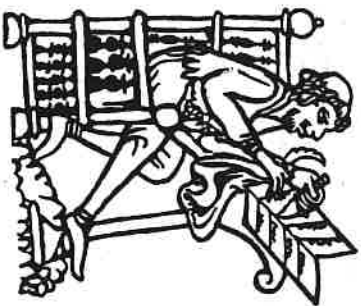


THE
History and Topography
OF
IRELAND



GERALD OF WALES

Translated with an Introduction by
John J. O'Meara

PENGUIN BOOKS

Here Begins the Account
OF
The Wonders
OF
IRELAND

by Giraldus Cambrensis

His SILVESTER

to HENRY THE SECOND

Illustrious King of the English

IT PLEASED YOUR EXCELLENCY, invincible king of the English, duke of Normandy, count of Anjou and Aquitaine to send me from your court, with your beloved son John, to Ireland. And there, when I had seen many things not found in other countries and entirely unknown, and at the same time worthy of some wonder because of their novelty, I began to examine everything carefully: what was the position of the country, what was its nature, what was the origin of the race, what were its customs; how often, and by whom, and how, it was conquered and subjugated; what new things, and what secret things not in accordance with her usual course had nature hidden away in the farthest western lands? For beyond those limits there is no land, nor is there any habitation either of men or beasts — but beyond the whole horizon only the ocean flows and is borne on in boundless space through its unsearchable and hidden ways.

Just as the countries of the East are remarkable and distinguished for certain prodigies peculiar and native to themselves, so the boundaries of the West also are made remarkable by their own wonders of nature. For sometimes tired, as it were, of the true and the serious, she draws aside and goes away, and in these remote parts indulges herself in these secret and distant freaks.

I have, therefore, collected everything, and have chosen out some of them. Those which I have thought worthy of being remembered I have, I hope usefully, put together and propose them for your attention — which scarcely any part of history

escapes. I could, as others have done, have sent your Highness some small pieces of gold, falcons, or hawks with which the island abounds. But since I thought that a high-minded prince would place little value on things that easily come to be – and just as easily perish – I decided to send to your Highness those things rather which cannot be lost. By them I shall, through you, instruct posterity. For no age can destroy them.

¶ Here begins the first part of the History of Ireland

I ¶ *The Position of Ireland*

IRELAND, THE LARGEST ISLAND beyond Britain, is situated in the western ocean about one short day's sailing from Wales, but between Ulster and Galloway in Scotland the sea narrows to half that distance. Nevertheless from either side the promontories of the other can be fairly well seen and distinguished on a fine day. The view from this side is rather clear, that from the other, over such a distance, is more vague. This farthest island of the west has Spain parallel to it on the south at a distance of three ordinary days' sailing,

The distance between Ireland and Britain.

Greater Britain on the east, and only the ocean on the west; but on the northern side, at a distance of three days' sailing, lies Iceland, the largest of the islands of the north. Ireland, then, lies parallel to Britain in such a way that if you sail to the west from any British port you will meet Ireland at some point.

some point.

Nevertheless Britain is twice the size of Ireland. For Britain from south to north is eight hundred miles long, and about two hundred miles broad; while Ireland in the same way stretches in length from the Brendanian mountains to the island of Columba that is called Torach – that is, a distance of eight days at forty miles a day; and in breadth stretches from Dublin to

the hills of Patrick and the sea beyond Connacht – that is, a distance of four days. Ireland is, however, in proportion to its size, more round. Britain is seen to be more oblong and narrow.

Ireland is a country of uneven surface and rather mountainous. The soil is soft and watery, and there are many woods and marshes. Even at the tops of high and steep mountains you will find pools and swamps. Still there are, here and there, some fine plains, but in comparison with the woods they are indeed small. On the whole the land is low-lying on all sides and along the coast; but further inland it rises up very high to many hills and even high mountains. It is sandy rather than rocky, not only on its circumference, but also in the very interior.

The character of the country and its unevenness.

2 ¶ *The fertility of the tillage-land and smallness of the grains of wheat*

THE LAND IS FRUITFUL and rich in its fertile soil and plentiful harvests. Crops abound in the fields, flocks on the mountains, and wild animals in the woods. The island is, however, richer in pastures than in crops, and in grass than in grain. The crops give great promise in the blade, even more in the straw, but less in the ear. For here the grains of wheat are shrivelled and small, and can scarcely be separated from the chaff by any winnowing fan. The plains are well clothed with grass, and the haggards are bursting with straw. Only the granaries are without their wealth. What is born and comes forth in the spring and is nourished in the summer and advanced, can scarcely be reaped in the harvest because of unceasing rain.

For this country more than any other suffers from storms of wind and rain.

Exposure to rain.

A north-west wind, along with the west wind to its south,

prevails here, and is more frequent and violent than any other. It bends in the opposite direction almost all the trees in the west that are placed in an elevated position, or uproots them.

The trees in the west bent by the north-west wind.

The island is rich in pastures and meadows, honey and milk, and wine, but not vineyards. Bede,¹ however, among his other praises of the island says that it is not altogether without vineyards. On the other hand Solinus² says that it has no bees. But if I may be pardoned by both, it would have been more true if each of them had said the opposite: it has no vineyards, and it is not altogether without bees. For the island has not, and never had, vines and their cultivators. Imported wines, however, conveyed in the ordinary commercial way, are so abundant that you would scarcely notice that the vine was neither cultivated nor gave its fruit there. Poitou out of its own superabundance sends plenty of wine, and Ireland is pleased to send in return the hides of animals and the skins of flocks and wild beasts. Ireland, as other countries, has bees that produce honey, but the swarms would be much more plentiful if they were not frightened off by the yew-trees³ that are poisonous and bitter, and with which the island woods are flourishing. It is possible, of course, that in Bede's time there were, perhaps, some vineyards in the island; and some people say that it was Saint Dominic of Ossory⁴ who brought bees into Ireland – and that was long after the time of Solinus.

The opinions of Bede and Solinus on vineyards and bees.

Neither would it be strange if these authors sometimes strayed from the path of truth, since they knew nothing by the evidence of their eyes, and what knowledge they possessed came to them through one who was reporting and was far away. For it is only when he who reports a thing is also one that witnessed it that anything is established on the sound basis of truth.

3 ¶ *The nine principal rivers and many others that have recently emerged's*

THE ISLAND IS DIVIDED and watered by nine principal and magnificent rivers, which have been famous from the earliest time of the earliest inhabitant of the land after the Flood, that is Bartholomus. Their names are: Avenliffus through Dublin; Banna through Ulster; Moeadus through Connacht; Slicheius and Samairus through Kenelcanill; Modarnus and Finnus through Kenelconia; and Saverennus and Luvius through Cork.

There are many other rivers flowing through Ireland which are, so to speak, new, and with regard to the ones mentioned, only recently emerged. They are not, however, smaller than the former, and only on the point of antiquity are they inferior. Some of them spring from the bowels of the earth and from the veins of wells. Others arise suddenly from lakes. All of them are fine rivers and divide and separate the island into its sections with their long courses. I have thought it useful to say something about some of these. From underneath the foot of the mountain Bladma (Slieve Bloom) three large rivers spring. They are called the three sisters, because they have shared between them the names of three sisters, namely, Berva which flows through Leighlin; Eoyrus through Ossory; and Suintus through Ard-finan and Tibraccia to join the sea at Waterford. The Slana flows through Wexford; the Boandus through Meath; the Avenmorus through Lismore; and the Sinenus through Limerick.

The Shannon (Sinenus) rightly holds the chief place among all the rivers of Ireland whether old or new, both on account of the magnificence of its size, its long meanderings, and its abundance of fish. It rises in a certain large and beautiful lake that divides Connacht from Munster, and sends two arms, so to speak, in opposite directions of the world. One arm goes south, flows beside Killaloe, takes in Limerick, and, separating the two Munsters from one

another for a distance of one hundred miles and more, pours itself into the Brendanican sea. The other arm, of equal importance, separates Meath and the farther parts of Ulster from Connacht, and after many wanderings eventually joins the northern sea. It, therefore, separates the fourth and western part of the island from the other three. It runs between them and marks Connacht off from sea to sea.

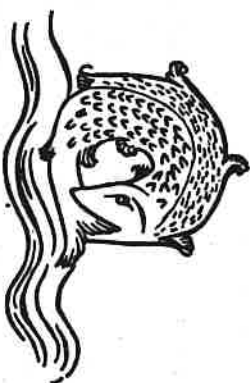
Of old the country was divided into five almost equal parts, namely: two Munsters, north and south, Leinster, Ulster, and Connacht. The prophecy of Merlin predicted that they would all be reduced to one. But we shall say more about this when we come to treat of it.

4 ¶ *The lakes and their islands*

THIS COUNTRY, above all others that we have seen, is well supplied also with beautiful lakes, full of fish and very large. They are a kind of speciality here. They contain islands rising to some height and very beautiful. The lords of the land usually appropriate them as places of safety and refuge, as well as of habitation. They are inaccessible except to boats.

5 ¶ *The sea, river and lake fish's and those that are missing*

THE SEA COASTS on all sides abound sufficiently with sea-fish. The rivers, however, and the lakes are rich in fish peculiar to themselves, and especially in fish of three kinds, namely, salmon, trout, and mud-eels. The Shannon abounds in sea lampreys. They serve as luxuries for the rich. But some fine fish,



found in other regions, and some magnificent freshwater fish are wanting. I mean pike, perch, roach, gardon, and gudgeon. Minnow, loach, bullheads, *verones*, and nearly all that do not have their seminal origin in tidal rivers are absent also.

6 ¶ *Fish that are new and not found elsewhere*

ON THE OTHER HAND the lakes of this country contain three kinds of fish that are not found anywhere else. There is one kind longer and more round than the trout. It has firm white flesh, and is pleasing to the taste. It is very like the tynal, except that the head is larger. There is another kind very like the sea-herring in shape, size, colour, and taste. A third kind is in every detail like the trout, except that it has no spots. These three kinds appear only in the summer and never in the winter. In Meath, near Fore, there are three lakes near one another, of which each has one kind of these fish. Neither of the other two kinds ever approaches it, even though the lakes communicate by a river that joins them. Moreover, if a fish of one lake is carried to the place and lake of another, it either dies or returns to its first home.

7 ¶ *Birds and those that are missing*

SOME BIRDS that live on the water and build their nests in high places are found here as elsewhere. But other types of birds have been altogether wanting even from the earliest times.

8 ¶ *The hawk, falcon and sparrow-hawk and their nature*

THIS COUNTRY above any other produces hawks, falcons and sparrow-hawks abundantly. These birds have been provided by nature with courageous hearts, curved and sharp beaks, and feet armed with talons, most suitable for catching their prey – and all to afford amusement to

the nobles. There is one remarkable thing about these birds, and that is, that no more of them build nests now than there did many generations ago. And although their offspring increases every year, nevertheless the number of nest-builders does not increase; but if one pair of birds is destroyed, another takes its place. The nests do not increase in number for a variety of reasons; no reason, however, tends to their increase.

Cassiodorus tells us: 'birds of this kind 'that live by prey, throw their weak young offspring out of their nests, lest they should accustom themselves to soft living, and beat them with their wings, and compel their young chicks to fly, so that they may turn out to be such that their parents can depend upon them.' When, as time goes on, their wings have got some strength, they are trained with the help of nature to prey, and are brought from their homes, and compelled by their faithless parents to remain away forever.

We notice one thing in particular about sparrow-hawks, and that is, that some of them are marked with white spots, some with red, and others with spots that are half white, half red. Some people, accordingly, think that this variety of colour arises from the kinds of trees in the place where they are born. But since on the same tree and in the same nest you will very often see young birds showing this variety of colouring, the view that this diversity arises from the parents in a natural way is more likely.

Here too, as in almost all other kinds of animals, nature makes the males stronger; but in these, and in such others as live by prey, and have to pursue their game, and who especially have need of strength and violence, the males have proportionately less superiority in as much as the females are stronger and more virile.

9 ¶ *The eagle and its nature*

YOU WILL SEE as many eagles here as you will kites elsewhere. This bird can look straight at the very rays

of the sun with all its brightness, and so high does it soar in its flight that its wings are scorched by the burning fires of the sun. It lives so long that it seems to contend with immortality itself in the renewal of its youth.

So also can contemplative men gaze fully with their minds, and without any turning away, upon the very nature itself of the divine majesty and the true sun of justice; and when they put their hands to the plough of the heavenly paradise, do not look back. And those too who, trying to unravel in the sacred scriptures what is hard and secret in the celestial mysteries, reach beyond the limits allowed and which should not, and cannot be passed, fall back upon themselves, and remain below as if the wings of presumptuous intelligence, on which they were borne, had been burned. Since therefore the heaven of heavens is the Lord's and what is left over will be burned by fire, we ought to be mindful, and not ungrateful, that we have been admitted to a part of knowledge and not to the fullness of intelligence and understanding. So do holy men, having truly renewed the innocence of their youth and having already put off the old man and put on the new, arrive happily at the reward of eternal life.

10 ¶ *The crane^s and its nature*

CRANES ARE SO NUMEROUS that in one flock alone you will often see a hundred or about that number. These birds, by a natural instinct, take their turns by night in watching the common safety, standing on one leg only, while in the other featherless claw they hold a stone. They do this so that if they should go to sleep, they will be awakened again immediately by the fall of the stone and continue their watch.

We should follow the example of this bird in watching and being on our guard, because we are entirely ignorant of the hour at which the thief will come. Some sacred duty should occupy our minds which, like the stone, will shake

off torpor and allow us to think of nothing else but itself. If then it should by chance slip from our mind sometimes, the mind, not being used to being without it, will, as it were, awakened from its sleep, take it up again.

This bird has such a warm and fiery liver that, if it should eat iron, it will not let it through undigested.

So too bowels aflame with the fire of charity will tame and soften hearts that were once as hard and unyielding as iron, and compel and soften them to the union of brotherly peace.

Wild peacocks abound here in the woods. Wild hens which are commonly called *gruiæ* are few here and rather small, and very like partridges both in size and colour. Quail also is plentiful here. Hoarse and noisy *ralluæ* are innumerable.

11 ¶ *Barnacles that are born of the fir-tree and their nature*

THERE ARE MANY BIRDS HERE that are called barnacles, which nature, acting against her own laws, produces in a wonderful way. They are like marsh geese, but smaller. At first they appear as excrescences on fir-trees carried down upon the waters. Then they hang by their beaks from what seems like sea-weed clinging to the log, while their bodies, to allow for their more unimpeded development, are enclosed in shells. And so in the course of time, having put on a stout covering of feathers, they either slip into the water, or take themselves in flight to the freedom of the air. They take their food and nourishment from the juice of wood and water during their mysterious and remarkable generation. I myself have seen many times and with my own eyes more than a thousand of these small bird-like creatures hanging from a single log upon the sea-shore. They were in their shells and already formed. No eggs are laid as is usual as a result of mating. No bird ever sits upon eggs to hatch them and in no corner of the land will you see them breeding or building nests. Accordingly in some parts

of Ireland bishops and religious men eat them without sin during a fasting time, regarding them as not being flesh, since they were not born of flesh.

Pause, unhappy Jew! Pause – even if it be late. You hesitate to deny the first generation of man, from the slime of the earth without the co-operation of either man or woman; or the second, from man without the co-operation of woman – this, because of your veneration for the Law. The third only, that achieved by the co-operation of man and woman, because it is usual, you, with your hard neck, approve of and affirm. But the fourth generation, in which alone is salvation, that is from a woman without the co-operation of a man, you cannot, in your obstinate will, abide – and to your own destruction. Blush! wretch. Blush! At least consider the evidence of nature. She daily produces and brings forth new creatures without the co-operation of any male or female for our instruction and in confirmation of the Faith. The first generation was from slime; and this last from wood. The first indeed, because it happened only once through the operation of the Lord of nature, will ever seem worthy of all awe. But the last, though not less remarkable, provokes less wonder, because nature, who imitates, often produces it. For human nature is so made that only what is unusual and infrequent excites wonder or is regarded as of value. We make no wonder of the rising and the setting of the sun which we see every day; and yet there is nothing in the universe more beautiful or more worthy of wonder. When, however, an eclipse of the sun takes place, everyone is amazed – because it happens rarely.

12 ¶ *Birds that belong to two species and their natures*

THERE ARE MANY BIRDS HERE of a twofold nature. They are called ospreys. They are smaller than the eagle, but larger than the hawk. One of their feet is armed with talons, open and ready to snatch; but the other is closed and

peaceful and suitable only for swimming. It is a wonderful instance of nature's pranks.

There is a remarkable thing about these birds, and I have often witnessed it for myself. They hover quietly on their wings high up in the air over the waves of the sea. In this way they can more easily see down into the depths below. Then, seeing with their sharp eyes through such a great distance of air and troubled water little fishes hiding below the waves, they dive down with amazing speed. While they enter and leave the water they control themselves by their swimming foot; but with their grasping foot they catch and carry off their prey.

So does our old enemy see with his sharp glance whatever secret thing we do in the troubled waves of this world. And while with peaceful claw he approaches us airily through success in temporal things, still with grasping claw, bloody with its booty, he seizes and destroys our unhappy souls.

13 ¶ *Birds that are so to speak mixed and not true to type*

ONE SHOULD REMARK that amongst both kinds of birds, ospreys and barnacles, some are found to be very like birds, but are, so to speak, deceptively and not truly so. They share the common nature of birds, and are far from having the characteristics of either type.

But the careful observing mind will clearly grasp the differences that exist between similar things and the similarities between different things.



14 ¶ *Kingfishers' and their natures*

HERE ARE FOUND ALSO those little birds which they call kingfishers. They are smaller than the blackbird, are rare, and are found on rivers. They are short like quails. They dive into the water in pursuit of very small fish on which they feed. While in all other respects they follow the nature of their type, here they are different in colour, but in that only. For they have a white belly and a black back. Elsewhere they are conspicuous in having a red belly, red beak and claws, and with bright shining green wings and back like the parrot or peacock.



There is a remarkable thing about these birds: if, when dead, they are kept in a dry place, they never putrefy; and if they are placed between clothes or anything else, they keep them free from the moth, and impart a pleasant perfume to them. And a thing even more amazing: if they are hung by the beak in a dry place, they change their coat of feathers each year, as if by virtue of a vital spirit that survives and continues to persist in some hidden part.

In the same way holy men, dead to the world, inflamed with love, and as it were left in a dry place, put on incorruption of life, and purify and perfect themselves and

those in association with them from the moth of vice by their practice of good actions, and make them deserving of all praise by the good odour of their virtues. And while they hang from above, as it were, by their concentration of mind, they are daily renewed and changed for the better in the rejection of their old habits and the acquisition of virtues. They put off the old man entirely, and put on the new. For the advancement that is most deserving of praise is that in which what precedes is put into the second place by what follows.

15 ¶ *Swans and storks and their natures*

SWANS ARE VERY PLENTIFUL in the northern part of Ireland. Storks are very seldom seen anywhere in Ireland, and when they are, they are black.

There is a remarkable thing about swans. They teach us that the troubles of death should not grieve us, for in the very moment of dying they make a virtue of necessity and despise their sad fate in singing.¹⁰

So men, clothed in the white garments of virtue, depart joyfully from the hardships of this world. They thirst only for God, the living fountain, and desire to be freed and liberated from the body of this death and to be with Christ.

There is a remarkable thing about storks. They seek out waters that are ice-cold, and leave those that are warm. They spend the whole winter in the beds of rivers, but at the first sign of the mildness of spring, they emerge once again and take themselves off into the freedom of the air.

So holy men, during the winter of the world, sleep in the depths of the earth; but when the world is reformed to a better state and acquires an everlasting spring, they emerge at the first sound of the archangel, and being borne aloft in the air to meet Christ, and being called to his right hand, are transferred to the true liberty of the sons of God.

16 ¶ *Birds that do not appear in the winter-time*

IT IS REMARKABLE about these birds, and others of a like nature that are accustomed to disappear during the winter, that in the interval, neither dead nor alive, they seem to continue living in their vital spirit and at the same time to be seized up into a long ecstasy and some middle state between life and death. They receive no support from food by which the animal body is usually sustained, but, refreshed during such a long time by some hidden help of nature, suffer no bodily harm, and, awakened as it were from sleep, return with the 'zephyr' and 'the first swallow'.¹¹

Like to theirs is the ecstasy of those whose souls are by divine permission rapt for some time to the highest dwelling places of the heavens or to the contemplation of the nether world. Eventually, having completed their mission, they return to their bodies, which in the meantime had been left on the earth, in a state worthy of all wonder, breathing without breath, living without life, and fully subject neither to life nor death.

17 ¶ *The many kinds of crows here and their natures*

THERE ARE NO BLACK CROWS in this country, or there are very few. What there are, are of different colours. These birds bring up small shell-fish into the air, and let them fall again so that they may be able to break by collision with a stone after a long fall the shell which they cannot break with their beak.

And so the old enemy with practised guile, as soon as he has advanced them to the highest peaks of honour, more boldly attacks those whom he could not pervert when they were in a lowly state. For driving them on by neglect of their duty, or, as they waver,



through the swelling of pride, he crushes and breaks them the more with a fall into the lowest depths of vice. The fall is greater in as much as they topple from a higher state.

There is a remarkable thing about these birds, for, although in other respects they are most cunning, nature has deprived them of sense only in the placing of their nests – a point in which even foolish birds are found to be clever. For building their nests in the public road, or in any gathering-place of men, or on a fallen tree, or on a rock, they make no provision against the winds, nor fear the approach of men or snakes.

And so every wise man in proportion to the greatness of his capacity or gift of wisdom with which he is adorned, if he be given to lust and be caught in the snares of passion, will in that proportion the less observe temperance and modesty. David and Solomon are good examples of this. A violent passion for silly women led one of them into the crime of homicide, and the other into the crime of apostasy.

Ireland has none but the best breed of falcons. Those inferior falcons, commonly called by the name *lanner*, are absent. Gerfalcons, which the northern and arctic regions beget and export, are absent. Partridges and pheasants are absent.¹² There are no magpies, and no nightingales.

18 ¶ *Wild animals and their natures and those that are missing*

IRELAND HAS almost all the kinds of wild animals that are found in the western regions. She has stags that are not able to escape because of their too great fatness. The smaller they are physically, the more nobly they carry themselves with the splendour of their heads and antlers. We have never seen anywhere such a supply of boars and wild pigs. But they are small, badly formed, and inclined to run away. They are equally inferior in their want of bold-

ness and courage as in their physical make-up. There are many hares but rather small, and very like rabbits both in size and in the softness of their fur.

To put it briefly: you will find the bodies of all animals, wild-beasts, and birds smaller in their species than anywhere else. Only men retain their full size. There is a remarkable

Animal, except men, smaller than anywhere else.

thing about those hares: if they are put up by dogs, they always try (unlike other hares) to make their escape in cover, as does the fox – in hidden country, and not in the open. They never make for the plains or rocky paths, unless they are driven and compelled to it.

Martens are very common in the woods. They are hunted all day and all night, by means of fire.



19 ¶ *The badger and its nature*

THE BADGER, or melot, is also found here. It is an unclean animal and tends to bite, frequenting rocky and mountainous places. Scraping and digging with its feet it makes for itself holes under the ground as places of refuge and defence. Some of them are born to serve by nature. Lying on their backs, they pile on their bellies soil that has been dug by others. Then clutching it with their four feet, and holding a piece of wood

across their mouths, they are dragged out of the holes with their burdens by others who pull backwards while holding on here and there to the wood with their teeth. Anyone that sees them is astonished.



20 ¶ *The beaver and its nature*

BEAVERS USE a similar contrivance of nature. When they are building their homes in the rivers, they use slaves of

their own kind as carts, and so by this wonderful means of transport pull and drag lengths of wood from the forests to the waters. In both kinds of animal (beaver and badger) the slaves are distinguished by a certain inferiority of shape and a worn bare patch upon their backs.

Ireland has badgers but not beavers.

In Wales beavers are to be found only in the Teifi river near Cardigan. They are, in the same way, scarce in Scotland.



One should remark that beavers have wide tails, spread out like the palm of the human hand, and not long. They use them as oars in swimming. And while the whole of the rest of their body is very furry, they are entirely free from fur on this part, and are quite bare and slippery like a seal. Consequently in Germany and the northern regions, where beavers are plentiful, great and holy men eat the tails of beavers during fasting times – as being fish, since, as they say, they partake of the nature of fish both in taste and colour.

But about these and their nature, how and with what skill they build their settlements in the middle of rivers, and how, when pressed by an enemy, by the loss of a part they save the whole – a contrivance most commendable in an animal – will be more fully explained when we come to deal with the geography and description of Wales and Scotland, and the origin and nature of the people of each. We shall find another opportunity of doing this, and to another purpose, with God's help and if life be spared.

The island suffers the absence of certain wild beasts. Wild-goats, deer generally, hedgehogs and polecats are wanting. Moles are either not here at all, or at any rate, are very scarce on account of the great humidity of the country. Mice are infinite in number and consume much more grain than anywhere else, as well as eating garments even though they be locked up carefully. Bede says that there are



only two kinds of harmful beasts in Ireland, namely, wolves and foxes. I would add the mouse as a third, and say that it was very harmful indeed.



21 ¶ *Reptiles and those that are missing and how all poisonous reptiles are not found here*

OF ALL KINDS OF REPTILES only those that are not harmful are found in Ireland. It has no poisonous reptiles. It has no serpents or snakes, toads or frogs, tortoises or scorpions. It has no dragons. It has, however, spiders, leeches and lizards – but they are entirely harmless.



Some indulge in the pleasant conjecture that Saint Patrick and other saints of the land purged the island of all harmful animals. But it is more probable that from the earliest times, and long before the laying of the foundations of the Faith, the island was naturally without these as well as other things.¹³

22 ¶ *Poisonous reptiles when brought here immediately die and poison loses its force*

DO NOT THINK it remarkable that the country should not have these reptiles, just as it has not got certain fish,

birds, and wild beasts. It is a natural deficiency. But this fact is truly astonishing, namely, that if a poisonous thing is brought here from elsewhere, the island cannot, and never could, endure to keep it.

One reads in the ancient writings of the saints of that land that sometimes, by way of a test, snakes have been imported in bronze containers. But as soon as they reached the middle of the Irish Sea they were found to be lifeless and dead. And similarly if poison is brought in, it loses its natural force in the middle of its voyage through the operation of a kindly breeze. I have heard merchants that ply their trade on the seas say that sometimes, when they had unloaded their cargoes at an Irish port, they found toads brought in by chance in the bottom of the holds. They threw them out still living on to the land; but immediately they turned their bellies up, burst in the middle, and died, while everybody saw and wondered.

It is clear then, that, whether because of a clemency in the air that is, indeed, something new and never heard of before, but is nevertheless benign, or some hidden force of the land itself that is inimical to poisons, no poisonous animal can live here. And if poison be brought in, no matter what it be, from elsewhere, immediately it loses all the force of its evil.

23 ¶ *The dust of this land which kills poisonous reptiles*

INDEED the soil of this land is so inimical to poison that, if gardens or any other places of other countries are sprinkled with it, it drives all poisonous reptiles far away.

24 ¶ *The boot-thongs of this country used as antidotes against poisons*

THE THONGS also of that country, those really made from the hides of animals bred in the country, and not those merely said to be such, are wont to be an effective

remedy, when cut up in little pieces and drunk with water, against the bites of serpents and toads.

I saw with my own eyes a thong of this kind placed in a complete circle around a toad to see what would happen. The toad came to it and wanted to pass, but, as if struck on the head, he fell back. He tried the opposite side, and then finding the thong everywhere, and fleeing it like a pest, in the end he suddenly dug a hole in the middle of the circle with his feet, and before the gaze of all went under the ground.

25 ¶ *A frog discovered in Ireland*

NEVERTHELESS in our days a frog was found near Waterford in some grassy land, and was brought to Robert Poet, who was in charge there at the time, and many others in assembly, both English and Irish, while it was still living. While the English, and more so the Irish, regarded it with great wonder, Duvenaldus, the king of Ossory, who happened to be there at the time, with a great shaking of his head and great sorrow in his heart at last said (and he was a man of great wisdom among his people and loyal to them): 'That reptile brings very bad news to Ireland.'

And regarding it as an indication of what was to be, he said that it was a sure sign of the coming of the English, and the imminent conquest and defeat of his people.

No one will suppose that the frog had ever been born in Ireland; because here the mud does not, as elsewhere, 'contain the seeds from which green frogs are born'.¹⁴ For if it had been otherwise, frogs would frequently and in numbers have been found either before or after this. But perhaps it came from some neighbouring port in a ship by chance, was thrown out on the land, and, since it was not a poisonous reptile, was able to live for some time.

26 ¶ *The many good points of the island and the natural qualities of the country*

THIS is the most temperate of all countries. Cancer does not here drive you to take shade from its burning heat, nor does the cold of Capricorn send you rushing to the fire. You will seldom see snow here, and then it lasts only for a short time. But cold weather does come with all the winds here, not only from the west-north-west and north but also equally from the east, the Favonius and the Zephyr. Nevertheless, they are all moderate winds and none of them is too strong. The grass is green in the fields in winter, just the same as in summer. Consequently the meadows are not cut for fodder, nor do they ever build stalls for their beasts. The country enjoys the freshness and mildness of spring almost all the year round.

The air is so healthy that there is no disease-bearing cloud, or pestilential vapour, or corrupting breeze. The island has little use for doctors.

You will not find many sick men, except those that are actually at the point of death. There is here scarcely any mean between constant health and final death. Anyone born here, who has never left its healthy soil and air, if he be of the native people, never suffers from any of the three kinds of fevers. They suffer only from the ague and even that only very seldom.

This indeed was the true course of nature; but as the world began to grow old, and, as it were, began to slip into the decrepitude of old age, and to come to the end, the nature of almost all things became corrupted and changed for the worse.

There is, however, such a plentiful supply of rain, such an ever-present overhanging of clouds and fog, that you will scarcely see even in the summer three consecutive days of really fine weather. Nevertheless, there is no disturbance of the air or inclemency of the weather such as inconveniences

those that are in health and spirits, or distresses those that suffer from nervous disorders.

27 ¶ *The advantages of the West are to be preferred to those of the East*

WHAT RICHES has the East then to offer in comparison with these? It has, of course, many-coloured silken cloth produced by the silk-worm; it has precious metals of certain types, sparkling gems and aromatic spices. But what are these in comparison with the loss of life and health? They are obtained only by enduring constantly the enmity of an enemy that one cannot get away from – the air that is within, and that surrounds one.

28 ¶ *All the elements in the East are pestiferous*

ALL THE ELEMENTS in the East, even though they were created for the help of man, threaten his wretched life, deprive him of health, and finally kill him. If you put your naked foot upon the ground, death is upon you; if you sit upon marble without taking care, death is upon you; if you drink unmixed water, or merely smell dirty water with your nostrils, death is upon you; if you uncover your head to feel the breeze the better, it may affect you by either its heat or coldness – but in any case, death is upon you. The heavens terrify you with their thunder and threaten you with their lightnings. The sun with its burning rays makes you uncomfortable. And if you take more food than is right, death is at the gate; if you take your wine unmixed with water, death is at the gate; if you do not hold back your hand from food long before you are satisfied, death is at the gate.

29 ¶ *The venom of poisons there*

THE POISONED HAND is to be feared there too: that of his step-mother by the step-son, of the enraged wife by her husband, and that of his wicked cook by the master. And not only food and drink, but also clothes, chairs and seats of all kinds. Poisons attack you from all sides, as also do poisonous animals. But the most harmful of all harmful things attacks you – man himself. Among so many dangers of death, what feeling can there be of security of life? Or rather, among so many deaths, what life can there be?

30 ¶ *The incomparable mildness of our climate*

LET THE EAST, then, have its riches – tainted and poisoned as they are. The mildness of our climate alone makes up to us for all the wealth of the East, in as much as we possess the golden mean in all things, giving us enough for our uses and what is demanded by nature.

O gift from God, on this earth incomparable! O grace, divinely bestowed on mortals, inestimable, and not yet appreciated! We can safely take our rest in the open air, or upon bare marble. We have no fear of any breeze, piercing in its coldness, fever-laden with its heat, or pestilential in what it brings. The air, that by breathing in we encompass and which continually encompasses us, is guaranteed to us to be kindly and health-giving.

31 ¶ *Certain deficiencies here that are in fact praiseworthy*

THERE ARE certain other things also which, as in the case of reptiles, are wanting here, but whose absence is a good thing. There never are earthquakes here. You will hear thunder here scarcely once in the year. Accordingly thunder does not frighten, nor lightning terrify one. No cataracts rush down upon one. No earthquakes swallow one. The lion does not prowl, nor the panther tear to pieces, nor

the bear devour, nor the tiger eat one up. No hospitality is dangerous because of the suspicion of poison – even in the case of an enemy. The step-son fears no poisoned cup from his step-mother, nor the husband from his enraged wife.

32 ¶ *The well of poisons is in the East*

THE WELL OF POISONS brims over in the East. The farther therefore from the East it operates, the less does it exercise the force of its natural efficacy. And by the time it reaches these farthest parts, after having traversed such long distances, losing its force gradually, it is entirely exhausted – just as the sun, the farther from the zodiac it sends its rays, the less does it exercise the force of its heat; and so some of the farthest parts of the arctic regions are completely without the benefit of its warmth.

But you may object that the East excels in precious stones and roots with certain virtues.

Objection.

Nature has indeed provided that where there

Reply.

were many evils, there should be many remedies against those evils. For the experience of many diseases compels one to seek for many medicines. But here, where dangers to health are so very few, so too are the remedies. By so much, then, as peace is more desirable than anxiety, preservation than cure, the satisfaction of health constantly enjoyed to the searching after remedies for serious illnesses, so the advantages of the West outshine and outstrip those of the East, and nature has given a more indulgent eye to the regions traversed by the west wind than those traversed by the east.

¶ Here begins the second part of
the History of Ireland

33 ¶ *The Wonders' and Miracles of Ireland*

NOW WE TURN OUR PEN TO THOSE things which, appearing to be contrary to nature's course, are worthy of wonder.

I have thought it worth while to give some account of such things as are marvellous in themselves and, because of their recent origin, are easily seen and have been placed in these parts by nature herself. I have also treated of those exceedingly wonderful and miraculous deeds done through the merits of the saints. They are worthy of being set on record for ever in view of the testimony on which they are received. For just as the marvels of the East have through the work of certain authors come to the light of public notice, so the marvels of the West which, so far, have remained hidden away and almost unknown, may eventually find in me one to make them known even in these later days.

I am aware that I shall describe some things that will seem to the reader to be either impossible or ridiculous. But I protest solemnly that I have put down nothing in this book the truth of which I have not found out either by the testimony of my own eyes, or that of reliable men found worthy of credence and coming from the districts in which the events took place.

And it should not seem surprising if wonderful things are written about the works of him who made whatever he

wished. For 'God is wonderful in his saints', and 'great in all his works'. And the psalmist is elsewhere made to say: 'Come and see the works of the Lord, the wonders that he has worked on the earth.' The careful reader will know that history does not spare the truth, and recounts rather what is in fact true than that which seems like the truth.

34 ¶ *The surging tides of the Irish Sea and its varying ebb and flow*

THE IRISH SEA, surging with currents that rush together, is nearly always tempestuous, so that even in the summer it scarcely shows itself calm for a few days to them that sail.¹⁶

35 ¶ *The contrary motions of the tides in Ireland and Britain*

AS OFTEN AS THE WATER EBBS to half depth from the port of Dublin, it flows to a half depth into the port of Milford, in Britain – a very good harbour for ships. Gradually the water flows back into the farther shores of Bristol that had been laid bare by the retreating tide. The same happens the other way round when the tide is flowing.

There is a harbour at Wicklow, on that side of Ireland that, being nearest, looks towards Wales, which fills up when the tide is ebbing from all other places. But, when the tide is flowing elsewhere, it is left dry. There is another notable thing about this place: when the sea has ebbed and the whole shore is dry, a river flowing in is made bitter throughout its whole channel by a continual saltness. But the opposite happens in the nearby harbour at Arklow. There the river that flows into the sea at that point retains its natural sweetness without any diminishing, not only when the tide has ebbed completely, but also when the tide is flowing in and filling the whole bay. In this way

it keeps its waters free from the salt until they reach the sea itself.

36 ¶ *The moon affects the waters as well as natural humours*

WHEN THE MOON is at her meridian, the ocean recalling its attendant waters to its hidden lairs always leaves the coasts of Britain entirely dry. In the meantime it fills up the Irish coasts near Dublin with the ebbing tide. The coast near Wexford follows the flow, not of the Irish tides at Dublin, but of the British tides at Milford. And a thing which is even more to be wondered at: there is a certain rock out in the sea not far from Arklow from which the tide ebbs on one side, while it flows in on the other.

When the moon is recovering her light, and is already beginning to grow beyond her half size and becoming big, the western seas through some secret natural causes begin to be rough and tempestuous; they swell more and more from day to day with surging waves running up on the shore in full spate far beyond their usual limits, until the moon has attained the full perfection of her roundness. But as her fires decrease and she turns her face away, the swelling of the waves begins to abate until, when she fails altogether, the tide loses its flood and returns once again to its usual channels.

Indeed Phoebe is to such an extent a source and influence on all liquids, that according to her waxing and waning she directs and controls not only the waves of the sea, but also the bone-marrow and brains in all living things as well as the sap of trees and plants. When she is deprived of her full light you will notice that all things lose their fullness. But when she has attained her complete roundness, you will find that bones are full of marrow, heads of brains, and other things of sap.

But it would take a greater work than this to explain the reasons behind such things, and why the western seas have taken for themselves in some well-ordered and unfailing

liveliness this surging and falling, rather than or more clearly than the eastern seas; and why all these things happen at the direction of the moon, the controller of things liquid. I have, in fact, explained these points clearly and briefly in a book written in verse and called *The Flowers of Philosophy*.¹⁷

37 ¶ *Two islands in one of which no one dies; into the other no animal of the female sex can go*¹⁸

THERE IS A LAKE in the north of Munster which contains two islands, one rather large and the other rather small. The larger has a church venerated from the earliest times. The smaller has a chapel cared for most devotedly by a few celibates called 'heaven-worshippers' or 'god-worshippers'.¹⁹

No woman or animal of the female sex could ever enter the larger island without dying immediately. This has been proved many times by instances of dogs and cats and other animals of the female sex. When brought there often to make a trial, they immediately died.

A remarkable thing about the birds there is that, while the males settle on the bushes everywhere throughout the island, the females fly over and leave their mates there and, as if they were fully conscious of its peculiar power, avoid the island like a plague.

In the smaller island no one ever died or could die a natural death. Accordingly it is called the island of the living. Nevertheless the inhabitants sometimes suffer mortal sicknesses and endure the agony almost to their last gasp. When there is no hope left, when they feel that they have not a spark of life left, when as the strength decreases they are eventually so distressed that they prefer to die in death than drag out a life of death, they get themselves finally transported in a boat to the larger island, and, as soon as they touch ground there, they give up the ghost.

38 ¶ *An island one part of which is frequented by good and the other by evil spirits*²⁰

THERE IS A LAKE in Ulster which contains an island divided into two parts.

One part contains a very beautiful church with a great reputation for holiness, and is well worth seeing. It is distinguished above all other churches by the visitation of angels and the visible and frequent presence of local saints.

But the other part of the island is stony and ugly and is abandoned to the use of evil spirits only. It is nearly always the scene of gatherings and processions of evil spirits, plain to be seen by all. There are nine pits in that part, and if anyone by any chance should venture to spend the night in any one of them – and there is evidence that some rash persons have at times attempted to do so – he is seized immediately by malignant spirits, and is crucified all night with such severe torments, and so continuously afflicted with many unspeakable punishments of fire and water and other things, that, when morning comes, there is found in his poor body scarcely even the smallest trace of life surviving. They say that if a person once undergoes these torments because of a penance imposed on him, he will not have to endure the pains of hell – unless he commit some very serious sin.

39 ¶ *An island²¹ where human corpses exposed in the open do not putrefy*

THERE IS AN ISLAND in the sea west of Connacht which is said to have been consecrated by Saint Brendan. In this island human corpses are not buried and do not putrefy, but are placed in the open and remain without corruption. Here men see with some wonder and recognize their grandfathers, great-grandfathers, and great-great-grandfathers and a long line of ancestors.

There is another remarkable thing about this island: while the whole of Ireland is infested with mice, there is not a single mouse here. For no mouse is bred here nor does one live if it be brought in. If by chance it is brought in, it makes straight for the nearest point of the sea and throws itself in, and if it be prevented, it dies on the spot.

40 ¶ *The wonderful natures of wells*

THERE IS A WELL in Munster²² and if anyone washes in its waters, he immediately turns grey. I saw a man who had washed there one part of his beard. It had turned grey, while the other part retained its natural dark colour. On the other hand there is a well in Leinster and if a man washes in it, he will not get greyer. There is a well of sweet water in Connacht on the top of a high mountain and some distance from the sea, which in any one day ebbs and overflows three times, imitating the ebbing and flowing of the sea. In Wales beside the castle of Dinevor there is a well whose waters are similarly inconstant. There is a well in the far north of Ulster which is so cold that if logs of wood are left in it for seven years, they harden so as to become stones.

There is in Norway also a well of the same kind, but its efficacy is the greater in as much as it is nearer to the frigid zone. Not only if wood, but if flax or a linen web be placed in it for a year, it becomes very hard stone. Because of this a certain bishop of Norway was able to bring back to Waldemar, king of Denmark in our time, a napkin which he had taken from him the year before for the purpose of proving the fact referred to. The napkin had now a double nature. The middle part, having been placed in the well, was a stone, but the rest of it remained as before, having been outside of the well.

While it is generally accepted that the use of the elements is naturally common to all living things, there is in Connacht a well which has water that can be drunk only by men, but

is pestilential to horses or cattle, or any other animals whatever that should taste it. Little pebbles taken from this well and placed in the mouth quench the thirst when one is dry and parched.

There is a well in Munster,²³ and if one touches or even looks at it, the whole province is deluged with rain. The rain will not cease until a priest, who is a virgin both in mind and body and specially chosen for the purpose, celebrates Mass in a chapel not far from the well and known to have been erected with this end in view, and appeases the well with a sprinkling of holy water and the milk of a cow of one colour. This is certainly a barbarous rite, without rime or reason.

41 ¶ *Two wonderful wells, one in Brittany and the other in Sicily*

THERE IS A WELL in Brittany of a similar nature to the one preceding. If you drink its water out of the horn of an ox and happen to spill any of it on a nearby rock, a shower of rain will fall on you immediately, even though the sky be ever so clear from rain.

There is in Sicily a well of a wonderful nature. If anyone approaches it clad in a red garment, a column of water immediately shoots up from the well to the height of the person. This well is entirely unmoved by any other colour, and if the person in red departs, it resumes its ordinary dimensions, and returns to its former channels.

'Happy indeed is he who is able to know the causes of things.'²⁴ But since there is a limit to human capacity, and whatever is human is far from being perfect, 'do ye, O Muses, tell' the causes of such things as these. 'We cannot all do all.'²⁵ Envious nature has locked and hidden away for herself among her secret wonders the causes of these and other such things.

There is on the sea-shore in Connacht a rocky mound, fairly big, which seems to tower as much above the waves

when the tide returns and covers even high objects as it does over the shore when the tide has ebbed. There is also in Connacht a certain walled place that looks like a large castle, and is said to have been consecrated by Saint Patrick. Although the herds of the whole province are often placed there for refuge, there is never such a number there that many more cannot be put in, until somebody happens to say that there is enough in, or expresses some doubt as to its being able to hold more.

42 ¶ *A big lake²⁶ that had a marvellous origin*

THERE IS A LAKE in Ulster of a remarkable size. It is thirty miles long and fifteen miles wide. From it a very beautiful river called the Bann flows into the northern ocean. Here the fishermen complain not of a scarcity of fish, but of too great catches and the breaking of their nets. In our time a fish was caught here – one that had come down from the lake, and not from the sea – which had the shape more or less of a salmon, and was of such size that it could not be dragged or carried as a whole. Accordingly it was cut up and carried about through the province.

They say that an accident was responsible for the rise of this remarkable lake. There was from ancient times in the region now covered by the lake a people very much given to vice, and particularly addicted, above any other people in Ireland, to bestiality. There was a saying well known to that people that if a certain well of the district which, because of a great fear of it that had been inherited from a barbarous superstition, was always covered and sealed, should be left uncovered, it would immediately overflow to such an extent that it would wipe out and destroy the whole district and people. It happened, however, that a young woman came to the well to draw water. She filled her vessel, and, before covering the well, ran quickly to her little child, because she had heard him crying where she had placed him a little way off. But 'the voice of the people is the voice of God', and

when she hurried back she met such an overflow from the well that both herself and her boy were swept off immediately. Within an hour the whole people and their flocks were overwhelmed in this local and provincial flood. The whole area was covered with a sea of water which remained there and made a permanent lake.

It looked as if the author of nature had judged that a land which had known such filthy crimes against nature was unworthy not only of its first inhabitants but of any others in the future.

There is some confirmation of this story in as much as fishermen of the lake clearly see under the waves in calm weather towers of churches, which, as is usual in that country, are tall, slender, and rounded. They frequently point them out to visitors who are amazed at the occurrence. One should note, however, that the river which now flows from the lake and is of such great size, always, from the time of Bartholomaeus after the Flood, traced its course back to the aforementioned well, and, joined by other rivers, flowed through the same country, but was of a much smaller size. It was, in fact, one of the nine principal rivers.

43 ¶ *A fish with three gold teeth*

TWO YEARS before the coming of the English to the island,²⁷ there was found at Carlingford in Ulster a fish of unusual size and quality. Among other wonderful things about it was that it had three teeth of gold of about fifty ounces' weight in all. It seemed to prefigure the imminent conquest of the country.

44 ¶ *The northern islands, almost all of which are held by the Norwegians*

IN THE NORTHERN OCEAN beyond Ulster and Galloway are a number of islands, namely the Orcades and the Incaes, and many others. Almost all of them are held by,

and are subject to, the Norwegians. For even though they lie much nearer to other regions, nevertheless the Norwegians, who keep their eyes ever on the ocean, lead, above any other people, a piratical life. Consequently all their expeditions and wars are decided by naval engagements.

45 ¶ *The island that was at first unstable and then was made stable by means of fire*

AMONG THE OTHER ISLANDS is one that arose recently, and which they call the 'phantom' island. Its origin came about in this way.

One fine day the inhabitants of the islands noticed that a large mound of earth arose in the sea where land had never been seen before. They all wondered. Some said that it was a whale or some other monstrous sea animal. Others, however, reflecting that it remained without any movement, said 'No, not at all. It is land.'

They wanted, nevertheless, to remove the uncertainty, and so they selected young men from the island nearest to it, and sent them over to it in a rowing boat. When they had approached so near that they were on the point of disembarking, the island disappeared entirely from before their eyes as if descending into the sea. It appeared again in the same way on the following day, only, however, to play a similar trick on the same young men. On the third day they followed the advice of a certain old man in first throwing at the island as they approached it an arrow of red-hot iron, and then disembarking they found the land stable and habitable.

And so there are many proofs that fire is always most hostile to phantoms. Hence those who have seen a phantom cannot look upon the splendour of fire without falling into a swoon immediately. For fire by its position and nature is the most noble of the elements. It is, as it were, aware of the secrets of the heavens. The sky is of fire; the planets are of fire; the bush was on fire but was not burned. The Holy Spirit came upon the apostles with tongues of fire.

46 ¶ *Iceland whose people speak few words but true and never swear an oath*

ICELAND, the largest of the islands of the north, lies at a distance of three days' sailing to the north of Ireland. Its people say little but they always tell the truth. They speak but seldom and briefly and never use an oath. They do not know how to lie. They detect nothing more than a lie. Their priest is their king, and their king is their priest. The bishop has the powers of both kingship and priesthood. This land produces and rears gervfalcons and big and noble hawks.

47 ¶ *A whirlpool of the sea that swallows ships²⁸*

NOT FAR TO THE NORTH from the islands of which we have been speaking is a certain wonderful whirlpool in the sea. All the waves of the sea from all parts, even those remote, flow and strike together here as if by agreement. They seem to pour themselves into the secret recesses of nature here, and are, so to speak, devoured in the abyss. If a ship happens to touch it, it is caught and pulled with such violence of the waves that the force of the pull downwards immediately swallows it up for ever.

48 ¶ *The Isle of Man which on account of its admission of poisonous reptiles is judged to belong to Britain*

AMONG THE SMALLER ISLANDS there is one of fair size that is now called the Isle of Man, but in antiquity was called Ewania. They say that it is equidistant from the north of Ireland and Britain. There was a great controversy in antiquity concerning the question: to which of the two countries should the island properly belong? Eventually, however, the matter was settled. All agreed that since it allowed poisonous reptiles to live in it, it should belong to Britain.

- 49 ¶ *That a long time after the Flood and then not suddenly but gradually and as it were through inundation islands came to be*

WHETHER ISLANDS CAME TO BE before the Flood or because of the Flood, when all the parents of animals were enclosed in the ark, it is nevertheless very difficult to answer why harmful animals, and among them poisonous reptiles, came to fill the remoter islands. It is clear that no one in his senses would have brought them there. On this point we can say with some probability that it was long after the Flood, when the earth was already full everywhere of the animals that had multiplied, that the islands were formed, and then not suddenly, or violently, but gradually and as it were through inundation.

- 50 ¶ *Thule an island of the West very well known in the East but entirely unknown in the West*

A REMARKABLE THING about Thule, which is said to be the farthest of the western islands, is that it is very well known among the eastern people both in name and for its nature, although it is entirely unknown to the people of the West. Solinus says²⁹ that it is the farthest island among the many around Britain. He says that there, during the summer solstice, there is no night, and, during the winter solstice, there is no day.

But whatever may be said of its name, it is quite clear that none of the western islands has such a nature. In the farthest parts, however, of the northern region, the sun turning round from Cancer seems to revolve around the edge of the earth, but over the horizon, for the space of a few nights. And when it is returning from the constellation of Capricorn, the brightness of its longed-for light disappears, as it were, beneath the dark limits of the Antarctic pole for the space of the same number of days.

- 51 ¶ *The Giants' Dance which was transferred from Ireland to Britain*

THERE WAS in ancient times in Ireland a remarkable pile of stones which was called the Giants' Dance, because giants brought it from the farthest limits of Africa to Ireland, and erected it, according to some on a mountain of Kildare,³⁰ according to others at Ophela near the castle of Nas, employing truly remarkable skill and ability. It is amazing how so many great stones were ever brought together or erected in one place, and with what skill upon such great and high stones others no less great were placed. These latter seem to be hanging, as it were, and suspended in space, so as to rest rather on the skill of the craftsmen than on the base of stones beneath.

According to British history,³¹ the king of the Britons, Aurelius Ambrosius, arranged through the divine help of Merlin that these stones be brought over from Ireland to Britain. He got them put up in exactly the same order and with the same skill as before – so as to leave behind some memorial of a great crime committed when the flower of Britain's manhood was cut to pieces by the concealed daggers of the Saxons, who, coming in the guise of peace with the weapons of treachery, killed the youth of the kingdom that had been so carelessly guarded.

- 52 ¶ *The wonderful happenings of our own time: and first about a wolf that talked with a priest*

AND NOW WE SHALL GIVE some account of the things that occurred in our own time and seem worthy of wonder.

About three years before the coming of Lord John into Ireland,³² it happened that a priest, journeying from Ulster towards Meath, spent the night in a wood on the borders of Meath. He was staying up beside a fire which he had prepared for himself under the leafy branches of a tree,

and had for company only a little boy, when a wolf came up to them and immediately broke into these words: 'Do not be afraid! Do not fear! Do not worry! There is nothing to fear!'

They were completely astounded and in great consternation. The wolf then said some things about God that seemed reasonable. The priest called on him and adjured him by the omnipotent God and faith in the Trinity not to harm them



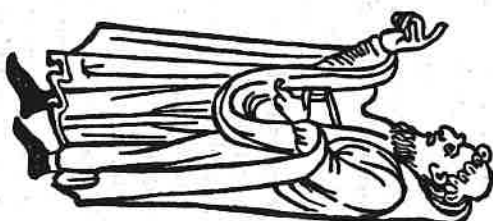
and to tell them what kind of creature he was, who, although in the form of a beast, could speak human words. The wolf gave a Catholic answer in all things and at length added:

'We are natives of Ossory. From there every seven years, because of the imprecation of a certain saint, namely the abbot Natalis, two persons, a man and a woman, are compelled to go into exile not only from their territory but also from their bodily shape. They put off the form of man completely and put on the form of wolf. When the seven years are up, and if they have survived, two others take their place in the same way, and the first pair return to their former country and nature.'

'My companion in this pilgrimage is not far from here and is seriously ill. Please give her in her last hour the solace of the priesthood in bringing to her the revelation of the divine mercy.'

This is what he said, and the priest, full of fear, followed him as he went before him to a certain tree not far away. In the hollow of the tree the priest saw a she-wolf groaning and grieving like a human being, even though her appear-

ance was that of a beast. As soon as she saw him she welcomed him in a human way, and then gave thanks also



to God that in her last hour he had granted her such consolation. She then received from the hands of the priest all the last rites duly performed up to the last communion. This too she eagerly requested, and implored him to complete his good act by giving her the viaticum. The priest insisted that he did not have it with him, but the wolf, who in the meantime had gone a little distance away, came back again and pointed out to him a little wallet, containing a manual and some consecrated hosts, which the priest according to the custom of his country carried about with him, hanging from his neck, on his travels. He begged him not to deny to them in any way the gift and help of God, destined for their aid by divine providence. To remove all doubt he pulled all the skin off the she-wolf from the head down to the navel, folding it back with his paw as if it were a hand. And immediately the shape of an old woman, clear to be seen, appeared. At that, the priest, more through terror than reason, communicated her as she had earnestly

demanded, and she then devoutly received the sacrament. Afterwards the skin which had been removed by the he-wolf resumed its former position.

When all this had taken place – more in equity than with proper procedure – the wolf showed himself to them to be a man rather than a beast. He shared the fire with them during the whole of the night, and when morning came he led them over a great distance of the wood, and showed them the surest way on their journey. When they parted he gave many thanks to the priest for the benefit he had conferred upon him, and promised to give him much more tangible evidence of his gratitude, if the Lord should call him back from the exile in which he was, and of which he had now completed two thirds.

Almost two years later I happened to be passing through Meath where the bishop of that region had called a synod. He had also summoned the neighbouring bishops and abbots so that, advised by their counsel, he might more clearly see what he should do in the matter recounted and which he had learned on the confession of the priest. When he heard that I was going through those parts, he sent two of his clerics to me, asking me to come in person, if I could, to discuss so serious a matter. If, however, I could not come, I was at least to indicate my view in writing. When I had heard the whole account (which I had, as a matter of fact, heard already from others) in due order from them, and since I could not be present because of urgent business, I gave them the benefit at least of my advice in writing. The bishop and synod agreed with it, and sent the priest to the Pope with his documents, in which were given an account of the affair and the priest's confession, and which were sealed with the seals of the bishops and abbots that were present.

53 ¶ *A woman with a beard and a mane on her back*

DUVENALDUS, the king of Limerick, had a woman that had a beard down to her waist. She had also a crest

from her neck down along her spine, like a one-year-old foal. It was covered with hair.

This woman in spite of these two enormities was, nevertheless, not hermaphrodite, and was in other respects sufficiently feminine. She followed the court wherever it went, provoking laughs as well as wonder. She followed neither fatherland nor nature in having a hairy spine; but in wearing her beard long, she was following the custom of her fatherland, not of her nature.



54 ¶ *A man that was half an ox and an ox that was half a man*

IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD of Wicklow at the time when Maurice fitzGerald got possession of that country and the castle,³¹ an extraordinary man was seen – if indeed it be right to call him a man. He had all the parts of the human body except the extremities which were those of an ox. From the joinings of the hands with the arms and the feet with the legs, he had hooves the same as an ox. He had no hair on his head, but was disfigured with baldness both in front and behind. Here and there he had a little down instead of hair. His eyes were huge and were like those of an ox both in colour, and in being round. His face was flat as far as his mouth. Instead of a nose he had two holes to act as nostrils, but no protuberance. He could not speak at all; he could only low. He attended the court of Maurice for a long time. He came to dinner every day and, using his cleft hooves as hands, placed in his mouth whatever was

given to him to eat. The Irish natives of the place, because the youths of the castle often taunted them with begetting such beings on cows, secretly killed him in the end in envy and malice – a fate which he did not deserve.

Shortly before the coming of the English into the island a cow from a man's intercourse

with her – a particular vice of that people – gave birth to a man-calf in the mountains around Glendalough. From this

you may believe that once again a man that was half an ox, and an ox that was half a man³⁴ was produced.

It spent nearly a year with the other calves following its mother and feeding on her milk, and then, because it had more of the man than the beast, was transferred to the society of men.



55 ¶ *A cow that was partly a stag*

NEAR CHESTER in Britain a cow that was partly a stag was born in our time from the intercourse of a stag with a cow. All the fore parts as far

as the groin were bovine, but the thighs and the tail, the hind legs and the feet, were clearly those of a stag, especially in quality and colour of hair.

But since it was more of a cow than a wild animal it stayed with the herd.



56 ¶ *A goat that had intercourse with a woman*

OTHERICUS, king of Connacht, had a tame white goat that was remarkable of its kind for the length of its coat and height of its horns. This goat had bestial intercourse with a certain woman to whom he was entrusted.

The wretched woman, proving herself more a beast in accepting him than he did in acting, even submitted herself to his abuse.

How unworthy and unspeakable! How reason succumbs so outrageously to sensuality! That the lord of the brutes, losing the privileges of his high estate, should descend to the level of the brutes, when the rational submits itself to such shameful commerce with a brute animal!

Although the matter was detestable on both sides and abominable, yet was it less so by far on the side of the brute who is subject to rational beings in all things, and because he was a brute and prepared to obey by very nature. He was, nevertheless, created not for abuse but for proper use. Perhaps we might say that nature makes known her indignation and repudiation of the act in verse:



Only novelty pleases now: new pleasure is welcome;

Natural love is outworn

Nature pleases less than art; reason, no longer reasoning,
Sinks in shame.

57 ¶ *A lion that loved a woman*

IT WAS IN PARIS a lion which a cardinal had given when it was a whelp to Philip the son of Louis, then a boy. This lion used to make beastly love to a foolish woman called

Johanna. Sometimes when he escaped from his cage and was in such fierce anger that no one would dare to go near him, they would send for Johanna who would calm his anger and great rage immediately. Soothing him with a woman's tricks, she led him wherever she wanted and changed all his fury immediately into love.

O Beasts! Both! Worthy of a shameful death! But such crimes have been attempted not only in modern times but also in antiquity, which is praised for its greater innocence and simplicity. The ancients also were stained with such unspeakable deeds.

And so it is written in Leviticus:

'If a woman approaches any beast to have intercourse with him, ye shall kill the woman, and let the beast die the death.'³⁵

The beast is ordered to be killed, not for the guilt, from which he is excused as being a beast, but to make the remembrance of the act a deterrent, calling to mind the terrible deed.



58 ¶ *How the cocks in Ireland crow differently from those in other countries*

DOMESTIC COCKS do not here, as elsewhere, distinguish the third and last part of the night from the two preceding by crowing three times at intervals. They are heard here rarely before daylight; and as elsewhere the day is known to be at hand from the third, so here it is known



from the first crowing of the cock. Nevertheless it is not to be thought that the cocks have here a different nature from those of other places. For if they are brought here from

outside they crow the same as the others here. But as Britain is content with a short night, so too is Ireland, and in fact it is shorter here, since Ireland is nearer the setting of the sun. And therefore, by how much shorter the night is here, so is the day nearer at hand after the crowing of the cock. Consequently during the summer-time the heavens above the horizon are always bright all night long from the brightness of the sun which scarcely dips under the land. One would think it was daylight with the dawn coming up.

59 ¶ *Wolves that whelp in December*

WOLVES IN IRELAND generally have their young in December, either because of the extreme mildness of the climate, or rather as a symbol of the evils of treachery and plunder which here blossom before their season.

60 ¶ *Ravens and owls that have their young about Christmas-time*

ABOUT CHRISTMAS-TIME of the year when Lord John first left the island,³⁶ ravens and owls in many parts of the country had their young. Perhaps they foretold the occurrence of some new and premature evil.

61 ¶ *About miracles; and first about the fruit³⁷ and ravens and blackbird of Saint Kevin*

NOW LET US COME to miracles, and let us begin with Saint Kevin, a great confessor of the Faith, and abbot. At the time when Saint Kevin was distinguished for his life and sanctity at Glendalough, a noble boy, who was a student of his, happened to be sick and to ask for fruit. The saint had pity on him and prayed for him to the Lord. Whereupon a willow-tree not far from the church brought forth fruit that was health-giving to the boy and to others

that were sick. And to this day both the willow-tree and others planted from it around the cemetery like a wall of willows bring forth fruit each year, although in all other respects, in their leaves and branches, they retain their own natural qualities. This fruit is white and oblong in shape, health-giving rather than pleasant to the taste. The local people have a great regard for it. Many bring it to the farthest parts of Ireland to cure various diseases, and it is called the fruit of Saint Kevin.

On the feast-day of the saint, the ravens at Glendalough, perhaps because they spilled the milk of the same student, are prevented by a curse of Saint Kevin from alighting on the earth or taking food. They fly around the village and the church, making a great noise, and on that day enjoy neither rest nor food.

Once upon a time the same Saint Kevin fleeing during Lent, as was his wont, the society of men, was by himself in a small cabin which warded off from him only the sun and the rain. He was giving his attention to contemplation and was reading and praying. According to his custom he put his hand, in raising it to heaven, out through the window, when, behold, a blackbird happened to settle on it, and using it as a nest, laid its eggs there. The saint was moved with such pity and was so patient with it that he neither closed nor withdrew his hand, but held it out in a suitable position without tiring until the young were completely hatched out. In perpetual remembrance of this wonderful happening, all the representations of Saint Kevin



throughout Ireland have a blackbird in the outstretched hand.

62 ¶ *The teal of Saint Colman which are almost tame but fly away from hurt*

THERE IS A LAKE in Leinster that is not very big and is the haunt of the birds of Saint Colman. They are small ducks which are commonly called teal. Since the time of the saint these have become so tame that they take food from one's hand, and do not fear even to this day the approach of men. Whenever any injury or molestation happens to the church, the clergy, or themselves, they go off to a lake at some distance, and do not return to their former abode until due satisfaction has been made. In the meantime during their absence the waters of the lake, which before were limpid and clear, become brackish and dirty, and cannot be used either for man or beast.

It happened once that a person drawing water there by night drew out of the water (by chance, and not design) one of the birds. He was cooking meat for a long time in the water which he had drawn, and still it was not cooked nor could it be cooked. At length the bird was found swimming around in the vessel entirely unhurt. As soon as it was brought back to the lake, the meat was immediately cooked.

It happened in our own times that Robert fitzStephen was travelling through that place with Dermot the king of Leinster, when an archer struck one of those birds with an arrow. He took it off with him to his quarters and placed it in a pot with some other meat to be cooked. He burned out three fires and spent until midnight trying to cook it, and still he did not succeed. When he took out the meat for the third time, it was still found to be as raw as when he put it in. At length when his host saw the body of the little

bird among the pieces of meat, and heard that it had been taken from that lake, he immediately exclaimed with tears:

'Alas for me! That this misfortune should ever have happened in my house! This was one of the birds of Saint Colman.'

And then the meat which could not be cooked, when put in the pot by itself, was immediately done. Not long afterwards the archer perished miserably.

63 ¶ *The stone which every day miraculously contains wine*

IN THE SOUTH of Munster near Cork there is a certain island which has within it a church of Saint Michael, revered for its true holiness from ancient times. There is a certain stone there outside of, but almost touching, the door of the church on the right-hand side. In a hollow of the upper part of this stone there is found every morning through the merits of the saints of the place as much wine as is necessary for the celebration of as many Masses as there are priests to say Mass on that day there.

64 ¶ *The fleas that were banished by Saint Nannan*

THERE IS IN CONNACHT a village celebrated for a church of Saint Nannan. In olden times there was such a multitude of fleas there that the place was almost abandoned because of the pestilence, and was left without inhabitants, until, through the intercession of Saint Nannan, the fleas were brought to a certain neighbouring meadow. The divine intervention because of the merits of the saint so cleansed the place that not a single flea could ever afterwards be found here. But the number of them in the meadow is so



great that it ever remains inaccessible not only to men but also to beasts.

65 ¶ *The rats that were expelled from Ferneginnan's by Saint Yvor*

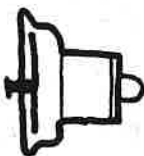
THERE IS A DISTRICT called Ferneginnan in Leinster. It is separated from Wexford by the river Slaney only. From there the larger mice that are commonly called rats were entirely expelled by the curse of the bishop, Saint Yvor, whose books they had happened to eat.

They cannot be bred nor can they live there, if brought in.



66 ¶ *The fugitive bell*

THERE IS IN LEINSTER in the land of Mactalewus a certain bell, which, unless it is exorcized each night by its guardian with an exorcism especially composed for the purpose, and is bound by some chain, however light, is found in the morning at Clonard in Meath in the church of Saint Finian, whence it came. It is certain that this has happened on some occasions.



67 ¶ *Various miracles in Kildare; and first about the fire that never goes out and whose ashes do not increase*

IN KILDARE, in Leinster, which the glorious Brigid has made famous, there are many miracles worthy of being remembered. And the first of them that occurs to one is the fire of Brigid which, they say, is inextinguishable. It is not that it is strictly speaking inextinguishable, but that the nuns and holy women have so carefully and diligently kept and fed it with enough material, that through all the years from the time of the virgin saint until now it has never

been extinguished. And although such an amount of wood over such a long time has been burned there, nevertheless the ashes have never increased.

68 ¶ *How Brigid keeps the fire on her own night*

ALTHOUGH in the time of Brigid there were twenty servants of the Lord here, Brigid herself being the twentieth, only nineteen have ever been here after her death until now, and the number has never increased. They all, however, take their turns, one each night, in guarding the fire. When the twentieth night comes, the nineteenth nun puts the logs beside the fire and says:

'Brigid, guard your fire. This is your night.'

And in this way the fire is left there, and in the morning the wood, as usual, has been burnt and the fire is still alight.

69 ¶ *The hedge around the fire that no male may cross*

THIS FIRE IS SURROUNDED by a hedge which is circular and made of withies, and which no male may cross. And if by chance one does dare to enter – and some rash people have at times tried it – he does not escape the divine vengeance. Only women are allowed to blow the fire, and then not with the breath of their mouths, but only with bellows or winnowing forks. Moreover, because of a curse of the saint, goats never have young here.

There are very fine plains hereabouts which are called 'Brigid's pastures', but no one has dared to put a plough into them. It is regarded as miraculous that these pastures, even though all the animals of the whole province have eaten the grass down to the ground, nevertheless when morning comes have just as much grass as ever. One might say that of these pastures was it written:

And all the day-long browsing of thy herds
Shall the cool dews of one brief night repair.³⁹

70 ¶ *The falcon in Kildare that was tamed and domesticated*

FROM THE TIME of Brigid a noble falcon was accustomed to frequent the place, and to perch on the top of the tower of a church. Accordingly it was called by the people 'Brigid's bird', and was held in a certain respect by all.

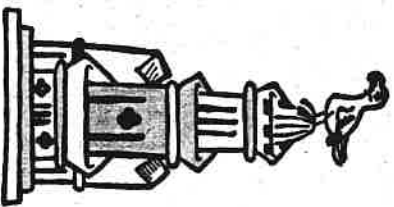
This bird used to do the bidding of the townspeople or the soldiers of the castle, just as if it were tamed and trained in chasing, and, because of its own speed, forcing duck and other birds of the land and rivers of the plain of Kildare from the air down to the ground to the great delight of the onlookers. For what place was left to the poor little birds, when men held the land and the waters, and a hostile and terrible tyrant of a bird endangered the air?

A remarkable thing about this bird was that it did not allow any mate into the precincts of the church where it used to live. When the season of mating came, it went far away from its accustomed haunts and, finding a mate in the usual manner in the mountains near Glendalough, indulged its natural instincts there. When that was finished it returned alone to the church.

In this is showed a good example of honour to churchmen, especially when they are entrusted with divine office within the precincts of the church.

Exactly at the time of the first departure of Lord John from Ireland, that bird which had lived for so many generations, and had so agreeably added interest to the shrine of Brigid, having occupied itself without sufficient caution with the prey which it had caught, and having too little feared the approaches of men, was killed by a rustic with a staff which he had in his hand.

From which it is clear that one must ever fear in pros-



Barbarians

perity a turn of the tide, and that one should have little confidence in a daily life that is delightful and well loved.

71 ¶ *A book miraculously written*

AMONG ALL THE MIRACLES of Kildare nothing seems to me more miraculous than that wonderful book which they say was written at the dictation of an angel during the lifetime of the virgin.

This book contains the concordance of the four gospels according to Saint Jerome, with almost as many drawings as pages, and all of them in marvellous colours. Here you can look upon the face of the divine majesty drawn in a miraculous way; here too upon the mystical representations of the Evangelists, now having six, now four, and now two, wings. Here you will see the eagle; there the calf. Here the face of a man; there that of a lion. And there are almost innumerable other drawings. If you look at them carelessly and casually and not too closely, you may judge them to be mere daubs rather than careful compositions. You will see nothing subtle where everything is subtle. But if you take the trouble to look very closely, and penetrate with your eyes to the secrets of the artistry, you will notice such intricacies, so delicate and subtle, so close together and well-knitted, so involved and bound together, and so fresh still in their colourings that you will not hesitate to declare that all these things must have been the result of the work, not of men, but of angels.

72 ¶ *The composition of the book*

ON THE NIGHT before the day on which the scribe was to begin the book, an angel stood beside him in his sleep and showed him a drawing made on a tablet which he carried in his hand, and said to him:

'Do you think that you can make this drawing on the first page of the book that you are about to begin?'

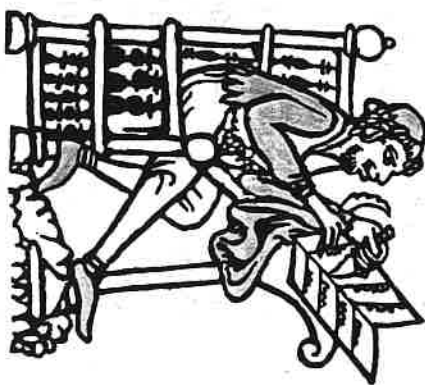
The scribe, not feeling that he was capable of an art so subtle, and trusting little in his knowledge of something almost unknown and very unusual, replied:

'No.'

The angel said to him:

'Tomorrow tell your lady, so that she may pour forth prayers for you to the Lord, that he may open both your bodily and mental eyes so as to see the more keenly and understand the more subtly, and may direct your hands to draw correctly.'

All this was done, and on the following night the angel came again and held before him the same and many other drawings. By the help of the divine grace, the scribe, taking particular notice of them all, and faithfully committing them to his memory, was able to reproduce them exactly in the suitable places in the book. And so with the angel indicating the designs, Brigid praying, and the scribe imitating, that book was composed.



73 ¶ *The cross in Dublin that speaks and gives testimony to the truth*

AND NOW we shall set out those things that happened in more modern times.

There is in Dublin in the church of the Holy Trinity a cross of most wonderful power. It bears the figure of the Crucified. Not many years before the coming of the English, and during the time of the Ostmen, it opened its

hallowed mouth and uttered some words. Many people heard it.

It had happened that a certain citizen had invoked it, and it alone, as the witness and surety of a certain contract. As time went on the other contracting party denied the agreement and completely and steadfastly refused to return the money which the other had given him according to the terms of the contract. The citizens, more in irony than for any serious reason, declared that they should go in a body to the aforesaid church and hear what the cross would say. The cross being adjured and called to witness, gave testimony to the truth.

74 ¶ *How the same cross became immovable*

WHEN EARL RICHARD⁴⁰ first came with an army to Dublin the citizens had forebodings of many evils, and fearing that their city would fall, and having no confidence in its defence, decided to make their escape by sea, and wanted to bring with them to the islands the cross of which we have been speaking. They tried every resource of effort and industry to give effect to this, but nevertheless the people of the whole city could not move it either by force or skill.

75 ¶ *How a penny offered to the cross twice jumped back and on the third occasion after confession remained; and of the iron greaves that were miraculously restored*

WHEN THE CITY was captured, an archer, among others, offered a penny to the cross, and as he turned to go away, was hit in the back by the penny flung after him immediately. He took it up and offered it to the cross a second time, but the same thing happened, while many people standing about looked on and wondered. Then the archer confessed before all that on that very day he had

plundered the residence of the archbishop within the very precincts of that church. A penance was imposed upon him, and he returned whatever he had got from the archbishop's residence. He then brought back the same penny in great fear and awe for the third time to the cross. This time finally it remained and did not move.

A similar thing happened on the staff of Raymond,⁴¹ the constable of earl Richard.

A young man of his household stole some iron greaves, and the whole household had declared on oath before the cross in the church of the Holy Trinity their innocence of the crime. Not long afterwards the young man, having returned from England where he had gone, threw himself, worn out and miserable, at the feet of Raymond. No one had suspected him of the crime. He offered satisfaction for the deed he had done and asked for pardon. He proclaimed openly and publicly that he had been so persecuted by the cross that ever since his perjury it had seemed to hang about his neck with a heavy weight, so that from then on he had not been able to sleep or have any rest.

With these and other manifestations and evidences of its power shown during the time of our arrival in the country, the cross has earned everywhere respect and veneration.

76 ¶ *The fanatic at Ferns who foretold the future from the past*

ABOUT THE TIME that the fitzMaurices got the castle at Ferns, a young man of their household, who had been called 'Fantasticus', plundered the church of Saint Maidoch, and being taken by a frenzy immediately went mad. By what spirit he was led, I do not know, but he began to prophesy and to foretell the future from the past.

'I can see,' he said, 'our men slain' (he mentioned several

of them by name) 'and all the castle laid low. It is no longer there.'

And so he continued to prophecy day after day, while everyone was astonished. In fact he did not cease until with the enemy's attack everything, in short, that he had predicted had come to pass as he had said.

77 ¶ *How an archer who crossed the hedge of Brigid went mad and how another lost his leg*

AT KILDARE an archer of the household of earl Richard crossed over the hedge and blew upon Brigid's fire. He jumped back immediately, and went mad. Whomsoever he met, he blew upon his face and said:

'See! That is how I blew on Brigid's fire.'

And so he ran through all the houses of the whole settlement, and wherever he saw a fire he blew upon it using the same words. Eventually he was caught and bound by his companions, but asked to be brought to the nearest water. As soon as he was

brought there, his mouth was so parched that he drank so much that, while still in their hands, he burst in the middle and died.

Another who, upon crossing over to the fire, had put one shin over the hedge, was hauled back and restrained by his companions. Nevertheless the foot that had crossed perished immediately with its shank. Ever afterwards, while he lived, he was lame and feeble as a consequence.



78 ¶ *How seed wheat on being cursed by the bishop of Cork did not grow, and in the following year was miraculously interchanged with rye*

IN CORK a soldier took the land of Saint Finbar without the assent of the person in charge, ploughed it and scattered seed all over it. The bishop of the place came up and, invoking God and the saints of his church, prohibited him from forcibly occupying or sowing that land any more. The soldier nevertheless would not give up. The bishop then coming back to him said with tears:

'I ask almighty God that that seed may never come to harvest for you.'

And it happened that that year, to the astonishment of all the people of the city, not a single ear grew in those fields, nor any blade, nor grain. In the following year, however, other people, with the consent of the person in charge, sowed rye in the same place. When the harvest came they reaped pure wheat without any admixture of rye, either because the rye seed was miraculously changed to the nature of wheat, or rather because through the merits of the holy man the seed that did not produce the former year was preserved for the second year's crop.

79 ¶ *How Philip of Worcester was struck with sickness at Armagh, and how Hugh Tyrrell was scourged through divine intervention*

WHEN PHILIP OF WORCESTER was leading his army during Lent near Armagh, the seat of the blessed Patrick and the special see of the primacy of the whole of Ireland, and was forcibly taking a great tribute from the holy clergy during these days of prayer, he was returning with his spoils and gold, when suddenly within a short distance he was stricken with an illness and scarcely survived.

Hugh Tyrrell carried off to Louth with him a big cooking-pot that belonged to a community of clerics, and for

doing so was cursed with the maledictions of all the clergy. But during that night a fire broke out in his lodgings, and two horses that had drawn the cooking-pot, and many other things, were burned immediately. Most of the settlement was also burned on that occasion. When Hugh Tyrrell saw this and found the cooking-pot in the morning undamaged, he repented and sent it back to Armagh. The bishop of Louth, then present, said of the same Hugh in the hearing of many of his army:

'That man will this year certainly meet with a grievous misfortune. Never was it known that the tears and curses of so many good men were spent in vain.'

And within the year we ourselves saw it happen to him because of a conflict that arose between himself and Hugo de Laci provoked by their own peoples. Almost the whole kingdom was entirely upset and overturned.

80 ¶ *The mill that will not grind on Sundays or anything stolen or plundered*

IN OSSORY there is a mill of Saint Luthernus, abbot, which does not grind on Sundays, nor does it grind anything got by theft or in plunder.

81 ¶ *The mill that women do not enter*

IN FORE in Meath there is a mill which Saint Fechin cut with his own hands out of the side of a rock. Women cannot enter this mill, no more than they can enter the same saint's church. The local people have as much reverence for this mill as they have for any of the churches of the saint.

It happened, however, when Hugo de Laci was leading his army through that place, that an archer dragged a woman into the mill and lustfully violated her there. He was stricken in his member with hell-fire in sudden vengeance.

ance and immediately began to burn throughout his whole body. He died the same night.

82 ¶ *How two horses on eating oats stolen from the same mill immediately died*

ONCE WHEN HIS ARMY was staying for the night in the same place, Hugo de Laci ordered his men to return the corn that they had stolen everywhere from the churches and from the mill. They restored all except a small quantity of oats which two soldiers left secretly in front of their horses. One of the horses went mad and died that night, having broken his head in the stable. And the other, while his rider was scoffing at the others who through a superstitious fear had returned the corn, fell dead on the following morning, suddenly and unexpectedly, beside Hugo de Laci. Most of the army saw it and were astounded.

83 ¶ *That the saints of this country seem to be of a vindictive cast of mind*

THIS SEEMS TO ME a thing to be noticed that just as the men of this country are during this mortal life more prone to anger and revenge than any other race, so in eternal death the saints of this land that have been elevated by their merits are more vindictive than the saints of any other region.