failghe rose once more; likewise O'Byrne of Wicklow, soon to be joined by James FitzEustace, Viscount Baltinglass. In Munster the rising was countered with horrifying savagery, the whole land laid desolate, and the hapless, hunchback 15th Earl of Desmond driven to rebellion and destruction. Abandoned by Philip II of Spain, on whom they had pinned their hopes, the insurgents were overwhelmed. All was over by 1583.

The way now seemed clear for the plantation of Munster. Accordingly 210,000 acres of the best land were confiscated for settling with Protestant English owners and tenants. (The opportunities for swindling on a grand scale were eagerly seized. Sir Walter Raleigh, for example, ended up with 40,000 ill-gotten acres.) Nevertheless, as an effort at colonisation the Plantation proved a failure, for very few English tenant farmers were attracted to Munster at this stage.

By this time the English Governor of Connacht was steadily encroaching on the southern marches of Tír Chonaill and Tír Eóghain. For twenty-five years, against a background of widespread plotting to organise a national, Catholic confederacy supported by Spain, Great Hugh O'Neill (Earl of Tyrone, 1587) had cunningly, patiently, and tortuously maintained a minimal loyalty to the English Crown. The English seizure (1594) of Enniskillen and the Gap of the Erne forced him at last to choose between open war and surrender. So began the Nine Years' War. Having no artillery with which to reduce the English towsn, O'Neill adopted Fabian tactics, engaging the enemy only when compelled to do so, and playing for time by repeated truces and parleys; for time until Spanish help should come, or James VI of Scotland ascend Elizabeth of England's throne; for time to conver a struggle for self-preservation into a confederacy for the salvation of Catholic Ireland.

The first five years of war gave O'Neill and Red Hugh II O'Donnell a series of spectacular victories; victories which brought most of the country over to them, including Munster, where the Plantation was swept away and the Súgán (Strawrope) Earl of Desmond restored for a space to a portion of his patrimony. In 1600, however, Lord Mountjoy arrived with the greatest army ever sent from England. His savagely effective policy of repression and devastation soon crushed the revolt in the south. Within eighteen months O'Neill and O'Donnell had been hemmed into their own territories by a chain of forts and entrenchments; but they still held out, their hopes on Spain. At long last the Spanish aid arrived—at the opposite end of Ireland. The English and Irish armies hurried south to Kinsale, and there the issue was decided by a resounding English victory on Christmas Eve, 1601.

Thereafter Mountjoy harried the North almost at will until Tír Eóghain and Tír Chonaill surrendered at last on 30 March 1603. Gaelic Ireland had made its greatest effort and had failed.

The Final Conquest, 1603-90

Though the vanquished were pardoned by James I, the earldom of Tyrone restored to O'Neill, and the earldom of Tyrconnell conferred on Red Hugh's successor, Rory, the Northern princes were no longer independent Gaelic rulers. Their territories were shired (as Cos. Donegal, Tyrone, Derry, and Armagh) and subjected to English law; Gaelic law and Gaelic tenures were abolished. In addition, the Dublin junta never ceased to plot Tyrone's destruction. Only by flight could he and O'Donnell hope to save themselves and their families, and so, on 14 September 1607, they sailed away, never to return.

The "Flight of the Earls" was promptly declared to be treason and made a pretext for finding the six western counties of the modern Province of Ulster forfeit to the Crown. By chicanery of every kind nearly 500,000 acres of the best land were taken from their owners and thrown open for planting with Protestants from England and Scotland, the City of London Companies obtaining large estates. Only some 300 old freeholders were conceded grants under the articles of plantation, though of course thousands of Gaelic tenants remained. Similar, if smaller, plantations were carried out in parts of Leinster and Connacht. Like the Ulster Plantation, these were a violation of the Act of Oblivion and Pardon (1604) which had terminated the Nine Years' War.

The violence, suffering, degradation, and interdenominational hatred inseparable from the several sixteenth and seventeenth century plantations only prepared the ground for violent efforts at recovery and revenge as soon as opportunity offered, which efforts in their turn would engender further violence, suffering, and hatred. In the long view, however, perhaps their worst feature was the enlargement of the agrarian proletariat by the depression of a substantial body of ancient freeholders. It was in these confiscations and plantations that the oppressive features of the landlordism of eighteenth and nineteenth century Ireland had their roots.

Despite the plantations, the great majority of Irish landowners, as of the population at large, was still Catholic. But it had grave causes for fear: Protestants, aliens by birth and speech as well as by religion, had control of parliament and the state; a plantation of Connacht threatened; further confiscations were in the air, imperilling even Old English magnates who had become Protestants; Munster was falling into the clutches of English "carpet-baggers" like Robert Boyle, "Great" Earl of Cork; Catholics were barred from public office, the legal profession, and the university, and were forbidden to keep schools; a Court of Wards had been set up to ensure the Protestant upbringing of minors. In general, however, James I, and after him Charles I, adopted a policy of "connived indulgence" towards the majority, and all might have ended well enough but for the rise of Nonconformist parliamentarianism in Britain and the repeated cheating of the Irish Catholics in the matter of royal Graces (i.e. the amelioration of injustices) promised by Charles I in return for subsidies. In 1638 the Scottish Presbyterians rose against Charles and the following year the Dublin government fell into the clutches of Puritan Lords Justice, who finally blocked the Graces and seemed bent on driving the country to rebellion so as to justify further spoliation of the natives. And rebellion came. It started in October 1641 with the rising of the Old Irish of Ulster, led by Sir Felim O'Neill, and of Leinster, led by Rory O'More of Laois, but soon spread to the Old English lords of the Pale, to Munster, and to Connacht. Tragically, if understandably, the first upsurge of those so recently and so cruelly wronged was the occasion of atrocities on the planters, particularly in the North. These atrocities were grossly exaggerated by calculated propaganda and were later made the pretext for barbarous treatment of the vanquished. The insurgent demands appear to us today as scarcely excessive: civil and religious rights for all, redress of injustices arising from the confiscations, the freeing of parliament from the shackles of Poynings' Law.

The course of the ensuing Eleven Years' War was bedevilled by a complexity of sometimes shifting interests: Royalist v. Parliamentarian, Catholic v. Protestant, Episcopalian Protestant v. Dissenting Protestant, Old Irish and Old English v. New English, Old Irish v. Old English. It was the Old Irish who provided the best of the Catholic armies, the army of Ulster, and the best Catholic general, Eóghan Rúa O'Neill, nephew of Great Hugh. Nevertheless, it was the Old English faction which dominated the government and parliament of the Catholic Confederacy (Confederation of Kilkenny). The choice of Kilkenny, capital of the Butler country, as the seat of the Confederation, gave an undue influence to the Butler interest, and thus to Charles I's Lord Lieutenant, the Protestant Earl (later Marquis and Duke) of Ormonde, whose sole purpose was to make Ireland a stronghold of the Crown in its struggle with the English Parliament, and to keep the country dependent on England—on a Parliamentarian England if necessary.

In 1649-50, O'Neill being dead, Cromwell butchered his way through Leinster and Munster and the Confederation dissolved. Thereafter the Catholic-Royalist armies were beaten one by one, the war coming to a close in 1652. By the time it had ended famine, plague, and the sword had reduced the population to a mere 500,000.

The victors allowed the Irish leaders and troops to take service abroad, and then set about crushing the defenceless nation for ever. The Catholic Church was suppressed; thousands of common folk were shipped to the West Indies practically as slaves; the "Irish Papist" landowners—save those who took to the hills and woods as "rapparees"—were herded into parts of Connacht and Clare; 11,000,000 acres of land were apportioned out among new Protestant settlers; the towns, too, were colonised with new Protestants. In this way a substantial Protestant and English minority was added to the population and Protestants came to dominate, not only the landowning classes, but also the urban, commercial, industrial, and professional life of the country.

The restoration of Charles II (1660) merely confirmed the Cromwellian settlers in power and possessions. The king had been well served by the Catholic Irish exiles, but only a minority of these recovered anything of their estates. (A few were given compensation in New England, the pioneers of the great Irish migrations to the Americas in search of freedom and opportunity.) However, the king's policy of "connived toleration" meant that the worst anti-Catholic laws were seldom enforced.

Under James II the "Old English" Catholic party came to power, and in 1687 a member of that party, Richard Talbot (Earl of Tyrconnell, 1685), became Lord Lieutenant. Civic rights were restored to the majority, the army and the legal profession opened to them. Such elementary justice awakened the resentment of the newly come Protestants, and when Talbot proceeded to raise a Catholic army Catholic army to maintain the

Stuart Crown they began to fear for their rights as well as for their privileges. Accordingly, when the Williamite rebellion broke out in England most

of the Protestants in Ireland sided with the rebels. Catholic Ireland, on the other hand, naturally rallied round King James against the Protestant ally of the Pope. In 1689 James came to Ireland and summoned the Patriot Parliament, whose Catholic majority proceeded to disendow the Church of Ireland and to undo the Cromwellian Confiscation in such a way as to cause injustice to some Protestants. James then took the field against the northern rebels, who had seized Derry and Enniskillen. His attempt on Derry failed and a Williamite army landed at Carrickfergus to outmanœuvre him on the Boyne (July 1690). Though James then left the country, his adherents continued the struggle with French help. The decisive action took place at Aughrim, near Ballinasloe (12 July 1691), where the Jacobite field army was broken, with heavy losses among the Old Irish and Old English aristocracy. The war ended with the Treaty of Limerick, on 3 October 1691. The Jacobite army then sailed away to France, leaving the nation leaderless and defenceless. The English conquest of Ireland was complete.

Modern Ireland, 1691-1921

The Rise and Fall of the "Protestant Nation", 1691-1801

The Williamite victory was followed by further confiscations, so that by 1700 only one seventh of the land remained in Catholic ownership. Even this small fraction was to be further whittled away by the operation of the Penal Laws enacted against Catholics between 1695 and 1727 in violation of the Treaty of Limerick. The worst aspect of the revolution thereby completed was not the transfer of the land to a small minority, but the replacement of a patriarchal system, in which the lord was primarily the lord of dependants who looked to him for protection, by a system in which he was an absolute lord of land to be exploited solely in his own interest.

The population was by now quite a medley: Old Irish, Old English, Elizabethan and Stuart Planters, Cromwellians, and Williamites, with the Catholic (Gaelic and Old English) element much the largest. The victorious Protestant minority was divided into two hostile halves, the episcopalian Church of Ireland on the one hand, the Nonconformists on the other. From 1691 onwards the Episcopalians constituted that "Ascendancy" whose plebeian aristocracy aroused the contempt of the blood-conscious Gael, the hostility of the democratic Nonconformist.

The Catholic majority was deprived of political and civic rights and was excluded from public office, the legal profession, the army, and several branches of trade and manufacture. Its Church was forbidden by law. It was not permitted to educate its children either at home or abroad. The Catholic peasant was among the most oppressed in Western Europe: weighed down by taxes and tithes as well as by rack rents and forced labour, exposed to capricious eviction, and demoralised by poverty and unemployment. The old aristocracy was gone, the leaders of the people and the patrons of the poets and poetry that had so long fanned the flame of Gaelic resistance. For a time the bardic schools and the bardic profession managed, indeed, to survive by the liberality of the countryside; but soon, if he would live, the poet had to reach for the spade, or stoop to *sráid-éigse*—the demeaning balladry of the market-place. Then the polished literary language, the classical metres, and the traditional themes ceased to be cultivated, their place taken by a new literature in the peasant language, a literature whose themes were the unfortunate "Dark Rosaleen" (Ireland) and the joys and sorrows of the oppressed. In some districts the poets continued for a while to vie with one another in "Courts of Poetry" meeting in farmhouse or inn, but their normal stage was the market-place or, preferably, the peasant's fireside, where captive listeners absorbed their outpouring into the fibre of their being. In this way the last Gaelic struggle for the soul of the nation was prolonged into the nineteenth century, when the advice of political leaders and the struggle for survival in an age of hunger and emigration induced the masses to jettison the last treasure of their Gaelic heritage, a treasure which had come to seem a badge of servitude at home and which proved an impediment to advancement abroad.

The democratic Nonconformists, too, had their galling religious and civic grievances. They, too, were helots; helots to the same oligarchy as the Catholic peasantry. Inevitably, their thoughts turned towards combination with the majority, to the alarm of the English interest. Unfortunately for Irish democracy—so it was to prove—Ulster custom gave the Presbyterian tenant rights denied to his Catholic neighbour. Moreover, the starveling Catholic was often tempted to outbid the Presbyterian when leases came to be renewed. Selfish landlords thus had reasons for replacing Presbyterian by Catholic tenants. The natural resentment of the dispossessed occasionally found expression in outbursts of anti-Catholic violence.

More important at first, however, than such sectarian conflict, was the stream of Presbyterian emigration to New England, a stream set off by wholesale rent-raising in 1718. From their American havens of religious and political equality the exiles passed back democratic ideals to their kinsfolk in Ulster, and it was among these that Irish republicanism first took root. In the outcome sectarianism was to triumph in Ulster, and the story of Irish democracy is largely the story of the slow, agonising, but wondrous resurrection of the indomitable explosive older peasantry which, surmounting every obstacle, surviving every disaster, broke in succession sectarian tyranny, landlordism, and the entire English system in Ireland. The nation as a whole—including the non-Catholics—has benefited by the victory.

The episcopalian oligarchy had its own grievances and, once its fears of a Jacobite counter-revolution had been stilled, began to air them. Foremost among its champions was a Dublin-born Englishman, the immortal Jonathan Swift (16671745), who to personal disappointment added a bitter indignation against social wrong. His indignation was not, however, typical of episcopalian Protestants, and the oligarchy’s complaints were primarily concerned with its own pocket. The oligarchy’s venal, unrepresentative parliament had no real power. Neither had it a voice in appointments to the great offices of Church or State, which were filled with English-born nominees of the London government. In addition, Irish trade, largely in Protestant hands, was hampered by restrictions imposed in the interests of England. Towards the middle of the eighteenth century there began to emerge among the Protestants a Patriot Party which by 1770, under the leadership of Henry Grattan, was agitating in the name of the “Protestant Nation” for a ‘Tree Constitution and freedom of trade”.

The rising tide of rebel successes in America prompted limited concessions (1774, 1778) to the Catholic middle class as well as to the few surviving Catholic landowners, and the admission (1780) of Nonconformists to public office. When France, Holland, and Spain joined in the American war against England, fear of invasion was added to the dread of risings by the Presbyterian and Catholic peasantry. England therefore consented to the raising of Protestant volunteers to defend the country. These the Patriot Party promptly employed to wring from her a relaxation of the restrictions on trade (1779) and the acknowledgement of legislative independence (1782).

The Protestant colony now had its free parliament, “Grattan’s Parliament”, but that parliament had no control over Dublin government, which continued to be a junta manipulated from London. Moreover, the parliament was as venal as it was unrepresentative, and it resisted every attempt at electoral reform. It is true that the period of Grattan’s Parliament was one of great prosperity for the upper and middle classes. But the masses continued to be exploited in the same old evil way. Small wonder if tile Catholic peasantry proved indifferent to the fate of the legislature, or sought to defend itself against local tyrants by the Whiteboys, Defenders, and other terrorist societies. Small wonder if the competition for farms called forth rival secret societies among the Presbyterians.

In the meantime increasing agitation for parliamentary reform and for Catholic emancipation, and the spread of French and American republicanism, were turning the thoughts of the Dublin junta to complete union with Great Britain as the only hope of preserving the power and privileges of the Ascendancy. At the same time disagreements between the Dublin and London parliaments were awakening English fears for the link between the two kingdoms, fears which were magnified by the rapid growth of the Irish population and the outbreak of war with the French Republic (1793).

It was about this time that the democratic movement found a leader in Theobald Wolfe Tone, a young Protestant lawyer who had been attracted by the French doctrines of liberty and equality. In 1792 Tone became secretary of the Catholic Committee—a timid organisation for pleading the Catholic cause—and he helped it to secure the parliamentary vote for Catholics and other concessions (1793). In 1791 he and other Protestants, “interpreters of the new America and the new France”, founded in Belfast the Society of United Irishmen, a secret society for the promotion of a “brotherhood of affection, and a communion of rights, and a union of power among Irishmen of every religious persuasion”. It was the continued rejection of the demands for parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation which turned the United Irishmen into a revolutionary organisation and sent Tone to France to seek the aid of the new republic there.

The United Irishmen had become particularly strong among the Presbyterians of Ulster. And yet it was now that sectarian feuds in the North began to come to a head with the “Battle of the Diamond” (Co. Armagh) and the foundation of the “Orange Order” pledged to maintain Protestant ascendancy.

In December 1796 Tone set sail from France with a large French army which was only prevented by ill luck from putting ashore in Bantry Bay. (A projected Franco-Dutch expedition was forestalled by the British naval victory at Camperdown the following year.) The Dublin junta now took steps to disarm the United Irishmen and to set off the threatened revolution at half-cock by provoking premature risings. Yeomanry and militia were let loose on the countryside to disarm the peasantry and to cow them by flogging, burning, torture, and other atrocities. In this way Ulster was substantially disarmed in 1797. Despite these set-backs, the Directory of the United Irishmen made plans for a national rising on 23 May of the following year, 4798, designating as commander of their forces gallant young Lord Edward FitzGerald, son of the Duke of Leinster and cousin of Charles James Fox (through whom he had made contact with the English republicans). The government, fore-warned, seized the Leinster leaders, 12 March 1798, FitzGerald alone evading arrest. Nevertheless, on 24 May, sporadic, uncoordinated risings of poorly armed peasants took place in parts of Leinster and of north-east Ulster. Two days later the only formidable rising broke out—among the Old English peasantry of Wexford. Here too the insurgents displayed desperate courage, and the fighting lasted into July. Though the Wexfordmen had chosen a Protestant landlord to lead them, their rising was represented to Ulstermen as essentially a Catholic affair, and this contributed to the ultimate estrangement of Ulster from the democratic cause.

The Rising also played into the hands of those who were bent on the Union. The entire oligarchy took fright. So, too, did the Catholic hierarchy, which had good reason to dislike Jacobinism. To make doubly sure of the hierarchy, the English Prime Minister, Pitt, let it be expected that a United Kingdom would grant Catholic emancipation, aboliish the payment of tithes to the minority State Church, and provide state salaries for bishops and parish priests. The Catholics of Dublin might protest as loudly as they would, and the Orange Order too, for there now remained but one obstacle to the Union, the oligarchy’s own parliament. And most of its votes were for sale! On 7 June 1800 the Act of Union was passed, and Henry VIII’s (and Pope Paul IVs) “Kingdom of Ireland” came to its shameful end on New Year’s Day, 1801. Simultaneously the Church of Ireland was united to the Church of England.

The Rise of Irish Democracy, 1801-1921

The expectations of the Catholic bishops were disappointed, and Ireland’s entry into the United Kingdom had to be marked by renewal of the agitation for the emancipation of the majority. At this juncture Catholic Irish democracy found its first great leader in Daniel O’Connell, the Liberator. O’Connell, a Gael of the Gaels, found the Irish peasants slaves. He left them men.

The close of the Napoleonic wars brought widespread poverty, unemployment, and evictions. Partial famines in 1817 and in 1821-2 added to the misery of the fast-increasing population. The proud, harassed victims of landlordism knew but one means of self-defence: agrarian crime and counter-terror. The government knew but one cure for social ills: further oppression. And indeed from 1796 to 1837 the whole social-political fabric was sustained by an uninterrupted, official, reign of terror; the shadow of the gallows hung over every parish; the oligarchy snatched at every device, including sectarian strife, to retain its power.

It was under these conditions that O’Connell, aided by the parish clergy, set to disciplining the tortured explosive peasantry, to organising them within the law so that they might bring overpowering weight to bear on the law without risking the law’s brutality. He spoke to their hearts, and to their hearts they took him while he guided their steps in the tortuous, alien paths of constitutional agitation and English party politics.

The first demonstration of their new-found manhood came at the Waterford election of 1826, when the electors, heedless of the vengeance of their landlords, returned a liberal Protestant. Two years later the peasants of Clare elected O’Connell himself. The law barred his entry to the House of Commons, but the Claremen sent him back a second time. And behind them stood the millions of Catholic peasants! The British Government capitulated; Catholic emancipation was grudgingly conceded in 1829.

O’Connell’s victory automatically freed the Presbyterians from their civic and political disabilities. Nevertheless, by now anti-Papist agitators had worked their will on the instinctive fears of the Presbyterians, and the Liberator, whose struggle against oppression won the admiration and support of enlightened opinion everywhere else in Europe, was not welcome in Ulster.

By alliance with the Whigs O’Connell began to secure some measure of social justice for his people, including the ending of Protestant terrorism (1837). When, however, the Tories ousted the Whigs (1841) it quickly became clear that Ireland had little hope of even elementary social justice under the Union. O’Connell, spurred on by the rise of the Young Ireland movement, therefore embarked on a gigantic campaign for “Repeal of the Union”, i.e. for the setting up of an Irish legislature with limited powers. His efforts to overawe the Government by a series of “Monster Meetings” quickly raised national feeling to fever pitch, but the Government called out troops and artillery to prevent what was to be the greatest meeting of all (8 October 1843). O’Connell called off the meeting to save his followers from slaughter. The Repeal movement collapsed. Four years later the Liberator was dead.

For a brief space his place was taken by Young Ireland, a militant movement of romantic nationalist—Protestant and Catholic—whose Nation newspaper gave Ireland her first romantic, nationalist literature in the fast-spreading English tongue.

At this stage the peasants were overwhelmed by catastrophe, the Famine of 1845-7. Hundreds of thousands perished of hunger and cholera; hundreds of thousands fled to penniless safety in Britain and America. Between 1845 and 1850 the population fell from 81 million to 61, and since that time the drain of emigration has never ceased.

This disaster, the greatest of its kind ever to befall a European nation in a time of peace, was the final condemnation of the Union, and in 1848, a year of European revolutions, Young Ireland made a futile despairing effort at insurrection under the leadership of William Smith O’Brien, a Protestant aristocratic landlord of ancient Gaelic lineage. With this fiasco the Young Ireland movement in turn collapsed, but it passed on its ideal of the union of “Orange” and “Green” in a sovereign nation, a union symbolised by its republican tricolour flag—which today flies over twenty-six of the Irish counties.

While the Tories refused any substantial redress of Irish grievances, they did make some minor concessions, among them the Queen’s Colleges (1845) of Belfast, Cork, and Galway, designed to answer the Nonconformist and Catholic demands for university education. The Catholic bishops and O’Connell rejected the colleges as “Godless”, and only the Belfast foundation prospered. (In 1854 the bishops set up a Catholic University in Dublin with John Henry Newman as first rector. The British Government refused to recognise it, and in 1908 the surviving departments, together with the Queen’s Colleges of Cork and Galway, were absorbed into the new National University of Ireland.)

The four or five decades after the Famine saw continuing distress, with much rural unemployment and wholesale’evictions. The peasantry sought to defend themselves by their traditional terrorist combinations, only to provoke the inevitable Coercion Acts. To add its sectarian poison to the witch’s brew, the Orange Order had by now become firmly entrenched in the North. Nationalist efforts to secure moderate concessions by constitutional means continued to prove unavailing, and republicanism, aimed both at the abolition of the landlord system and at complete separation from Britain, raised its head once more. In 1858 exiles in America founded the Irish Republican, Brotherhood, a secret oathbound society dedicated to the principles of Wolfe Tone. Under the name “Fenians”, its members set about preparing for a revolution to which veterans of the American Civil War (in which Irish-born generals and soldiers had played brilliant and heroic parts on both sides) would make expert contributions. Though the movement succeeded in recruiting a great number of adherents, the rising (1867) was easily crushed. But the Irish Republican Brotherhood survived to organise the underground, physical-force arm of the later constitutional movement for land reform and Home Rule.

About this period the Irish cause found a noble English champion in Gladstone, whose liberal principles were grounded in a Christian sense of justice. In 1869 Gladstone disestablished the Protestant state church which, resuming its pre-Union name, Church of Ireland, has ever since governed itself. The following year he carried a Land Act ameliorating the peasants’ condition.

That same year an Ulster Protestant lawyer, Isaac Butt, founded the Home Rule Association to press for Home Rule within the United Kingdom. In 1873 a strong Home Rule party entered the House of Commons. Four years later the leadership of the party passed to Charles Stewart Parnell, a young Protestant landlord from Wicklow. Parnell proved to be the second great leader of Irish democracy. No suppliant pleading for favours, but a proud aristocrat asserting his people’s rights, his personality and tactics won the love and veneration of the nationalist majority. He had able lieutenants, most notable of them Michael Davitt, who in 1879 founded the Land League and forged the weapons of the boycott and “No Rent”. Under Parnell and Davitt the constitutional movement for peasant proprietorship and Home Rule filled the stage, with distress, evictions, and peasant violence supplying a lurid back-cloth. In the wings, ready to intervene should constitutional agitation fail yet again, stood the Irish Republican Brotherhood. In 1881 Gladstone, in alliance with Parnell’s Irish Party, carried an Act securing the tenant’s right to fixity of tenure and substantially reducing his rent. Even the landlords now began to see the wisdom of selling out to their tenants, and a series of later Land Acts (1887, 1891, 1903) effected the social revolution.

In 1885 Gladstone embarked on his last great crusade. His Home Rule Bill was, however, rejected by the House of Commons, and the Conservatives returned to power. In 1890 tragedy overtook Parnell: he was convicted of adultery. Gladstone's Nonconformist supporters were shocked and he was compelled to refuse further cooperation with the Irish leader. The Irish nationalist movement thereupon split into two factions; and then Parnell died suddenly at the age of forty-five (1891). In 1892 Gladstone introduced his second Home Rule Bill, only to have it defeated in the House of Lords. In Ireland there followed a decade of political stagnation, during which the Irish Republican Brotherhood maintained its secret revolutionary organisation.

In non-political fields, on the other hand, there were at this time many signs of renewed life. In 1893 the Gaelic League was founded to stem the rapid decay of the Irish language. About the same time a new generation of writers in English was beginning to write the most brilliant chapter in Anglo-lrish literature. About this time too, the ill-paid workers of the towns began to organise trade unions to protect themselves from exploitation. In 1899 Arthur Griffith began to propound the gospel of Sinn Féin (We Ourselves): passive resistance to British rule, the revival of Irish industry, and abstention from the Westminster Parliament. His aim was "government by the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland".

The return of the Liberals to power at Westminster in 1906 made Home Rule a live issue once more. In 1911 the power of the House of Lords was curtailed, and the way at last seemed clear for the third Home Rule Bill, which passed the Commons in 1912 and was due to come into effect in 1914. But the British and Irish opponents of Home Rule found a most effective leader in Sir Edward Carson, M.P. for Trinity College, Dublin. Carson worked on the fears of the Protestants, raised the Ulster Volunteers to resist the law, and named a "Provisional Government" which would take over Ulster if the Home Rule Act were put into operation. Nationalist Ireland countered these seditious illegalities by raising the Irish Volunteers "to secure and maintain the rights and liberties common to the whole people of Ireland", the Irish Republican Brotherhood (which itself included Ulster Protestants) having a hidden hand in the business.

The outbreak of the first world war gave the British Government an excuse for putting the Home Rule Act into abeyance. Most Nationalists supported the "struggle for the freedom of Belgium and small nations", but a minority, including the Republican Brotherhood, held aloof in anticipation of an opportunity to strike for Irish freedom. Among the Republican leaders were Patrick Pearse (Dublin-born son of an English father), James Connolly (leader of the Socialist wing of the trade union movement just then emerging from the testing fires of a series of great lockouts and strikes), and Bulmer Hobson (a. Belfast Quaker). In alliance with Connolly's Irish Citizen Army, the Republican Brotherhood prepared for a widespread insurrection. The insurrection broke out on Easter Monday 1916, but was more or less confined to Dublin, and was crushed in less than a week. But thirty months later a new (Sinn Féin) republican party swept the polls. The Sinn Féin members of parliament constituted themselves a national assembly (Dáil Éireann), ratified in the 1916 proclamation of the Irish Republic, and set up a "government" claiming *de jure* authority over the the whole island. Guerrilla warfare soon broke out between the Irish Republican Army and the forces of the Crown. In 1920 the British amended the Home Rule Act so as to establish two Irish parliaments with limited powers, one for the six north-eastern counties ("Northern Ireland"), the other for the remaining twenty-six counties ("Southern Ireland") Dáil Éireann rejected this solution of the Irish Question and the struggle continued until the following year. Britain then improved her offer by conceding full Dominion Status to the "Twenty-six Counties" ("The Irish Free State") while insisting on allegiance to the Crown and on the maintenance of the special position of the "Six Counties" as an integral part of the United Kingdom (but with a local parliament and government in control of agriculture, social services, education, police, &c.). The partitioning of the country—and of Ulster itself—was hateful to Nationalist Ireland. There was strong dislike also of the British Crown. In the event, Dáil Éireann ratified the Anglo-Irish Treaty, but by so slender a majority that civil war proved inevitable. Peace finally came when the Republicans cached their arms (1923).

As a part of the United Kingdom the "Six Counties" were actively involved in the second world war, whereas the independent "Twenty-six Counties", though at one in heart and principle with the democracies, remained neutral. But neutrality was no obstacle to prompt assistance for bombed Belfast, or to generous post-war succour for the hungry and homeless peoples of devastated Europe.

In 1948 the "Twenty-six Counties" seceded from the British Commonwealth and became a sovereign republic calling itself "Ireland" (Éire in Irish). Thanks to its traditions of nationalism, democracy, and individual liberty, the republic has been able to play a valuable role in the councils and affairs of the United Nations, and this in turn would seem to have contributed to the post-war diminution of sectarianism in Northern Ireland and to improved relations between the Belfast and Dublin governments. In 1965, after more than forty years of aloofness, the two Irish premiers exchanged visits for the first time, and rational cooperation between North and South in matters of common concern may henceforth be expected, a cooperation made easier by the 1966 Free Trade agreement between Dublin and London.

Postscript

In May 1972, the Irish people voted by Referendum to join the European Economic Community (EEC/EU) as the British also did three years later. By then, however, the Northern "Troubles" had already started with attacks on Civil Rights marchers, notably at Burntollet in 1969 when members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Orange Order jointly assaulted peaceful demonstrators against social unjustice in the pre-dominantly Protestant state of Northern Ireland. Instigating the attacks was Dr. Ian Paisley, the overtly-sectarian leader of the Free Presbyterian Church, founded by himself, who would spear-head the resistance of the loyalist movement against any accommodation with the Republic of Ireland for long decades to come – though ultimately be would accept the appointment of First Minister of the newly-formed Legislative Assembly in partnership with Martin McGuinness, a former commander of the Irish Republican Army (IRA; strictly *Provisional* IRA, therefore PIRA). With the Burntollet attack and subsequent assaults on Catholics and Nationalists in Northern Ireland cities, the IRA returned from the grave to defend the Catholic minority, causing the British government deploy the Army in the streets and to introduce Internment for suspected members and sympathisers with the IRA – a measure that backfired on account of its discriminatory character and equally because the 'lists' used to round up men were guided by the inaccurate and prejudicial views of the RUC. (The B Specials which had been created to 'police' nationalism in Northern Ireland was disbanded in 1969.) In the ensuing decades of Direct Rule, a triangular war raged in the Province between the IRA, the Loyalists and the British Government with occasional interventions by the Irish Government – one, at least, an illegal attempt to supply arms to the IRA under the leadership of the Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Charles Haughey. Only in the late 1980s did the prospect of 'cease-fire' and 'Peace Agreement' materials when John Hume, leader of the Socialist Democractic Labour Party (SDLP), began to broker an agreement between the IRA, the British Government and the Loyalist Movement. The Troubles came to an end in April 1998 with the dramatic signing of the Belfast Agreement – otherwise called the Good Friday Agreement – which laid down the principal that Northern Ireland would remain in the British Union until a majority of its citizens voted against, and that each citizen of Northern Ireland could claim British or Irish citizenship or both, as they wished.

In the same period the economic relation between North and South altered radically. Whereas Northern Ireland had been by far the richer part of the country in the 1920s, it was three times poor in GNP by the 1990s A blue-print for the development of industry in the Republic had been created in the late 1950s with the foundation of the Irish Industrial Authority (IDA) and, with its entry into the European Union, Ireland became an attractive base for American manufacturers seeking to sell their products in Europe. Companies such as Dell and Pfizer, and later Google and Starbucks set up assembly plants in the late 1980s which soon became into major nodes in their corporate plans. The combination of European Regional Funds investment in the Irish infrastructure and the profitability of the new company and others down-stream transformed the economic profile of Irish society and created new wealth in many quarters. In 2008, in the wake of the global recession, a number of Irish investment banks failed – largely through mismanagement – and were bailed out by the Irish Government, effectively passing the multi-billion debt on to the Irish people. The austerity politics of the ensuring decade resulted in a rising tide of discontent but effectively launched the recovery of the economy. At the same time, the European Union began to demand that the Irish tax regime be reformed to eliminate preferential terms for overseas companies operating in the country. With the advent of Brexit in 2017, up to them co-members of the European Union and therefore subject to the same economic and judicial rulings, seem set to travel on different paths and face the risk of the re-establishment of a 'hard' border at Dundalk. Views differ as to the relative economic advantage to be gained on either side of that border but it seems certain that the change will result in a hardening of inter-community relations which have grown increasingly fluid since the Belfast Agreement.

Recent Irish history, North and South, has also seen a major shift in the social character of the respective states. While Northern Ireland has, form the most part, adhered to its traditional culture of loyalism and evangelism in an arguably pathological spirit of conservatism informed by the fear and dislike of the threat of a United Ireland, the Republic has largely lost its character as a Roman Catholic state, with changes to the Constitution effecting the ‘special position’ of the Church and, most recently, the legalisation of ‘same sex’ marriage – a jubilant and surprising ‘first’ for Ireland among European nations. Irish people have generally embraced the European connection and the spirit of liberalism that was associated with it and the resort to the European Supreme Court for the arbitration of differences in social and economic opinion has become a common feature of the legal culture of the Republic. At the same time, the prohibition on abortion remains in place and it is not certain that the government or the population are willing and able to remove it even though it is regarded as the last bastion of Catholic conservatism. At the same time, the mood of Presbyterian Ulster is strongly opposed to abortion and that State enjoys an exemption from the Abortion Laws established in Britain in 1968. It is one of the oddities of the current political order in the United Kingdom that the Tory Government has maintained its majority in Parliament only by means of a ‘deal’ with the Democratic Unionist Party of Northern Ireland which strenuously opposes abortion and, of course, any accommodation with an All-Ireland political outlook. Yet British MPs have driven through laws ensuring that women travelling from Northern Ireland to Great Britain for abortions will now enjoy the full financial support of the Welfare State embodied by the National Health Service. Meanwhile, the Northern Ireland Assembly at Stormont is suspended since the two main parties involved – DUP and Sinn Féin – are unable to form a joint administration and, in the vacuum, direct rule is once again threatened, with disabling consequences for the budgetary management of crucial sectors such as health, security and education. [BS]