

Giraldus Cambrensis The Topography of Ireland

translated by

Thomas Forester

Revised and Edited with additional notes by

Thomas Wright

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The Author's First Preface

When I reflect that our life is short and fleeting, I am filled with admiration of the noble aims of those men of genius who, before their path for the future was yet plain, resolved on making it their principal object to leave behind them some excellent memorial, by which they might secure enduring fame, and at least live in after-times, when their brief span of existence had ended. Thus we read in the books of celebrated poets:—

“Denique, si quis adhuc præterdit nubila livor,
Occidet; et meriti post me referentur honores.”¹

“Should clouds of envy still around me spread,
Harmless on me their venom will be shed,
And honour's meed be mine, when numbered with the dead.”

And elsewhere:

“Quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,
Ore legar populi, perque omnia sæcula, fama,
Si quid habent veri vatum præsentia, vivam.”²

“Far as the power of Rome the world obeys,
All climes and nations shall peruse my lays;
And, if inspired poets can divine,
Renown, through endless ages, shall be mine.”

This was the first, and main, incentive with the greatest authors to undertake their works. There was another, second indeed in merit as well as in order, namely, the patronage, reward, and encouragement of illustrious princes. For honours are the nurses of the liberal arts:

“Nam si Virgilio puer et tolerabile desit
Hospitium, caderent omnes a crinibus hydrae.”³

“The snakes, had Virgil no Mæcenas found,
Shook from the Furies' head, had dropt upon the ground.”

And again:

¹Statius, *Thebaid*, xi. 818, 19.

²Ovid. *Met.* xv. 877-9.

³Juv. *Sat.* vii. 69; 70.

“Quis locus ingenio, nisi cum se carmine solo
Vexant, et dominis Cyrrhæ Nisæque feruntur
Pectora rostra, duas non admittentia curas.”⁴

“What room for fancy say, unless the mind,
And all its thoughts, to poetry resigned,
Be hurried with resistless force along
By the two kindred powers of wine and song.”

The philosophy, however, which loves a happy mean and modest independence, neither revelling in wealth, nor exposed to poverty, seems to have been condemned by Solomon:—“Give me, O Lord, neither riches nor poverty, but only what things are necessary for subsistence.” For, although mediocrity is not allowable in poets,

“Non dii, non homines, non concessere columnæ;”⁵

“Which gods, nor men, nor *critics* will permit;”

still, if their wits be slender, there is no reason why they should not possess a moderate competence.

When, therefore, at any former period, the last mentioned inducement to write ceased, poetry began to fail. Not, indeed, that poetry was altogether lost, or philosophy extinct; nor did the imperishable records of glorious deeds ever fall into oblivion. Letters were not wanting, but lettered princes. The liberal arts had not disappeared, but the honours which ought to attend them were withheld. There would be no lack of eminent writers at the present day, if there were none of enlightened rulers. Give but a Pyrrhus, and you will have a Homer; a Pompey, and you will have a Tully; a Caius and Augustus, and a Virgil and Horace will follow in course. While, then, in our case, the second motive for writing fails for want of patrons, the first and most powerful of those I have mentioned urges me on. For nothing can better tend to kindle the sparks of mental vigour, and fan the innate fire into a flame, than that, supported by so many and such great authorities, and borne, as it were, upon their shoulders, we may rise to eminence by the aid of their manifold grandeur, if only we have confidence in ourselves. Nothing is so great a hindrance to bold attempts as diffidence. Despair of success is fatal to all efforts for obtaining it; so that many men of praiseworthy talent and learning have for this reason lived in idleness and seclusion, and while they shrunk from proving their abilities by active exertion, their brilliant merits remained hidden. Hence it happens that numbers of men of the greatest learning grow old without knowing their own powers; and turning the force of their genius to no account, for want of vigour of mind, perish like the beasts, and their names are lost in oblivion.

Since, then, “there is little difference between powers not called into action and buried in sloth;” since “fear is the token of a degenerate mind;” “a work well begun is half ended;” and “fortune favours the brave;” I have resolved on writing, preferring rather to incur the ridicule of the envious and malicious, than to seem in the judgment of worthy persons to shrink from my task through fear. Nor am I deterred by the example of Cicero, who says:—“I do not compose a poem on that subject, because I cannot write such verses as I could wish, and those which I can I am unwilling to write.” My own determination is this, and on this subject it is very decided—

“Cum neque chords, sonum reddat, quem vult manus et mens,

⁴Ib. vii. 64-67.

⁵Hor. Ars Poet. 372.

[Poscentique gravem persæpe remittit acutum:]
Nee semper feriet, quodcunque minabitur arcus.”⁶

“For oft the strings the intended sound refuse:
In vain his tuneful hand the master tries;
He asks a flat and hears a sharp arise;
Nor always will the bow, though famed for art,
With speed unerring wing the threatening dart.”

Francis.

If I cannot write as well as I would, I will at least write according to the best of my ability. Devoting myself, therefore, to a task requiring long and close application, shall I be esteemed presumptuous or provident, exposing myself to the shafts of envious malice while I live, in the hope of possibly achieving a glorious reputation when my days are ended?

After long musing on this subject, and after anxiously revolving it in my mind, at last it occurred to me that there was one corner of the earth, Ireland, which, from its position on the furthest borders of the globe, had been neglected by others. Not that it had been left altogether untouched, but no writer had hitherto comprehensively treated of it.

But it may be asked, “Can any good come from Ireland?” “Will its mountains drop sweetness, and its vallies flow with milk and honey?” Let us, then, endeavour to suck honey out of the rock, and draw oil from the flint. Let us follow the example of great orators, who, in an admirable manner, most polished the shafts of their eloquence, when the poverty of their subject required it to be elevated by the superiority of their style.

Et ferat invalidæ robur facundia causæ.

It behoved them, therefore, to lavish the graces of elocution on cases which were in themselves barren of interest, that, where reasoning little availed, language might do its best. For such is the effect, such the power of eloquence, that there is nothing so humble which it cannot exalt nothing so copious which it cannot amplify, nothing so obscure which it cannot clear up, nothing so clear which it cannot illustrate. For, as the noble senator says in his Paradoxes: “There is nothing so incredible that it cannot be made probable by the manner of putting it, nothing so rude and barbarous that a brilliant oratory cannot ornament and polish.” But what can a discourse which has but a slender pith of sense, a barren waste of words, offer to erudite ears, and to men of the highest eloquence? For it is useless, and altogether superfluous, to address the eloquent in barren phrases, or to set before the learned things which every one knows. What sort of sounds would the cackling goose utter among tuneful swans? Are we, then, to publish what is new, or what is already well known? Men recoil with disgust from what is trite and common, while, on the other hand, novelties require the support of authority. For, as Pliny says, “it is a difficult matter to give novelty to old subjects, authority to new; to embellish what is threadbare, shed grace on what is out of fashion, light on obscurities, give confidence in what is doubtful, and nature to all.”

Notwithstanding, it will be my endeavour, in the best manner I can, to rouse the reader’s attention, by setting before him some new things, either not before related or very briefly noticed; exhibiting to him the topography of Ireland in this little work of mine, as in a clear mirror, so that its features may be open to the inspection of all the world.

I propose, therefore, to take, at least, a distinct view of this most remote island, both as regards its situation and character, explaining its peculiarities, so long hidden under the veil of antiquity, and

⁶Hor. Ars Poet. 347–9.

searching out both the qualities and defects of almost all things which nature has produced there, both for the ornament of the better class and the use of the lower orders. Besides this, I propose to unravel the stupendous wonders of nature herself, to trace the descent of the various tribes from their origin, and to describe from my own knowledge the manners and customs of many men. And since the country of which we treat is backward and feeble, it will be no small satisfaction to studious minds to survey, at least in thought, our better part of the world and its condition, having all things made easy to be understood.

This work is divided into three parts. The first treats of the situation of Ireland, and its locality in reference to the Greater Britain; of the quality of the soil, its inequalities, and its various properties; of the fishes and birds which are distinct from ours in place rather than in origin; of wild beasts and reptiles, the nature as well as defects of the several species; and of the absence of all venomous creatures. It will also contain a comparison of the East and the West, showing that the West is deservedly to be preferred. All which is distinctly noted in the titles prefixed to the several chapters.

The *second* part tells of the prodigies and wonderful works of sportive nature, not those only which are found in this country, but others also, of whatever kind and wherever existing, which are of the same description. It also sets forth the famous records of Saints celebrated for their virtues, which were manifested by glorious miracles unknown to the world.

The *third* part treats, in regular order, of the first inhabitants of this country, and the various immigrants of different nations, their arrival and departure; of the habits and customs of the Irish race which inhabits the island to the present day, and of their subjugation by foreign invaders. In short, it gives a history of all that is worthy of notice respecting this nation to our own times.

In the two first parts I have found no direct evidence from the Irish records, nothing from other sources, except the advantages I derived from personal inquiry, which could aid me in my task. It is only in the third part, which treats of the inhabitants of the island and the origin of the various races, that I obtained some information from their own chronicles. But these having been heaped together by the native writers in a loose and disorderly manner, with much that is superfluous or absurd, and being composed in a rude and barbarous style, I have digested them, with much labour, as clearly and compendiously as I could, like one seeking and picking up precious stones among the sands on the seashore, and have inserted whatever was of most value in the present volume. But since, from the wretched state of human imperfections,

“Judicis argutum labor hic formidat acumen;”⁷

“I tremble at the critic’s shrewd review;”

if not the work itself, at least the author’s design has claims to commendation. For the love of study is praiseworthy; nor does it appear immeritorious to have had some regard for reputation amidst the regular and almost insupportable cares of attendance at court. Be it his praise, then, that while the body was subject to servitude, the mind was free. And since it is the part of a wise man to take breath in the refreshment of his own spirit of cheerfulness when at times he is worn by outward vexations, and to diversify wearisome employments by an interchange of such as are agreeable, nothing that is pleasant being considered a task, dignified leisure intervening between the multifarious calls of business is surely worthy of commendation.

⁷Ars Poet. 369.

The Author's Second Preface

Silvester Giraldus Cambrensis to the illustrious King of England, Henry II.

It hath pleased your excellency, most invincible king of England, duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, and count of Anjou, to dispatch me from your court in attendance on John, your beloved son, to Ireland. Coming there, not as a fugitive, but in some sort as a scout whose office it is to explore the country, I soon found occasion to remark many things which are quite different to what is found in other countries, and, being quite strange, are for their novelty much to be wondered at. I, therefore, began to make diligent inquiries respecting the site and nature of the country, the origin of the race, their customs, how often, by whom, and in what manner, the island had been subjugated and conquered; and what new and secret works, contrary to her ordinary rules, nature has stored up in these western and extreme borders of the earth. For beyond these confines neither land exists, nor is there any habitable spot either for men or animals; but throughout the entire horizon, in boundless space, Ocean only sweeps around, and rolls its waves in unknown and unfathomable channels.

For as the countries of the East are remarkable and preeminent for some prodigies peculiar to themselves and originating there, so also the Western parts are dignified by the miracles of nature performed within their limits. For sometimes, like one wearied with serious affairs and realities, she withdraws and retires for a little space, and, as it were, sportively employs herself with extraordinary freaks in secret parts reverently and mysteriously veiled. Having, therefore, selected and made a collection of the most curious facts, I have deemed it a not unprofitable labour to bring those which appeared most worthy of notice into one point of view, and to submit them to your highness's careful consideration, of which scarcely any part of history has escaped the observation.

I might, indeed, have presented for your highness's acceptance, as others have done, some little offerings of native gold, or falcons or hawks, with which the island abounds. But I thought it of little importance to offer to a mighty prince things which are easily procured, and are perishable in their nature, but rather preferred to send to your highness what cannot be lost, and thus, through you, instruct posterity by means which no lapse of time can destroy.

I esteemed it also a worthy undertaking to give a short account in writing of the virtues and victorious honour of yourself and your illustrious son, that the great glory they have conferred on our age may not be merely transitory, but, by the aid of letters, be firmly planted in the memory of posterity. Nor do I hesitate to believe that it may be well entrusted to your watchful care, that through the records of such noble achievements, the minds of many in future times may be roused to increased vigour by the admirable examples of valorous action; and that the perusal of these pages may have the same effect as the statues and portraits of their ancestors had on men of old, rousing a laudable spirit of emulation, not only in ardent minds, but in those which are feeble and sluggish; fanning the sparks of impetuous valour in the one, and lighting up the fire of innate courage in the other.

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Distinction I.

Chapter I: Of the situation of Ireland.

Ireland, the largest of islands after Britain, lies in the Western ocean, a short day's sail beyond Wales, in Britain; but between Ulster and Galway, in Scotland, the sea contracts into a narrower strait of about half the breadth. There are, moreover, promontories on the coasts of both islands, which may be seen and made out from the opposite side more or less distinctly, but in all cases clearly enough in favourable weather. Ireland is the most remote of the western islands, having Spain parallel to it on the south, at the distance of three ordinary days' sail, Great Britain on the east, and the ocean alone on the west. On the north lies Iceland, the largest of the northern islands, at a distance of about three days' sailing.⁸

Chapter II: Of the Spanish sea, which embraces Britain and Ireland with its two arms.

The Spanish sea, named also the Iberian sea, either from the river Iberus, or because Spain presents the form of a hemisphere, receiving the waters of the ocean from the west, between Ireland and Spain, is divided into two arms. One of these flows between Spain and Britain, and then, verging to the north, divides France from Britain. But although the mouth of this channel on both sides touches lands from which it might be named, it is most commonly called the French sea, taking its name from France only. The other branch of the Iberian sea, taking its course northward, flows between Ireland and Britain, and extends in length as much as it expands in breadth towards the north, until it mingles its waters with the Northern ocean at the Orkney islands. Thus separated from the rest of the known world, and in some sort to be distinguished as another world, not only by its situation, but by the objects out of the ordinary course of nature contained in it, Ireland seems to be nature's especial repository, where she stores up her most remarkable and precious treasures. Collaterally, Ireland thus occupies such a position in regard to the adjacent coast of Britain, that from whatever British port any one sails westward, he will have before him some part of it. Britain, however, is twice as large as Ireland; for, the greatest length of both islands running north and south, Britain is eight hundred miles long, and about two hundred miles broad, while Ireland extends from the Brandane mountains⁹ to the island of Columba, called Thorach,¹⁰ the length of eight good Irish days' journey, which is forty miles to the day; and from Dublin to St. Patrick's hills and the sea of Connaught it is four such days' journey in breadth. The surface of Ireland may be, therefore,

⁸As the distance between the two islands cannot be less than eight degrees of latitude, the estimate given by Giraldus of the length of time occupied in the voyage by a sailing ship of those days, though possible, must be taken with some reserve. In some of the Icelandic sagas it is computed at about eight days.

⁹A Brendanicis montibus, perhaps Mount Brandon, in Kerry, which would not be a measure of the extreme length from S.W. to N.E.

¹⁰We take this to be Rathlin island, off the coast of Antrim, which was in the early ages the chief station for the passage from Ireland to Scotland, and as such the rendezvous for a number of merchants and other travellers. It may be concluded from its Scandinavian name, Thorach, that it was also the point of departure for Norway and Iceland, although Malin Head, on the N.W. point of Donegal, is the point of the Irish coast nearest to Iceland; and it has been supposed that the station mentioned in the sagas for the intercourse between the two islands must be sought for in that neighbourhood.

about as large as Wales and Scotland, the better part of the island of Britain, which was in ancient times annexed by its kings to their own dominions, and called by the Britons Loegria, from Loctrine, the eldest son of Brute, to whom it was assigned.

Chapter III: Of the various opinions of Solinus, Orosius, Isidore, and Bede; some true, some erroneous.

Solinus describes Ireland with sufficient accuracy as one hundred and twenty miles in breadth; but he says nothing of its length. Hence I conclude that the island was unknown to him, especially as he asserts that it was of enormous magnitude. Orosius, better informed, represents Ireland as the nearest island to Britain, with a much smaller surface, and a climate the temperature of which was more favourable. Isidore agrees with Orosius, saying that Ireland is the island lying nearest to Britain, inferior in size, but, from its situation, of greater fertility. Bede, also, states that Ireland is much superior to Britain both in the salubrity and serenity of the atmosphere. He is right as to its salubrity; but, with due respect to his opinion, he is in error with regard to its serenity, as will appear in the sequel of this book. For, as France excels Britain, so by far does Britain surpass Ireland, in the serenity and pureness of its air. For the further you go towards the East, the brighter and clearer is the face of the sky, the more penetrating and inclement is the atmosphere; but when you turn your steps nearer and nearer to the extremity of the West, you find that, the air being more cloudy and thick, as well as milder and more wholesome, it renders the land more fruitful. Ireland, indeed, lying at equal distances between the cold of Iceland and the heat of Spain, with its temperature moderated from these opposite quarters, the country is happily favoured both in having a temperate climate and a wholesome air. In shape Ireland is much rounder than Britain, but rather narrow in the middle, and spreading in breadth towards the heads, while Britain is remarkable for being more oblong and narrow; and, as the north of Ireland is, as it were, broken off and much shortened, compared with Britain, so its southern extremity is so far from being shorter, that, according to Bede's statement, it extends much beyond the parallel of Britain.

Chapter IV: Of the surface of Ireland, and its inequalities; and of the fertility of the soil.

Ireland is a country of uneven surface, and mountainous; the soil is friable and moist, well wooded, and marshy; it is truly a desert land, without roads, but well watered. Here you may see standing waters on the tops of the mountains, for pools and lakes are found on the summits of lofty and steep hills. There are, however, in some places very beautiful plains, though of limited extent in comparison with the woods. On almost all sides, and towards the sea-coast, the land is very low, but in the interior it rises into hills of various elevations and mountains of vast height; not only the surrounding country, but also the central districts, being rather sandy than rocky.

The tillage land is exuberantly rich, the fields yielding large crops of corn; and herds of cattle are fed on the mountains. The woods abound with wild animals; but this island is more productive in pasture than in corn, in grass than in grain. The crops give great promise when in the blade, still more in the straw, but less in the ear; for the grains of wheat are shrivelled and small, and can hardly be separated from the chaff by dint of winnowing. The fields are luxuriantly covered, and the barns loaded with the produce. The granaries only show scanty returns.

Chapter V: On the prevalence of winds and rain; and their causes.

The crops which the spring brings forth, and the summer nourishes and advances, are harvested with difficulty, on account of the autumnal rains. For this country is exposed more than others to storms of wind and deluges of rain. A wind blowing transversely from the north west, and more frequent and violent than any other winds, prevails here; the blast either bending or uprooting all the trees standing on high ground in the western districts, which are exposed to its sweep. This arises from the land, surrounded on

all sides by a vast sea and open to the winds, not having in those parts any solid shelter and protection, either distant or near. Add to this, that the waters attracted in clouds, and collected together by the high temperature of that region, and yet neither exhaled by fiery atmospheric heat, nor congealed by the coldness of the air and converted into snow or hail, at last burst in copious showers of rain. In short, this country, like other mountainous regions, generates and nourishes most abundant rains. For the heat evaporating from the high lands by excessive wet, the moisture which they attract is easily converted into its native element. And it is usually distinguished by various names, according to its various elevations. While yet hanging about the hills, it is called mist; when it rises higher, and, floating in the atmosphere, is quite disengaged from the earth, it becomes clouds; again descending in drops or particles, it is called snow or rain, according as it is solid or liquid. Thus, Ireland, Wales, and Scotland are subject to much rain.

The island is rich in pastures and meadows, honey and milk, and also in wine, although not in vineyards. Bede, indeed, among his other commendations of Ireland, says, "that it does not lack vineyards;" while Solinus and Isidore affirm, "that there are no bees." But, with all respect for them, they might have written just the contrary, that vineyards do not exist in the island, but that bees are found there. Vines it never possessed, nor any cultivators of thorn. Still, foreign commerce supplies it with wine in such plenty that the want of the growth of vines, and their natural production, is scarcely felt. Poitou, out of its superabundance, exports vast quantities of wine to Ireland, which willingly gives in return its ox-hides and the skins of cattle and wild beasts. Like other countries, it has bees producing honey, and I think it would flow from their cells more abundantly, if the increase of the swarms were not checked by the bitter and poisonous yews¹¹ with which the woods of the island abound; or rather, if the violent winds, and the moisture of the climate, in Ireland, did not disperse the swarms of so minute an animal, or cause them to perish.

It may be alleged, indeed, in favour of contrary opinions, that in Bede's time there were possibly some few vineyards in Ireland, and that St. Dominic of Ossory, as some say, introduced bees there long after the times of Solinus. But I can scarcely excuse those who assert that the soil is so noxious to bees, that if any one scatters dust or gravel brought from it among the beehives in any other country, the swarms desert their cells. Bede also affirms, that this island is famous for the hunting of stags and wild goats. Whereas it is a fact, that it never possessed any wild goats, and is still without them. Nor can it be wondered that these writers occasionally deviated from the truth, when they knew nothing but what they learnt at second-hand and from a distance, in which they placed implicit faith. Any statement rests on a certain foundation of truth, when the person who makes it has been also an eyewitness of what he affirms. Still, these writers are entitled to their due share of praise for their careful and generally correct investigation of subjects placed by distance so far beyond their observation. And, since nothing human is altogether perfect, and universal knowledge and freedom from error is the attribute of divinity, and not of mortals, any mistakes which may have crept into their statements must be considered pardonable, as arising both from human imperfections, and the remoteness of the country of which they treat. This indulgence we ask for ourselves, while we grant it to others, thinking nothing that concerns the human race foreign to our object.¹²

Chapter VI: Of the nine principal rivers, and several others which have burst forth of late.

The island is intersected and watered by nine noble rivers, which have been celebrated from the earliest ages, even from the time of Bartholanus, who first settled in it after the flood. Their names are

¹¹Giraldus adopts what Virgil says of Corsica:—

"Fugiunt examina taxos."—*Ecl.* ix. 30.

¹²"Hanc etiam veniam petimusque damusque vicissim,
Nihil unquam humani a nobis alienum esse putantes."

these: the Avenliffius, at Dublin;¹³ the Banna runs through Ulster;¹⁴ the Moadus, through Connaught;¹⁵ the Slichenis and Samarius, through Kenelcunnill;¹⁶ the Modarnus and Phinnus, through Keneleonia;¹⁷ and the Saverennus and Luvius, through Cork.¹⁸ There are also several other rivers flowing through Ireland, but they are, so to speak, new, and, compared with the others, of recent origin, though not inferior to them, except in respect of their age. Some of these take their rise from springs which have their sources in the bowels of the earth; others bursting suddenly from lakes in well-known parts, divide the island into separate districts during their long course.

I think it not superfluous to enumerate some of these. Three noble rivers, then, rise at the foot of the Blandine mountain:¹⁹ they are called The Three Sisters, because they received their names from three sisters. These are the Beria, which runs through Leighlin;²⁰ the Eyrus, which runs through Ossory;²¹ and the Suyrus, which, after running through Archfinia and Tribarecia, falls into the sea at Waterford.²² The Slana runs through Wexford;²³ the Boandus, through Meath,²⁴ the Avonmore,²⁵ through Lignioria; and the Sinnenus, through Limerick.²⁶

Of all the rivers in Ireland, new or old, the Sinnenus deservedly claims the first rank, both for its full and majestic stream, which flows through vast tracts of country, and for the abundance of fish contained in

¹³The Liffey, which rises in the Wicklow mountains, and, as here intimated, flows into the bay of Dublin.

¹⁴The Bann, a river of the north of Ireland, which passes through Lough Neagh, and enters the sea near Coleraine.

¹⁵The Moy, a well-known river of Connaught, which rises in Sligo, and enters the bay of Killala.

¹⁶The Sligrach and Samar, the latter of which runs through Tyrconnell.

¹⁷The Morne and Finn, in Tyrone.

¹⁸The Bandon and Lee, in the county of Cork.

¹⁹Sliabh Bladhwa, or Slieve Bloom, an extensive mountain range, stretching across the King's and Queen's counties. The Three Sisters were the Barrow, Nore, and Suir. See Spenser, F. Q. lib. iv. cant. xi. 42,43.

“The first the gentle Shure, that making way
By sweete Clonmell, adornes rich Waterford;
The next the stubborne Newre, whose waters gray
By faire Kilkenny and Rosseponte boord;
The third the goodly Barow, which doth hoord
Great heapes of salmons in his deepe bosome;
All which long sundred, doe at last accord
To joyne in one ere to the sea they come;
So, flowing all from one, all one at last become.”

²⁰The Barrow, which rises in the north of Queen's County, and empties itself into the bay of Waterford.

²¹The Nore is a tributary of the Barrow.

²²The Suir rises in Tipperary, and flows into Waterford harbour.

²³The river of Slaney runs through the county of Wicklow, and flows into Wexford harbour.

²⁴The Boyne, which rises in Queen's County, flows north-east through Trion and Cavan, and enters the sea below Drogheda.

²⁵Lignioria is probably a misreading of the manuscript by the copyist for Lismoria. Avonmore is the Irish name for the Blackwater, which rises among the mountains on the borders of Cork and Kerry, passes by Lismore, and enters the sea at Youghal.

²⁶The Shannon, called in Irish, *Sinain*. It is not easy to account for the singular error into which Giraldus has fallen with regard to the course of this celebrated river. He seems to have imagined that it was a branch of the river Shannon which discharges itself into the sea at Ballyshannon, in the bay of Donegal. The Shannon, as is well known, takes its rise in Lough Allen, in the county of Leitrim, and takes first a southern and then a south-western course, till it discharges itself into the Atlantic, which was sometimes called St. Brandan's sea, because it was the supposed scene of his marvellous voyages.

its waters. It has its source in a lake which divides Connaught from Munster, and forms two branches which take opposite courses; one branch flowing eastward, and washing the city of Killaloe in its course, after embracing Limerick, and separating for one hundred miles and more the two parts of Munster, falls into the sea of Brandon. The other branch, of equal importance, divides Meath and the further districts of Ulster from Connaught, and after various windings falls into the Northern Ocean.²⁷ Thus, flowing from sea to sea, it separates the fourth and western part of the island from the three others. For this country was formerly divided into five equal provinces; namely, the two Munsters, north and south, Leinster, Ulster, and Connaught. Merlin's prophecy predicted that they would be reduced to one; but of that I shall speak more fully in the proper place. It may, however, be as well to remark, that the two Munsters embraced the southern parts of Ireland; Ulster, the north; Leinster, the east; and Connaught, the west.

Chapter VII: Of the lakes, and the islands therein; of the fishes in the sea, rivers, and lakes; and of those which are not found there; and of some new species of fish not found elsewhere.

This island is also especially remarkable for a great number of beautiful lakes, abounding in fish, and surpassing in size those of any other countries I have visited. These lakes encompass some slightly elevated spots, most delightfully situated, which, for the sake of security, and because they are inaccessible except by boats, the lords of the soil appropriate as their places of refuge and seats of residence, where they raise their harvest.

Sea-fishes are found in considerable abundance on all the coasts. The rivers and lakes, also, are plentifully stored with the sorts of fish peculiar to those waters, and especially three species: salmon and trout, muddy eels, and oily shad.²⁸ The Sinnenus (Shannon) abounds in lampreys,²⁹ a dangerous delicacy indulged in by the wealthy.

This country, however, does not produce some fine fishes found in other countries, and some excellent fresh-water fishes, such as the pike, the perch, the roach, the barbel, the gardon,³⁰ and the gudgeon. Minnows, also, bullheads, and verones,³¹ are not found there, also, no loches, or they are very rare. Thus, every country is deficient in some particular products. In Great Britain there are no tortoises or scorpions. Cisalpine Gaul produces no leopards or lions; Italy has no perch; Palestine no pikes; and both are without salmon. So also, Italy, Apulia, Calabria, and Sicily, have no salmon; and no part of Spain produces pikes, perch, or pheasants. Crete has no owls; the Mediterranean sea, no herrings; and the kingdom of Hungary, no eels.

On the other hand, the lakes of this country contain three species of fish which are found nowhere else. One is a sort of trout, called also *salares*, which are longer and rounder than trout, and which are white, close-grained, and good flavoured.³² The tymal, commonly called the umber,³³ resembles the former kind of fishes, except that it is distinguished by a larger head. There are others which very much resemble the sea herring both in shape and quality, and in colour and taste. A third sort exactly resembles

²⁷The river which empties itself into the sea, at Ballyshannon, is merely the outlet of the waters of lake Earne.

²⁸*Alosisgua præpinguibus*. The shad, the *clupea alosa* of modern naturalists, called in France an *alose*. It is not a fresh-water fish, but ascends the larger rivers from the sea, and is most delicate when caught in the rivers.

²⁹The unwholesome character of the lamprey is proverbial. Henry of Huntingdon informs us, that king Henry II.'s death was caused by indulgence in this favourite dish. See his History, in *Bohn's Antiq. Lib. p. 259*.

³⁰One of the roach family, the *leuciscus idus*.

³¹One of the smaller members of the genus *leuciscus*, in modern French *véron*, is supposed to answer to our minnow; but Giraldus clearly distinguishes it from the *minuta*, the old French *menuise*.

³²*Salares*. This word is only found in this passage of Giraldus, and it is not quite clear to what fish it refers.

³³The name *umber* is now given to the *mallus vulgaris*, better known as the graylin.

the trout, except that it has no spots. The first sort is called *Glassans*, the second, *Cates*, the third, *Brits*.³⁴ These three species of fishes make their appearance in the summer only, and are never seen in the winter. In Meath, near Fovera,³⁵ are three lakes, not far from each other, each of which has its own distinct and peculiar species of fish, and which are frequented by no other, although they are connected by streams affording communications between them; and if a fish of one kind is carried down into the water frequented by another, it either perishes or finds its way back to its first abode.

Chapter VIII: Of birds, and those that are wanting, with their natures and allegorical significations, of the hawk, the falcon, and the sparrow-hawk, and their natures.

Ireland has some aquatic birds, which build their nests in high crags, of the same species as are found in other countries; but some other species have never been found there from the most ancient times.

This country produces in greater numbers than any other, hawks, falcons, and sparrow-hawks,³⁶ a class of birds which nature has endowed with courageous instincts and armed with curved and powerful beaks and sharp talons, to fit them as birds of prey. It is, however, a remarkable fact in the history of this tribe of birds, that their nests are not more numerous than they were many centuries ago; and, although they have broods every year, their numbers do not increase. When one pair perishes by any accident, another takes its place. The nests diminish in number from a variety of circumstances, but nothing occasions them to increase. According to Cassiodorus, birds of this class, which live by prey, allow their young no rest in their infancy, that they may not acquire indolent habits; they beat the tender brood with their wings, and compel them to fly as soon as they are fledged, that they may rear them to habits on which the parents may rely. And when, in process of time, they are strong on the wing, with the help of their natural instinct they are taught to seek their prey, and then are driven by their cruel parents from their native seats, to which they are not allowed to return.

Since, then, it is a much easier task to teach the ignorant than to reclaim the froward, prudent parents will breed up and educate their sons after the example set them by these birds. And, as idleness engenders instability of character, they will rouse and sharpen their will by constant exercise, lest imbued with the vices attendant on listless sloth in their riper years, they may find it difficult to unlearn them.

Moreover, the Lord chastens the sons whom he loves; and, in order to set their minds more earnestly on eternal felicity, secures their happiness by present calamities. St. Augustine says, "Nothing is more unhappy than the happiness of sinners, which nourishes in them a fatal sense of impunity, and a foe within confirms their propensity to evil." Hence, Gregory remarks, that "oxen intended for slaughter have the free run of the pastures, while those that are reserved for labour are put under the yoke."

So also sons of ripe age are sometimes sent forth from the homes of their parents, for kind and prudent ends; that, left to themselves, they may learn caution instead of carelessness, diligence instead of idleness, activity instead of sloth, courage instead of cowardice. For he seldom fails who is not wanting to himself; while those who depend upon the assistance of others, appear very often to fall short of their aims. For this cause the fathers and pastors of the church gradually admit their sons as they become capable of receiving higher instruction, to seek their meat boldly in the Lord's pastures; for "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." They teach them also to despise and eschew the troublesome paths of this life, and its sinful gulf, and to direct all their efforts towards that which is their true and permanent country; thus compelling them by a most merciful severity to be mortified to the world, and become exiles from it.

³⁴*Glassanos—catos—britios*. These appear to have been old local names for the fishes alluded to, and are not found in any other writers.

³⁵Foure, a small town in Westmeath, situated on Lough Lein.

³⁶*Nisos*. This is the English interpretation of the Latin *nisus* given in the early Anglo-Latin vocabularies.

Moreover, as in all kinds of animals the males are naturally stronger than the females, so also in these birds, and all others which live by prey and have to pursue their game, and therefore particularly need for their subsistence strength and force, the female sex is bolder and stronger than in other kinds, though the males lose something of their superior privileges. Perhaps this may signify that the female sex is more resolute in all evil than the male. For, as Tully says, “Men will sometimes, to gain a single, object, perpetrate one crime; but women will stick at nothing to satisfy their desires in a single instance.” So it is said, in Ecclesiasticus, “The wrath of a man is shorter than the wrath of a woman.” Nor are they ever wanting in efforts to establish their power over the men in a variety of ways; ...;³⁷ and God makes use of the weak things of the world to confound the strong. Thus, nature has so deprived the males of these birds of the privilege of their sex, that as they grow old they almost always degenerate; while in the other sex years only add to their vigour and swiftness.

We find it remarkable in sparrow-hawks, that some are distinguished by white spots, some by red, and some by parti-coloured. Hence, it has been conjectured that they contracted this variety from the trees in which they were bred. But as this difference is perceived in broods from the same trees, and even from the same nests, it seems to be the better opinion that this variety in their plumage is derived from the parent birds. It is also reported of the sparrowhawk, that when the frost of winter is very severe, it seizes a bat towards evening, and nestling to it the whole of the night for the sake of the warmth, lets it go free in the morning uninjured, in return for its service. Hawks and sparrow-hawks, differing in size rather than instinct, pounce on their prey with great velocity, and either fail in their first attack, or carry it off.

There are several kinds of falcons, both large and small, high bred, and kestrels; merlins (*meruli*) also, small and summer birds, though sluggish at first when fat, afterwards swoop suddenly on their prey, and soaring on high in wide circles, pounce from above on the quarry, and having struck it and crushed it with the force of their breasts, pierce it and tear it to pieces with their extended claws. Their flight is so rapid and unwearied that, pursuing the bird which endeavours to escape, and flits from side to side, now high, now low, while all the spectators are filled with delight; no length of flight in the vast aerial amphitheatre, no artifice of the fugitive, can save it from its relentless foe. Hawks and sparrow-hawks are of a more delicate nature, requiring choicer food and more careful keepers. Falcons are both more pertinacious in their attacks, and more ready to return to their keeper when he raises his hand, or even at his call. May we not compare to the first class of birds, those who, indulging in sumptuous banquets, equipages, and clothing, and the various other allurements of the flesh, are so won by their charms, that they study only earthly things, and give themselves up to them; and as they do not soar on high to gain the prize by resolute and persevering efforts, their conversation is on earth, and not in heaven.

Those, again, may be compared to the other class of birds, who, rejecting altogether a delicate diet and all the other delights of the flesh, choose rather, by Divine inspiration, to suffer hardships and privations. And, since all virtue soars high, struggling upwards with all their efforts, their aim and object is that recompense and reward for their labours above, which the violent take by force.

Falcons derive their name from a sickle (*falce*), because they whirl their flight in a circle; gerfalcons are so called from their gyrations (*gyrofaciendo*); sparrow-hawks (*nisi*), from their swoop (*nisu*); and hawks (*accipitres*) from their greed of prey (*accipiendo*).³⁸

Chapter IX: Of the eagle, and its nature.

Eagles are as numerous here as kites are in other countries. These birds eye with fixed gaze the full effulgence of the solar rays; and it is reported that they teach their young to do the same, though unwilling.

³⁷The sequel of this sentence is here printed in the original Latin: “Et effœminatos a fœminis viros debitâ virilitate fœminæ deprædantur.”

³⁸It may be right to remark that most of these derivations are more fanciful than correct.

Hence, eagles (*aquilæ*) are so called from their piercing eyes (*acumine*). Thus, contemplative men strive to fix the whole powers of their mind without distractions on the very essence of the Divine majesty, and on the true sun of righteousness, and, putting their hands to the plough of the heavenly paradise, do not look backward. The fathers of the church also, in order to accustom their sons in tender age to that which is good, teach them to turn the eyes of the soul to the intuition and the desire of the light divine.

Eagles also live for so many ages, that, enjoying renewed youth, they seem to contend with eternity itself. So also the saints, renewed with the innocence of childhood, having put off the old man, and put on the new man, obtain the blessed fruit of everlasting life. Again, eagles often soar so high in their flight, that their wings are scorched with the fiery rays of the sun. So those who in the Holy Scriptures strive to unravel the deep and hidden secrets of the heavenly mysteries, beyond what is allowed, and those limits which it is not permitted us to pass, returning to themselves halt below as if the wings of the presumptuous imagination on which they were borne were scorched in their flight. But since a subject of great importance here incidentally occurs for I have both read and observed myself that numbers in many parts of the world have erred in this matter—I think I shall be pardoned for dwelling upon it a little longer, and with more attention.

Rocks and stones, and masses of earth, which of themselves are incapable of motion, being only ponderous bodies which tend to the centre,³⁹ are vastly excelled by trees and herbs, which have, as it plainly appears, a certain living vegetation and vegetable life, by which they sensibly, though without sense, move and grow, and increase and multiply. Again, trees and herbs are far surpassed by brute animals, which have the power of moving themselves from place to place, and by some instinct know their own stalls, and have some memory of the past. On this account, several of them are even esteemed higher than rational creatures; “for where reason abounds, there imagination yields.” All these, however, are far surpassed by the microcosm man, who, richly gifted with intellect and reason, lifting his face to heaven, and having the use of speech, worships his Creator, and is the most perfect of all terrestrial creature. But, as far as man excels all others, so are angelical beings pre-eminent, being as far above man in their subtle essence, and in their dwelling on high, in familiar intercourse with the Creator, in whose presence they always stand, as they are his superiors in intellect. Finally, the Almighty and All-creating God, as the potter is superior to the clay he moulds, and the artificer to the material on which he works, incomparably transcends all creatures with a pre-excellence surpassing all powers of language or thought. For He formed all things according to his will; He spake, and they were made; He commanded, and they were created. From Him is all wisdom, and out of His fullness we all receive. From Him it is that we exist, and are intelligent beings, as from the source from which all intellect flows, as the stream from its fountain. Since then human nature is so much inferior and less worthy than the angelical, tell us, O man, with what face, with what temerity thou presumest to scrutinize and trace out those mysteries, to the investigation of which the very angels esteem themselves wholly incompetent? By what arrogance dost thou aspire to embrace with the powers of thy intellect things which no intelligence can grasp or comprehend? As He is incomprehensible before whose majesty dominations adore and powers tremble,⁴⁰ so His judgments are incomprehensible, and His ways past finding out. My thoughts are not as your thoughts, nor my ways as your ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are my ways above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts. Why is your heart so lifted up, and your eyes raised on high, that you are conversant with wonders and with miracles which are above you? Does your pride so separate you from the love of God, that while you are wise in that which is above knowledge, and aspire to still

³⁹*Ad centrum tendunt.* The tendency of heavy bodies to a centre was an article of the higher science doctrines of the age of Giraldus, and is stated still more fully by his contemporary, Alexander Neckam. in his treatise *De Naturis Rerum*. It was a foreshadowing of the Newtonian doctrine.

⁴⁰*Dominationes, potestates.* Terms in the mediæval theology indicating different orders of the angels in heaven. Both the dominations and the potestates and powers formed the second rank of the angelic hierarchy.

higher attainments, you turn aside from the path of the humble? Notwithstanding, it becomes us best not to know more than we ought to know, but to be wise with soberness.

Beware then, lest in thus employing your intelligence you become as though you had no understanding. Beware, lest abusing the privileges of reason and intellect, through which, by the merciful goodness of the Creator, you excel all beings under the sun, you justly forfeit them. Fix not your seat in the North, and seek in vain to be equal with the Most Highest. Beware, lest, lifting up your born, you speak evil against the Lord. Beware, lest exalting yourself, you fall from on high. Beware, I say, lest, being so immeasurably exalted, your fall be equally great. Be wise, therefore, ye foolish among the people, and, ye unwise, have some understanding. He that planted the ear, shall He not bear? and He that made the eye, shall He not see? He that proveth man, shall He not chastise? and He that teacheth man wisdom? The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are but vain. Hear, rather, how humbly the man whom God himself testifies to have found after his own heart: I mean David the king and prophet, sings in the Psalms: "Lord, I am not high-minded, nor are my eyes lifted up; nor have I exercised myself in great matters, nor in wonders that are above me." Listen to what Solomon, the wisest of the kings of the earth, said to his son: My son, search not into things that are above thee, nor inquire into those that are mightier than thee; but meditate always on what the Lord hath commanded thee, and in many of his works be not too curious. Also, to one who eateth too much honey, it is bitter and evil; and elsewhere, if thou findest honey, eat that which shall satisfy thee, lest if thou eat too much thou vomit it up. Again, to quote, in part, the words of Job: How can man be more just than God, or purer than his Maker? Behold, his servants are not to be trusted, and his angels he charged with folly. How much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, while they lift their face to heaven, they shall perish and be consumed as it were by the moth. And again, in the same: Man shall not be justified when compared with God.

Tell me then, thou frail potsherd, with what face, against reason and against faith, thou presumest to give an account of all things above and below, and especially of those which are above all reason? For what can be more contrary to reason, than by the use of reason to strive to master that which transcends reason? And what is more contrary to faith than to refuse to believe whatever reason cannot grasp? "He who is swift to believe is light-minded;" as much as to say, that faith is to be controlled by reason. But understand, that Solomon did not speak of faith in God, but of mutual confidence amongst ourselves. Gregory distinctly denies the merit of faith in God which is founded on the experience of human reason. The Apostles are commended for having followed their Master in obedience to his simple summons. It was said in praise of one: "At the hearing of the ear he obeyed me." On the other hand, those disciples are rebuked who were slow to believe. Finally, Mary was commended for having preferred faith to reason, and Zacharias was punished because he tried faith by the test of reason. And again, Abraham was commended because against hope he believed in hope.

To return, however, to natural objects. What master ever intrusted to his servant all the secrets of his heart? or, did even Euryalus to Nisus, Tydeus to Polynices, Orestes to Pylades, without reserving in the inmost recesses of his soul many which he would never unfold or make known to anyone? How much more must He who is most infinite, reserve to himself things that are infinite? Will He who is the Maker and Ruler of the universe entirely reveal Himself to the lowest of his servants, who are but dust, so that all that relates or can relate to the lofty, the inscrutable, the ineffable nature of the Divinity, should be open to the ken of a being so frail, so corruptible, so vile in his nature, as man? Who ever saw a picture rival the art of the painter? Shall the vessel say to the potter, Why did you mould me in a shape which is narrow at the mouth and swells out below? Thus, it is said in the Book of Wisdom, Who hath measured the sand of the sea, the drops of rain, and the days of eternity? Who hath meted the height of the heavens, the breadth of the earth, and the depth of the abyss? Who hath searched out the wisdom of God, which was before all things? And again, to whom is the root of wisdom revealed, and who hath known all her secrets? To whom is the discipline of wisdom revealed and made manifest, and who hath understood the numbers of her goings out? There is one Most High and Omnipotent Creator. God, who sits and rules on his throne, is a mighty king, and greatly to be feared. He created wisdom by the Holy Spirit, and saw it, and counted

and meted it out, and poured it forth over all his works, and in all flesh bestowed it on those who love him. Thus, on his people He has shed wisdom, not in entirety, but in portions, and as it were in rivulets, that in all their wants they may recur to him as the fountain-head, the well of living waters, inexhaustible and never-failing. Since then, the wisdom of the Lord is a deep abyss, the heaven of heavens is His, and what remains He will have destroyed by fire, we ought to remember with thanks that we are admitted to the knowledge of things in part only, and not to the fullness of intelligence and comprehension. Hence, when some one irreverently inquired, "What God did before the world was created?" Augustine replied, "He prepared hell for those who ask foolish questions." It is in vain, therefore, to torment ourselves with such inquiries, and I shall finally conclude with the positive axiom, that a well-disposed mind does not search into such things. Into a malevolent mind wisdom will not enter. To use the words of the prophet: "How great are thy works, O Lord: thy thoughts are very deep; an unwise man doth not know this, and a fool doth not understand it."

Chapter X: Of the crane, and its nature.

Cranes assemble in such numbers, that a hundred, or about that number, are often seen in one flock. By natural instinct they keep watch in turns at night for their common safety, perched on one foot, and holding a stone in the other featherless claw, that if they should fall asleep, the fall of the stone may rouse them to renew their watch.

These birds are emblems of the bishops of the church, whose office it is to keep watch over their flock, not knowing at what hour the thief will come. And any sacred duty should employ the mind, and be like the stone, ready to drop. It should utterly shake off all sloth, and allow nothing to be thought of but itself. And if by any chance it should sometimes fail, the mind, being inured to its habitual occupation, resumes it like one awakened out of sleep.

This bird also gives notice of danger by its cries. In like manner the pastors of the church drive the wolves from the fold by sounding the alarm from the holy oracles, and with unwearied diligence lift up their voice like a trumpet. The liver of this bird is also of such a fiery heat, that, when by any chance it swallows iron, its stomach digests it. So bowels inflamed with the fire of charity subdue and soften iron hearts which were before indurate, and reduce them to soft concord in brotherly love.

Wild peacocks here abound in the woods,⁴¹ but wild hens, which common people call *grutes*, (*grutas*) are here small and scarce, being both in shape and colour very like partridges. There are immense flights of snipes,⁴² also called *kardioli*, both the larger species of the woods, and the smaller of the marshes; but the latter are the more abundant. Quails are found in considerable numbers; *ratulæ*,⁴³ also, with their hoarse cries, are innumerable; and clouds of larks singing praise to God.

Chapter XI.: Of barnacles, which grow from fir timber, and their nature.

There are likewise here many birds called barnacles, which nature produces in a wonderful manner, out of her ordinary course. They resemble the marsh-geese, but are smaller. Being at first gummy excrescences from pine-beams floating on the waters, and then enclosed in shells to secure their free

⁴¹The bird here mentioned is probably the capercaillie, or cock of the wood, a noble bird of the size of a turkey, called in Norway "ticer," which is met with in the pine forests of that country, but seldom in any great numbers.

⁴²*Acetæ*. This Latin word is explained in the Anglo-Saxon glossaries by *snite*, the old form of *snipe*, or *rude-cocc*, perhaps an error for *wude cocc*, the woodcock, so that the latter are here probably meant by "the larger species of the woods," and "the smaller of the marshes" is no doubt the ordinary snipe.

⁴³It has been suggested that we ought to read *ranulæ* for *ratulæ* in the text of Giraldus; but it is evident that he intended to speak of a bird, though of what kind is uncertain.

growth, they hang by their beaks, like seaweeds attached to the timber. Being in process of time well covered with feathers, they either fall into the water or take their flight in the free air, their nourishment and growth being supplied, while they are bred in this very unaccountable and curious manner, from the juices of the wood in the sea-water. I have often seen with my own eyes more than a thousand minute embryos of birds of this species on the seashore, hanging from one piece of timber, covered with shells, and already formed. No eggs are laid by these birds after copulation, as is the case with birds in general; the hen never sits on eggs in order to hatch them; in no corner of the world are they seen either to pair, or build nests. Hence, in some parts of Ireland, bishops and men of religion make no scruple of eating these birds on fasting days, as not being flesh, because they are not born of flesh. But these men are curiously drawn into error. For, if any one had eaten part of the thigh of our first parent, which was really flesh, although not born of flesh, I should think him not guiltless of having eaten flesh.⁴⁴ Repent, O unhappy Jew, recollect, though late, that man was first generated from clay without being procreated by male and female; nor will your veneration for the law allow you to deny that. In the second place, woman was generated of the man, without the intervention of the other sex. The third mode of generation only by male and female, as it is the ordinary one, obstinate as you are, you admit and approve. But the fourth, from which alone came salvation, namely, birth from a woman, without union with a man, you utterly reject with perverse obstinacy, to your own perdition. Blush, O wretched man, blush! At least, recur to nature, which, in confirmation of the faith for our best teaching, continually produces and gives birth to new animals, without union of male and female. The first creature was begotten of clay; this last is engendered of wood. The one, proceeding from the God of nature for once only, was a stupendous miracle; the other, though not less admirable, is less to be wondered at, because imitative nature often performs it. But human nature is so constituted, that it holds nothing to be precious and admirable but what is uncommon and of rare occurrence. The rising and setting of the sun, than which there is nothing in the world more beautiful, nothing more fit to excite our wonder, we pass by without any admiration, because they are daily presented to our eyes; while an eclipse of the sun fills the whole world with astonishment, because it rarely occurs.⁴⁵ The procreation of bees from the honeycomb, by some mysterious inspiration of the breath of life, appears to be a fact of the same kind [as the origin of barnacles].

Chapter XII: Of birds of twofold species and mixed breed.

There are also many birds here of a twofold nature, which are called ospreys, in size less than eagles, and larger than hawks. By an extraordinary contrivance of sportive nature, one of their feet spreads open, armed with talons and adapted for taking their prey; the other is close, harmless, and only fit for swimming. It is wonderful how these birds—and I have often witnessed it myself—hover in the air over the waves supported by their wings, remaining still, that they may command a better view of the depths below; and when, with a penetrating glance, they discover through the great space of turbulent air and water small fishes lurking in the sand beneath the waves, they pounce upon them from on high with headlong speed, and diving and coming to the surface, use their web-foot in swimming, while with the other armed with talons they seize and carry off their prey. In like manner, the old enemy of mankind fixes his keen eyes on us, however we may try to conceal ourselves in the troublesome waves of this present world; and ingratiating himself with us by temporal prosperity, which may be compared to the peaceable

⁴⁴Another curious case of casuistry, arising out of what was an important question in those days, the distinction between fish and flesh, with reference to the diet allowed on days of abstinence, will be found in Chap. XXI. following.

⁴⁵A truly just and philosophical remark; a grain of wheat which we may well winnow from the chaff of our author's absurdities.

foot, the cruel spoiler then puts forth his ravenous claws to clutch miserable souls, and drag them to perdition.

It must be remarked that, in both kinds of birds, some are found which much resemble the other; but they are mongrels, and not true to their kind, differing very much in some things, though they possess the common nature of birds. But the careful observer will discriminate these differences in animals having a general resemblance, as well as certain resemblances in those which differ.

Chapter XIII: Of martinets and their natures.

There are also found in this country the small birds called martinets,⁴⁶ which are less than the blackbird, and here, as elsewhere, rare, frequenting the rivers. They are short, like quails, and dive in the water after the small fish on which they feed; and though in other respects they retain their general character, their colour varies. For degenerating here, they have the belly white with a dark-coloured back, while in other countries the belly is red, with red beak and feet. Like parrots and peacocks, the back and wings are distinguished by their brilliant shade of green, which is very lustrous and beautiful. It is remarkable in these little birds that, if they are preserved in a dry place, when dead, they never decay; and if they are put among clothes and other articles, they preserve them from the moth and give them a pleasant odour. What is still more wonderful, if, when dead, they are hung up by their beaks in a dry situation, they change their plumage every year, as if they were restored to life, as though the vital spark still survived and vegetated through some mysterious remains of its energy.

Thus holy men, who are dead to the world, and, as it were, laid up in a dry place, and inflamed with the ardour of charity, purify and perfect themselves and those who are united to them from being vitiated by the corruption of sin, and render them conspicuous by the good odour of their virtues. And while they hang from above by the most intimate union of soul, casting off the old garment of the flesh, and clothed in new virtues, they are changed and renewed for the better from time to time, putting off the old man, and putting on the new. For that is the highest pitch of excellence, when the former acts are surpassed by being followed by those which are better.

Chapter XIV: Of swans and storks and their natures.

Swans abound in the northern part of Ireland; but storks are very rare throughout the island, and their colour is black. It is remarkable in swans that they teach us not to grieve at the fate of death; for in their last moments, making a virtue of necessity, they exhibit by their funeral songs contempt for the loss of life. So men, who are clothed in white by the merits of their virtues, depart joyfully from the troubles of the present world, and thirsting for God, the only fountain of life, desire to be dissolved, freed from this body of death, and to be with Christ.

It is remarkable in storks that they desert places where the waters are warm, and frequent those where they are cold. For throughout the winter they harbour about the beds of streams, but in the first opening of spring change the temperature, betaking themselves to a free current of air. So the saints, who now sleep in the dust of the earth, during the wintry season of this world, which now is, when it is renovated and changed into a better state, enjoying for ever a serene atmosphere, will rise from their hiding-places at the first sound of the archangel's voice, and being carried up to meet Christ in the air, shall be summoned to his right hand, and translated into the true liberty of his sons.

⁴⁶The *martinet* (*martineta*) was the kingfisher. It is still called in French the *martinet-pêcheur*.

Chapter XV: Of birds which disappear during the winter.

It is also remarkable in birds of these and other similar species, which the rigour of winter is wont to drive away, that during this period they are neither living nor dead, but vegetating, without the breath of life being extinct, they appear wrapt in a long trance, and, remaining without the nourishment by which animal life is wont to be sustained, are yet supported by some kind and secret process of nature, until, roused from their sleep, they come back with the zephyrs and the first swallow. In like manner the animals called dormice, because sleep makes them fat (for the word from which they derive their name, *gliscere*, signifies to grow fat, as well as to long after), sleep all the winter, and, after lying motionless as if they were dead, revive in the summer. This led some one, speaking in the person of this little animal, to say:

“Tota mihi dormitur hyems, et pinguior illo
Tempore sum, quo me nil nisi somnus alit.”

Those seem to fall into a similar trance whose spirits are on some occasions, by divine permission, wafted to the heavenly mansions above, or to the spectacle of hell below, returning at last, when their mission is completed, to their bodies on earth, which meanwhile have remained in an extraordinary state of destitution, breathing without a spirit, and living without life, and thus neither entirely dead or alive.

Chapter XVI: Of grasshoppers which sing the better when their heads are cut off, and revive spontaneously after being long dead.

In the districts of Apulia and Calabria there are grasshoppers with wings, which spring from place to place not by any effort of their legs, but by the use of their wings, and have orifices under their throats by which they utter tuneful sounds. It is also reported that they sing sweetest when their heads are cut off, and when they are dead better than when they are alive. Hence the shepherds in that country have a custom of depriving them of their heads, that at least they may extract sweetness from them even by their death. For the residue of the life-giving spirit, until it has escaped by these apertures from the dying body, gives forth wonderful harmony. These grasshoppers, also, being congealed by the frost in the beginning of winter, shrivel up, and many of them putrefy. But when warm weather returns in spring, the breath of life returns to them, and they revivify and recover their strength. That the dead sing better than the living may be exemplified in the case of the Christian martyrs, who, having been decapitated for Christ's sake, preach, when dead, better than they did when alive, so that the church is more edified by their death than by their life. In what follows concerning resuscitation and revival, we have a sign of our own resurrection. For thus the Creator, for our instruction and confirmation in the truth, corroborates the less probable articles of the received faith by familiar examples in the natural world. What else can be the meaning of that prodigious increase from their dust of the little worms which produce silk? What the astonishing reproduction of the phoenix from its own ashes?

Chapter XVII: Of the various kinds of crows found here, and of their natures.

Also there are no black crows in this country, or they are very rare; they are all parti-coloured. These birds carry up small shell-fish into the air, and let them fall on the rocks by the sea shore, that, not being able to crush the shells with their beaks, they may be fractured by collision with the stones, after falling from a great height. Thus the old enemy, with malicious guile, after raising to the highest pitch of honour those whom he was unable to pervert when in a humble condition, boldly assails them, in order that, neglecting the duties of their station, or wavering, from being puffed up with arrogance, the higher they have been lifted up the greater may be their fall into the depths of sin, and the more severely he may bruise and crush them.

It is a remarkable fact respecting these birds, that although in other things they are the most cunning of all fowls, their natural instinct fails them in choosing suitable situations for their nests, in which other birds, however silly, manifest great ingenuity. For they build their nests in a public road, or any other frequented place, or on a fallen tree, or a stone; never thinking of the winds, or apprehensive of the access of snakes or men. Thus, however a man may be distinguished by vigour of genius and the endowments of wisdom, if he abandons himself to licentiousness, and is ensnared by lust, he pays little regard to temperance and modesty. This was exemplified in David and Solomon, one of whom incurred the guilt of murder, and the other of apostasy, through their violent passion for women.

Chapter XVIII: Of the *croeriae*, which are here white, and of other species of birds.

As in Crete all the merles are white, so the Irish *croeriae*⁴⁷ are also white. It is the instinct of these birds to impale beetles on a thorn, so that the thorn is impregnated by venom. How remarkable is it that the mischief which we find in neither of the three by itself, is effected through the union of the three. Thus the Creator, by a wonderful union of things contrary, joins the spirit to the flesh, and so the evil of sin is forthwith contracted, although it is to be found in neither of the three of itself.

Ireland produces no falcons but those of noble breed. The ignoble species, vulgarly called *layner*⁴⁸ are not found here. The *gerfalcons*, which are bred in the Northern and Arctic regions, and supplied from thence, are not produced in this country; nor are there partridges and pheasants. There are no magpies or nightingales; indeed, of birds in general, and especially of the smaller species, fewer are found here than in other countries. This did not escape the notice of Orosius, when speaking of Ireland, for he observes, “No kind of snake is found there; birds are scarce; and there are no bees.” In the two first instances his account is correct, in the third he is mistaken.

We may add to the list of birds a smaller species of white geese, also called *gantes* (wild geese), which are wont to arrive in great flocks, with a prodigious cackling. But they seldom migrate to these remote regions, and when they do, in very small numbers. The larger species, called by the vulgar *bysiae*, and also *grisiae*, come over in the depth of winter in vast flocks, when the north wind blows, and after the frosts are past, return with the south wind at the season for building their nests.

Chapter XIX: Of wild animals, and their natures.

This island contains nearly all the species of wild animals which are bred in the western countries. It produces stags so fat that they lose their speed, and the more slender they are in shape, the more nobly they carry their heads and branching antlers.⁴⁹ In no part of the world are such vast herds of boars and wild

⁴⁷This word, as far as I know, has not been found elsewhere, and it is uncertain to what bird it is intended to apply. As it fed upon beetles, it must have been busiest towards nightfall. Ducange has the word *croerola*, as occurring in the Alemanic Laws, and conjectured to be the French *crecerelle*, a kestrel. But this can hardly be the meaning here.

⁴⁸In old books of falconry, we find hawks formerly appropriated in a sort of fanciful order, according to the gradations of rank, and among them the “*layner* and *layneret*” were assigned to an esquire. Thus, also, the *gerfalcon* was counted a royal bird, the peregrine falcon was appropriated to an earl or lord, the “*sakyr* and *sakyrret*” to a knight, a lease of merlins to a lady, a hobby to a gentleman “of the first heag,” a goss-hawk to a yeoman, a sparrow-hawk to a priest, and a kestrel to a knave (in the old sense of the word). See Latham’s *Birds*, vol. i. p. 109. As to the *gerfalcon*, see the note to c. 13, *Distinction II* in this *Topography*.

⁴⁹The elk, the largest of the *genus Cervus*, of which there are any traces in Europe, and akin to the moose-deer of America, must have been extinct in Ireland long before the age of Giraldus, or he could hardly have failed to notice it. Still, from its remains being discovered in considerable numbers in the Irish bogs, and often in groups, it would appear that the elk co-existed in Ireland with the present state of organized nature. The species seems to have

pigs to be found; but they are a small, ill-shaped, and cowardly breed, no less degenerate in boldness and ferocity than in their growth and shape. There are a great number of hares, but they are a small breed, much resembling rabbits both in size and the softness of their fur. In short, it will be found that the bodies of all animals, wild beasts, and birds, each in its kind, are smaller here than in other countries; while the men alone retain their full dimensions. It is remarkable in these hares, that, contrary to the usual instincts of that animal, when found by the dogs, they keep to cover like foxes, running in the woods instead of in the open country, and never taking to the plains and beaten paths, unless they are driven to it. This difference in their habits is, I think, caused by the rankness of the herbage in the plains, checking their speed. Martins are very plentiful in the woods; in hunting which the day is prolonged through the night by means of fires. For night coming on, a fire is lighted under the tree in which the hunted animal has taken refuge from the dogs, and being kept burning all night, the martin eyeing its brightness from the boughs above, without quitting its post, either is so fascinated by it, or, rather, so much afraid of it, that when morning comes the hunters find him on the same spot.

Chapter XX: Of the badger and its nature.

There is also here the badger or melot, an unclean animal, which bites sharply, frequenting the mountains and rocks. It makes holes under ground for its refuge and protection, scratching and digging them out with its feet. Some of them, whose natural instinct it is to serve the rest, have been seen, to the great admiration of the observers, lying on their backs with the earth dug out heaped on their bellies, and held together by their four claws, while others dragged them backward by a stick held in their mouth, fastening their teeth in which, they drew them out of the hole, with their burthens.

Chapter XXI: Of the beaver and its nature.

The beavers, also, have a similar practice, through the kind provision of nature. When they are building their fortress in the bed of a river, they make servants of some of their own species and use them as vehicles in a very extraordinary manner, for collecting and conveying oak boughs from the woods to the water. In both these kinds of animals, some of these servants are to be found remarkable both for their degeneracy and uncouth shape, and for the manner in which the shaggy fur on their backs has been rubbed and worn off. Ireland produces badgers, but not beavers. They are, however, found in Wales, but only in the river Teivy, near Cardigan (Kairdygan); and likewise in Scotland, but very rarely there also.⁵⁰

It must be noted that beavers have broad tails, but they are not long; and being spread out like a man's hand, they supply the place of oars when they are swimming. Though they have a thick coat of fur over all the rest of their bodies, their tails are quite bare and smooth, and slippery like seals. Hence in Germany and the northern regions, where beavers are plentiful, even the great, and men of religion, eat the tails during fasting seasons instead of fish, of the nature of which they partake both in taste and colour. It

died off from some change of the climate, the destruction of the forests, or the loss of its natural food, just as attempts to acclimatize in Scotland the reindeer, kindred species, have failed from similar causes.

⁵⁰It would appear from this passage that the beaver, a native of the northern parts of Europe and Asia, was become extinct in Ireland before the time of Giraldus, and had then become very rare in Wales, though still found on the river Tivy in Cardiganshire. Beavers still exist in Norway, where we have seen their dykes in the province of Telemarken; but they are becoming rare in that country also, and a law was passed not long since, prohibiting their being killed for a term of seven years, in order to preserve the breed. Even in the solitudes of North America, when the beaver remained unmolested for ages after the value of its furs had caused it to be almost exterminated in other countries, it is fast disappearing before the persevering enterprise and cupidity of the trapper.

would appear, however, that what is true of the whole, as a whole, is true of a part, considered is a part; nor is it usual that a part differs essentially from the whole.⁵¹

I propose to describe more fully in another work the habits and character of beavers,⁵² how and with what skill they construct their fortresses in the middle of the rivers, and how, with such admirable instinct for an animal, when they are pursued by their enemies, they redeem the whole by the sacrifice of a part.⁵³ This I shall do when I come to treat of the geography and natural history of Wales and Scotland, and of the origin and characteristics of the two nations.⁵⁴ But we shall find a place for this elsewhere, and for another purpose, under God's guidance, if life be spared.

There are some other wild animals which are not found in Ireland, such as roebucks, goats, hedgehogs, hermins, and polecats (*putacii*).

Chapter XXII: Of weasels and their nature.

There are here a vast number of weasels, but they are very small, and are of a reddish colour. This little animal has more spirit than body, and its courage supplying the deficiency of its strength, with a great heart actuating a slender frame, it is vindictive and relentless in its wrath, however it may hide it for a time. When injured it dissembles its resentment and defers its revenge; it is the tyrant of the larger sorts of mice, and commits great ravages by gnawing clothes. It preys also on hares and rabbits, nor does it shrink from engaging in single combat with the snake, in which conflict, often pretending to run away, it betakes itself to some mound of earth which it has noted before, and having a hole through the middle as well as one perforated above in the form of a cross. The snake gliding after it, and being entangled in the narrow passage without the power of wriggling out, the weasel darts upon it from the upper orifice with its natural agility, and seizes it with its teeth, without suffering any injury. Thus, by an innate impulse and ingenuity, not to call it a wonderful instinct, the weasel, avoiding its terrible enemy's venomous head, triumphs over it more by art than by prowess.

The weasel also, when its young are dying from any hurt, recovers and restores them to life by the use of a yellow flower. We are told by persons who have witnessed the fact, having put the whelp to death to make the experiment, that the weasel brought the flower in its mouth, and first applied it to the wound, and then to the mouth, nostrils, and other orifices of the little animal, that it might inhale the odour, by which, through the efficacious touch of the plant, breath was restored, though life seemed extinct, some slight and imperceptible vestiges of it only having remained.

Moreover, as death destroys every thing else by its mere glance, such is the weasel to the basilisk. In like manner, the hyæna subdues the lordly lion with the smallest drop of its urine. The mouse, too, is formidable to the elephant, the largest of animals. Thus, by the wise disposition of Providence, the greater are sometimes conquered by the less, that at least we may learn from them that there is nothing on earth so mighty or so favoured, as to enjoy entire felicity. What is there under heaven loftier than man? What more insignificant than an adder, a spider, or a gnat? The Creator has introduced among his creatures nothing without reason, no evil without a remedy.

⁵¹An amusing specimen of the casuistry of ecclesiastics, who sought to vary their Lenten diet, and as curious an application of our author's shrewd logic to the case.

⁵²Giraldus mentions the beaver again in Chapter III. of his Itinerary of Wales.

⁵³The following scholium is printed in the margin of the Frankfort edition of Giraldus: "that is, by gnawing off, or rather cutting off, their own testicles."

⁵⁴It appears from this to have been the intention of Giraldus Cambrensis to write similar topographies of Wales and Scotland. The *Cambriæ Descriptio*, of which a translation is given in the present volume, may, perhaps, be considered as the fulfilment of one part of this design, but no description of Scotland by our writer is at present known to exist.

There are very few or no moles in Ireland, either because they have never existed, or on account of the extreme humidity of the soil. As the sun blinds the mole, so a single day sees the birth and death of the grasshopper, on which account some one has thus apostrophized the little insect:

“Mors et vita dies una tibi est.”

The larger species of mouse is found here in great numbers, and the smaller kind swarm to such an amazing degree that they consume more enormous quantities of grain than anywhere else, and are very destructive to clothes, which they gnaw and tear, however carefully they may be locked up in chests. Bede describes the island as possessing only two sorts of ravenous animals.⁵⁵ To these I have added this third, which is most destructive.

Chapter XXIII.: Of reptiles, and those which are not found in the island; and that there are no venomous creatures, for those that are brought over immediately die, and their poison loses its venom; and of the dust of this land and leathern thongs being antidotes for poison.

Of all sorts of reptiles, Ireland possesses those only which are harmless, and does not produce any that are venomous.⁵⁶ There are neither snakes nor adders, toads nor frogs, tortoises nor scorpions, nor dragons. It produces, however, spiders, leeches, and lizards; but they are quite harmless. Hence it may be said, or even written, pleasantly, as well as with historical truth:—“In France and Italy the frogs fill the air with their croakings; in Britain they are mute: in Ireland there are none.” Some indeed conjecture, with what seems a flattering fiction, that St. Patrick and the other saints of that country cleared the island of all pestiferous animals; but history asserts, with more probability, that from the earliest ages, and long before it was favoured with the light of revealed truth, this was one of the things which never existed here, from some natural deficiency in the produce of the island.

Nor does it appear to me much to be wondered at that the country does not naturally produce these reptiles, no more than some kinds of fishes, birds, and wild animals which are not found there. But it does appear very wonderful that, when any thing venomous is brought there from other lands, it never could exist in Ireland. For we read in the ancient books of the saints of that country, that sometimes, for the sake of experiment, serpents have been shipped over in brazen vessels, but were found lifeless and dead as soon as the middle of the Irish sea was crossed. Poison also similarly conveyed was found to lose its venom, when midway on the waters, disinfected by a purer air. Bede, in speaking of Ireland, writes on this subject as follows:—“No reptile is found there; no serpent can live there; for, though often carried thither out of Britain, as soon as the ship draws near the land, and the scent of the air from off the shore reaches them, they die. On the contrary, almost all things produced in the island have virtues against poison.”⁵⁷

⁵⁵*Scholium*, “namely, wolves and foxes.” Giraldus introduces a wolf in a curious legend, *Distinction II. c. 19*, and in *c. 26*; we find that wolves were not totally extirpated from the neighbourhood of Glendalough until 1710.

⁵⁶It is difficult to comprehend how the assertion, that no venomous animals existed in Ireland, could have been so generally current without some basis of truth; particularly as Giraldus, who was three years in the island, and appears to have been generally well informed on its zoology, not only strips the statement of its fabulous element, calling that “a flattering fiction,” but affirms it on his own authority as a fact in natural history, offering the very plausible solution, that species of animals existing in some countries are not produced in others. The account he gives, in the next chapter, of the great surprise publicly manifested, when a frog or toad was found in the neighbourhood of Waterford, and brought to court, is so circumstantial, that the fact of its discovery being considered an extraordinary occurrence seems hardly to be doubted.

⁵⁷*Eccles. Hist. b. i. c. 1.*

I have also heard it said by merchants, who pursued their adventures in the ocean, that on some occasions, having unloaded their ships in an Irish port, they found toads in the bottom of the hold; and having thrown them on shore in a living state, they immediately turned on their backs, and bursting their bellies, died, to the astonishment of many who witnessed it. It appears, therefore, that either through the merits of the saints, as report goes throughout the world, or some strange and unheard of, but most kindly, influence of the air, or some occult property of the soil itself inimical to poison, no venomous animal can exist here, and every kind of poison introduced from other countries forthwith loses its malignant effect.

Indeed the soil of Ireland is so hostile to poison, that, if gardens or any other spots in foreign countries are sprinkled with its dust, all venomous reptiles are immediately driven far away.

Thongs also, which are the real produce of the island, and made of the skins of animals born there, being grated in waters which is drunk, the potion is an efficacious remedy against the bites of toads and serpents. I have seen with my own eyes one of these thongs drawn tight in a circle round a toad, for the sake of the experiment. Coming to the thong, and trying to cross over it, the animal fell backwards as if it were stunned. It then tried the opposite side of the circle, but meeting with the thong all round, it shrunk from it, as if it were pestiferous. At last, digging a hole in the mud with its feet in the centre of the circle, it crept into it in the presence of many persons.

Nay more, according to Bede's statement, almost all things produced in the island have virtues against poison. He gives an instance which he witnessed himself. Some persons having been bitten by serpents, water in which the scrapings of the leaves of books brought from Ireland had been mixed was given them to drink, and it extracted all the venom of the spreading poison, reduced the swelling of their bodies, and assuaged the tumor. It happened also, within my time, on the northern borders of England, that a snake crept into the mouth of a boy while he was asleep, and passed through his gullet into his belly. The reptile, making a very ill return to his host for the lodgings with which it had been unconsciously supplied, began to gnaw and tear the lad's intestines, and threw him into such agonies that he would have preferred death at once to such a dying life. After satisfying his hunger, however, the snake allowed him some respite from his sufferings, but before that none at all. After the boy had resorted to the shrines of the saints of God throughout England for a long time, but all in vain, at length, better advised, he crossed over to Ireland, where, as soon as he had drank of the salubrious waters of that country and partaken of its food, his deadly enemy expired, and was voided through his intestines. Then rejoicing in renovated health, he returned to his own country.

Chapter XXIV: Of a frog lately found in Ireland.

Nevertheless, a frog was found, within my time, in the grassy meadows near Waterford, and brought to court alive before Robert Poer, who was at that time warden there, and many others, both English and Irish. And when numbers of both nations, and particularly the Irish, had beheld it with great astonishment, at last Duvenold,⁵⁸ king of Ossory, a man of sense among his people, and faithful, who happened to be present, beating his head, and having deep grief at heart, spoke thus:—"That reptile is the bearer of doleful news to Ireland." And uttering a sort of prognostic, he further said, that it portended, without doubt, the coming of the English, their threatened conquest, and the subjugation of his own nation. No man, however, will venture to suppose that this reptile was ever born in Ireland; for the mud there does not, as in other countries, contain the germs from which green frogs are bred. If that had been the case, they would have been found more frequently, and in greater numbers, both before and after the time mentioned. It may have happened that some particle of the germ, hid in the moist soil, had been exhaled into the clouds by the heat of the atmosphere, and wafted hither by the force of the winds; or, perhaps, that

⁵⁸Duvenold, or Donald, king or prince of Ossory, is introduced more fully by Giraldus, as an ally of the English, in the Vaticinal History of the Conquest of Ireland.

the embryo reptile had been swept into the hollow of a descending cloud, and, being by chance deposited here, was lodged in an inhospitable and ungenial soil. But the better opinion is, that the frog was brought over by accident in a ship from some neighbouring port, and being cast on shore, succeeded in subsisting and maintaining life for a time, as it is not a venomous animal.

Chapter XXV: On several advantages possessed by the island; and the nature of the climate.

Ireland is the most temperate of all countries. The burning heat of Cancer does not drive the inhabitants to the cool shades, nor the freezing blasts of Capricorn urgently invite them to the fire. You seldom observe snow here, and then only for a short time. Cold weather sometimes comes with every wind, no less from the east and west, than from the south or north. From all quarters they are moderate, and from none tempestuous. The grass in the fields is green in the winter as well as in the summer; so that they neither cut hay for fodder, nor ever build stalls for the cattle. In consequence of the agreeable temperature of the climate, it is warm at almost all seasons. The air also is so healthy, that no clouds bring infection, and there are no pestilent vapours, or tainted breezes. The islanders have little need of physicians, for you will find few sick persons, except those who are at the point of death. There is little medium between perfect health and the last end. Strangers here are troubled only with one disorder; they suffer from a single ailment. At first, hardly any one escapes a violent flux of the bowels, from the succulent qualities of the food they take. However, flesh and the produce of cows are to be had almost at all seasons; but pork meat is unwholesome. Moreover, no natives of the island, who have never quitted its salubrious soil and climate, suffer at any time from either of three sorts of fever; the only one which attacks them is the ague, and that very seldom.

This was the course of things in due order of nature; but as the world grows older, and is falling as it were into the decrepitude of old age, and draws to an end, the nature of almost all things is corrupted and deteriorated. For now such floods of rain inundate the country, such dense clouds and fogs overspread it, that you will hardly see three clear days together, even during summer. Notwithstanding, no disturbance of the atmosphere, no seasonableness of the weather, either troubles those who are in health and spirits, or affects the nerves of delicate persons.

Chapter XXVI: A comparison of the east and west; and that in the east all the elements are pestiferous, and of the malignity of poisons there.

What wealth then can Eastern lands boast which is comparable to these advantages? They possess, indeed, those silken fabrics, the produce of a little worm, which glow with colours of various dyes? They have the precious metals, and sparkling gems, and odoriferous trees. But what are these, procured at the cost of life and health? Are they not attended with the presence of a familiar enemy,—the air the Orientals breathe, and which constantly surrounds them?

In those countries all the elements, though created for the use of man, threaten wretched mortals with death, undermine health, and bring life to an end. Plant your naked foot on the earth, death is at hand; incautiously seat yourself on a rock, death is at hand; drink pure water unmixed, or smell it when it is putrid, death is at hand. Expose your head uncovered to the free air, if it be cold it pierces you through, if it be hot you languish; death is at hand. The heavens terrify you with their thunders, and flash their lightnings in your eyes. The blazing sun allows you no rest. If you eat too much, death is at the gate; if you drink wine undiluted with water, death is at the gate. Besides this, poison threatens on all hands: the mother-in-law gives it to her step-son, the exasperated wife to her husband, the corrupt cook to his master. You may suspect poison not only in the dish and in the cup, but in your clothes, your seats, your saddles. It insidiously creeps into your veins of itself; you are subject to its insidious attacks from venomous animals; man, of all noxious creatures the most noxious, insidiously gives it to man.

Besides all the more common annoyances which abound in these regions, the safety of man is threatened and endangered by swift panthers of various kinds; by rhinoceroses, allured by love of virgins;⁵⁹ crocodiles, fearful by their breath;⁶⁰ hippopotami frequenting the rivers; lynxes, with piercing eyes; and lions that fear nothing but the hyæna's urine. The country is infested by asps and vipers, by dragons, and by the basilisk, whose very glance is fatal. It is infested by the 'seps,' a little reptile whose malignity makes up for its diminutive size. Its venom not only wastes the flesh, but the very bones. Of which the poet sings:

Ossaque consumit cum corpore tabificus seps.⁶¹

There is also the *dipsa*, a small species of snake, whose venom destroys life before it is even perceived, and is so powerful that its bite occasions death before any pain is felt.

It happened, within my own memory, that a man having gone on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, as is the custom, from Britain, one morning, as he happened to be sifting with his hand the corn for his horses, he had his finger bitten by a little reptile which was lurking in the corn. Immediately his whole body, flesh and bone, was converted into a shapeless mass like pitch. His companions, making inquiry into the cause of his death, or rather of his transformation, and the nature of the reptile, discovered a very minute snake having the appearance of a black eel. They learnt from the natives that this species of snake is called *Galeia*, and that it was wont, rarely indeed, but yet too often, within the last thirty years to visit that country from the deserts of Babylonia, and by its attacks on man and beast, with such violent and incurable malignity, gave notice of its arrival. Of reptiles of this description, which abound in the East, each genus has its own peculiar poison, each species its own power of destruction. Their colours are as varied as the dolours they cause; their varieties as great as the sufferings they occasion. In such peril of death, what security is there for life? or rather, among so many deaths, what is life?

Chapter XXVII.: Of the singularly temperate character of our climate; and that we are happily free from many disadvantages.

Let the East then have its abundant stores of venom and poison, while we, possessing in golden moderation whatever is necessary for decent use and the wants of nature, are compensated for Oriental pomps by the single circumstance of our temperate climate. O incomparable gift bestowed on the land by God! O inestimable favour—one not sufficiently appreciated, conferred on mortals from above! We sleep secure in the open air, secure on the bare rock. We fear no wind piercing us with cold, prostrating our strength with heat, or carrying pestilence in its blast. The air we breathe, and with which we are surrounded, lends us its beneficent and salutary support. The nearer, indeed, we go to the regions of the East, and warmer climates, the greater is the fertility of the soil, and the more plentifully does the earth pour forth her fruits. There also are found in abundance the precious metals and gems, with silk and cotton wools; and wealth of all kinds is overflowing. The people also, thanks to a brighter atmosphere, although slender in person, are of a more subtle intellect. Hence, they have recourse to poison rather than to violence for success in their schemes, and gain their purposes more by their arts than by their arms. But when we come to the Western parts of the world, we find the soil more sterile, the air more salubrious, and

⁵⁹It was the unicorn, which, according to the mediæval fable, could only be caught by the means of a pure virgin, to whom, when exposed in the places the animal haunted, he came and became perfectly tame, and the hunters took this opportunity of attacking and killing it

⁶⁰It was the old notion relating to crocodiles, that they drew to them their prey by the effect of their breath.

⁶¹Lucan's *Pharsalia*, lib. ix. l. 723,

the people less acute, but more robust; for where the atmosphere is heavy, the fields are less fertile than the wits. And, as each race, bred among Arctic frosts,

Nascitur indomitus bellis, et martis amator;
Gens hæc ingentes animos ingenti corpore versant.

Is born to war, and filled with martial fire—
So here brave souls gigantic frames inspire.

Bacchus and Ceres, therefore, rule in the East, with their attendant Venus, who, deprived of them, is chilled; Minerva, also, who was always nursed and attracted by a purer sky. Here [in the West] reigns Mars, Mercury, and the Arcadian god. In the East is accumulated a superabundance of wealth; here we have a modest and honourable competence. There the atmosphere is serene, here it is salubrious. There the natives are fine witted; here, their understandings are robust. There they arm themselves with poisons, here with manly vigour. There, they are crafty, here bold in war. There men cultivate wisdom, here eloquence. There Apollo rules, Mercury here; there Minerva, here Pallas and Diana.

Many other things are wanting here much to our advantage, such as vermin. Here there are no earthquakes, you scarcely hear thunder once in a year; thunder-claps do not terrify, nor flashes of lightning strike. Here are no cataracts to overwhelm, no earthquake to swallow you up; no lions to carry you off, no panthers to mangle you, no bears to devour you, no tigers to destroy you. Moreover, no suspicion of poison makes you recoil from food, even offered by an enemy. No stepson fears the poison cup of his mother-in-law, no matron that of a jealous mistress.

Chapter XXVIII: That the east is the fountain-head of poisons, and that the advantages in the west are preferable to those in the east.

The East is the well-spring of poisons, and the further the stream flows from the fountain-head, the less is its natural force. Weakening gradually during its long course through such vast distances, the strength of the venom has wholly evaporated in these extreme parts of the world.

The further from the zodiac the sun's rays penetrate, the less is the influence of its warmth on objects exposed to it, so that some extreme parts of the Arctic regions are entirely deprived of the benefit of its heat. But you will say, "The East is super-eminent for precious stones and medicinal roots." It is, indeed, a wise provision of nature, that where evils abound, there remedies for the evils should spring up. Where many diseases are rife, they require medicines to be discovered for their cure; but here, where the danger is less, the remedies are more scarce.

As much then as ease of mind is more desirable than anxiety, as preservation is better than cure, and as it is better to enjoy constant health than, after much suffering, to seek for remedies, so in the same degree, the advantages of the West are to be preferred to those of the East; and so far nature has cast a more favourable eye on the regions fanned by the west, than those swept by east winds. It appears to be very probable that as moisture tempers and softens the morning and evening of day, while noon is scorching, and the earliest and latest years of man are mellowed by a moist temperament, while his middle age is fervid, so while, in respect of the regions on the meridian and its confines, the sun raging in those parts as if in the prime of youth, infects the air with disease, so a more humid climate renders the boundaries of its rising and setting temperate.

Distinction II: Of the wonders and miracles of Ireland.

I come now to those facts which, being contrary to the course of nature, call forth our wonder and amazement. From among these I have thought it not superfluous to employ my pen in relating such as nature has produced in these remote lands, remarkable and novel in themselves, and such also as have been most eminently and miraculously wrought through the merits of the saints; the memorials of which are extant in authentic records, and most worthy of notice. As then the prodigies of the Eastern regions have already been brought to the light of public attention through the labours of industrious authors, so those of the West, which have hitherto been almost hidden and unknown, may at length, in these latter days, find an editor through my labours. I know, however, and am persuaded, that I shall have to write some accounts which will seem to the reader either utterly impossible, or quite ridiculous. But, with the help of God, I will insert nothing in my book the truth of which I have not elicited with the greatest diligence either from my own firm belief or the authentic testimony of most trustworthy men, who have lived in the districts of which I write. Let me not, however, be involved in a cloud of malicious slander. What I have witnessed with my own eyes, that I assert firmly and without any hesitation. But what has only reached my ear through others, which I am slower to believe, that I do not affirm, but only relate. To all those of which I received authentic accounts from many persons who were eye-witnesses of them, I give full credence; and I accept those given by others, whose truth and assertions I find no reason to doubt.

It is not surprising that wonders should be discovered, related, and written concerning His works, who made all things according to his will; with whom nothing is impossible; who, as the God of Nature, moulds nature as he pleases, and makes that natural which appears unnatural. Moreover, how can any thing be said to be done contrary to primitive and true nature, which is God, when it is certain that he is the doer of it? Those things, therefore, are, in common phrase, rather than properly, said to be done contrary to nature, which appear to happen, not contrary to his power, but to his usual proceeding. Since, therefore, God is wonderful in his saints, and great in all his doings, come and behold the works of the Lord, who hath shown his wonders in the earth.

Some countries, islands especially, and parts remote from the centre of the earth, are remarkable for prodigies which are peculiarly their own. For nature always, and purposely as it were, interlards her works with some new ones, that she may thus plainly teach and declare, that although her usual operations may be comprehended by the human understanding, her mighty power cannot be understood. Let the careful reader also remark that, history must not be sparing of truth, and that it rather chooses what is certain than what is probable. If, therefore, anything should escape me which is new and unheard of, let it not be condemned and struck out even by the malicious, but sometimes pardoning, sometimes approving, let my task proceed. For as the poet sings:—

“Si patribus nostris novitas invisa fuisset,
Ut nobis, quid nunc esset vetus, aut quid haberet
Quod legeret, tereretque viritim publicus usus?”⁶²

⁶²Hor. Epist. II., 1. 90. 3. Giraldus has altered the beginning of the first line, which is in the original:
“Quod si tam Graiis novitas,” &c.

Let no one, therefore, condemn anything because it is new, which, as time passes on, while it is accused of novelty, ceases to be new. Let there be found here both what the present age may blame, and posterity applaud; what the one may rail at, the other read; what the one may condemn, the other love; what the one may reprove, the other approve.

Chapter I: Of the strong currents in the Irish sea, and the ebb and flow of the tides therein.

The Irish Sea, being agitated by opposing currents, is almost always troubled, so that navigators scarcely ever find it tranquil even for a few days in summer.

Chapter II: Of the difference of the tides in Ireland and Britain.

Whenever the water is low in the port of Dublin, the tide being at half-ebb, the returning tide has already risen to half-flood at Milford, the most excellent harbour in Britain for ships to enter. At the same time the flood-tide gradually runs up to the farthest coast about Bristol, which had been left dry by the receding waters. The same rule applies to the tides on the opposite shores. There is also a port at Wicklow, on the coast of Ireland, lying opposite to France,⁶³ into which the tide sets when it is ebbing at most other places, but when the flood returns, this port is left dry. There is another thing remarkable in this locality; when the sea has receded and left the whole bay dry, still a stream flows in through the entire channel to the harbour, which makes the water salt and brackish. On the contrary, at Arklow, which is the nearest port, not only when the tide is setting in and filling the bay, but also at its reflux, when the sea has entirely ebbed, the stream which runs down retains its purity and freshness, and discharges its waters into the sea without any mixture of saltness.

Chapter III: Of the influence of the sea on the waters, as well as on natural humours.

When the moon is at the meridian, the ocean, withdrawing its attendant waves, leaves the northern coasts of Britain entirely dry. The reflux then produces high tides on the Irish shore at Dublin. The coast about Wexford, however has not the Irish tides of Dublin, but the British as they flow at Milford. What is still more remarkable, there is a rock in the sea, not far from Arklow, where the tide comes in on one side, while it ebbs on the other.

When the moon is at half her growth, as her light returns, the Western seas, from some unknown natural cause, begin to be rough and agitated, and, till she is in her full, swell more and more from day to day, overflowing the shore far beyond their usual bounds. But when the moon wanes, and her light failing, she, as it were, turns away her face, the swelling of the waters gradually declines, and when the moon's face is no longer seen, the sea returns into its proper channels, its overflow subsiding. Indeed, the moon is the entire source and cause of motion in liquids, so that it not only regulates the waters of the ocean, but, in animal life, influences the marrow in the bones, the brains in the head, and the juices of trees and plants, in proportion to its increase or decrease.⁶⁴ Hence, when the moon ceases to be luminous you will find all animate nature shrink, but when she is again round and shining at the full, the marrow fills the bones, the brains the head, and the juices of vegetables swell. Hence it is, that those are called lunatics, who suffer every month by the excessive action of the brain, as the moon increases; and the word *mensis* (a month) is

⁶³Wicklow and Arklow (called by Giraldus Gwykingelo and Archelo) are sea-ports on the Irish channel, incorrectly described by Giraldus as opposite to the coast of France.

⁶⁴The extraordinary influence of the moon on the earth and its inhabitants was one of the foundation stones of mediæval science, and was the origin of numerous superstitions, some of which have hardly yet become obsolete.

derived from *mene*, which signifies decrease,⁶⁵ because it decreases with the moon, and with her increase fills and completes its course.

It may be observed that a commentator on that part of the Gospel which speaks of our Lord's curing lunatics and paralytics, writes to the following effect. He calls those lunatics whose disorder augmented with the increase of the moon, not that their madness is caused by the moon, but the devil, who is the author of it, takes advantage of the moon's seasons to shame the creature to the blasphemy of his Creator. The commentator might, however, have said with equal truth, if I may be allowed to correct him, that valetudinarians are affected in this manner on account of the humours increasing in an extraordinary degree at the full moon. But matters of this sort, and why the Western ocean attracts the flux and reflux of the tides by some lively influence, which is regular and unfailing, and acts more powerfully than the Mediterranean Sea; and how all this is affected through the influence of the moon on liquids; it would be a more serious task to explain. I have clearly, though briefly, treated on these subjects in my little metrical work called "The Flowers of Philosophy."⁶⁶

In order, however, shortly to direct the readers' attention to the more evident causes of these great changes, and to a fuller investigation of their subtle principles, let him bear in mind these four points. Rivers, and the springs which feed them, from which the sea in some degree derives life and motion, are always more abundant towards the extremities of the earth. From the four conflicting and most distant parts of the ocean, there is a certain violent attraction of the sea, with alternate absorption and ebullition, and the disorder immediately occasioned by the decrease as well as by the increase of humidity, towards the extremities of the earth, is very apparent. Add to this, that there the ocean has freer course for its flux and reflux without impediment. When, however, the land embraces it on all sides, and it is reduced by so many obstacles to the conditions of standing water in a lake, it has no scope for flowing freely.

Chapter IV: Of two islands, in one of which no one dies, and in the other, no animal of the female sex enters.

There is a lake in the northern parts of Munster,⁶⁷ containing two islands, one large, the other small. In the larger island there is a church held in great veneration from the earliest times; the smaller island contains a chapel, which is devoutly served by a few celibates, called Heaven-worshippers, or God-worshippers. No woman, nor any animal of the female sex, could ever enter the larger island without instant death. This has been often proved by dogs and cats, and other animals, of the female sex, which, having been carried over for sake of the experiment, immediately expired. It is an extraordinary fact, that while male birds perch on the bushes on all parts of the island in great numbers, the female birds with whom they pair, fly back, avoiding the island from some natural instinct of its qualities, as if it were infested with the plague. In the smaller island no one ever dies, was ever known to die, or could die a natural death. It is consequently called the Isle of the Living. Notwithstanding, its inhabitants are sometimes severely afflicted with mortal diseases. and languish in misery till life is nearly exhausted. But when no hope remains, all expectation of the powers of life being restored becomes extinct, and they are reduced by their increasing malady to such a degree of suffering that they would rather die than live a life of death, the natives cause themselves to be ferried over in a boat to the larger island, where they breathe their last as soon as they touch the land. I have thought it right to notice this because it is mentioned in the

⁶⁵From *minuo*, to diminish?

⁶⁶*De philosophicis flosculis*. This work of Giraldus Cambrensis is not now known to exist.

⁶⁷These islands were situated in a lake called Loch Cre, now dried up, in the parish of Corbally, three miles from Roscrea, in Tipperary. The bog, which has taken the place of the lake, is called Monaincha, *i.e.* the bog of the island; and on the latter, which is supposed to consist of the two islands spoken of by Giraldus, there are the ruins of a monastic house.

first pages of the Scholastic History, which treats of the inhabitants of islands of this description. The tree of the sun is also there spoken of, concerning which king Alexander writes to Aristotle, that whoever eats of the fruit prolongs his life to an immense period.

There is also in Ulster a cemetery, with a station, consecrated by the long resort of holy men. Here, also, the female sex is not admitted; the bride cannot follow her husband, but a local divorce takes place; they cannot join in their devotions, and on this spot they are adjudged to an early separation. The cock enters here without the hen, and, strange to observe, it calls its mate without avail when it finds a place to feed in the island.

There is likewise, in the northern parts of Britain, an island called the Holy Isle, where women cannot bring forth children, yet they conceive, becoming pregnant, and increase in size according to the natural order of things, till the time of delivery. When that is near at hand, if they are carried to another island, nature takes its free course; but if they are detained, as sometimes is done for the sake of experiment, they are tortured with excruciating pains, and reduced to the door of death by their sufferings, until they are sent away.

Chapter V: Of an island, one part of which is frequented by good spirits, the other by evil spirits.

There is a lake in Ulster containing an island divided into two parts. In one of these stands a church of especial sanctity, and it is most agreeable and delightful, as well as beyond measure glorious for the visitations of angels and the multitude of the saints who visibly frequent it. The other part, being covered with rugged crags, is reported to be the resort of devils only, and to be almost always the theatre on which crowds of evil spirits visibly perform their rites. This part of the island contains nine pits, and should any one perchance venture to spend the night in one of them (which has been done, we know, at times, by some rash men), he is immediately seized by the malignant spirits, who so severely torture him during the whole night, inflicting on him such unutterable sufferings by fire and water, and other torments of various kinds, that when morning comes scarcely any spark of life is found left in his wretched body. It is said that any one who has once submitted to these torments as a penance imposed upon him, will not afterwards undergo the pains of hell, unless he commit some sin of a deeper dye.

This place is called by the natives the Purgatory of St. Patrick.⁶⁸ For he having to argue with a heathen race concerning the torments of hell reserved for the reprobate, and the real nature and eternal duration of the future life, in order to impress on the rude minds of the unbelievers a mysterious faith in doctrines so new, so strange, so opposed to their prejudices, procured by the efficacy of his prayers an exemplification of both states even on earth, as a salutary lesson to the stubborn minds of the people.

⁶⁸Tradition places St. Patrick's Purgatory, as Giraldus describes it, on an island in a lake in the province of Ulster, Lough Derg, in Donegal, near the town and bay of the same name, and about three-quarters of an Irish mile in extent; but Giraldus is the only writer who speaks of its division into paradisaic and purgatorial regions. The text-book on St. Patrick's Purgatory, in the middle ages, was a Latin narrative by Henry of Saltery, which is dated 1152, and is common in old manuscripts; it was translated into various languages. Giraldus had evidently not seen this book, as his account differs very much from it. See for full information on the subject, the volume on "St. Patrick's Purgatory," by the editor of the present volume. It appears that the penitents were immured in a low and dark cell cut in the rock, and capable of holding six or eight persons, where, with their heads half-turned by preparatory fastings and watchings, they were in a state to place implicit faith in the visions which superstition presented to their distempered imagination through a narrow window, the only aperture left in the stifling cell.

Chapter VI: Of an island where human corpses exposed to the atmosphere do not suffer decay.

There is an island called Aren,⁶⁹ situated in the western part of Connaught, and consecrated, as it is said, to St. Brendan, where human corpses are neither buried nor decay, but, deposited in the open air, remain uncorrupted. Here men can behold, and recognise with wonder, grandfathers, great-grandfathers, and great-great-grandfathers, and the long series of their ancestors to a remote period of past time.

There is another thing remarkable in this island. Although mice⁷⁰ swarm in vast numbers in other parts of Ireland, here not a single one is found. No mouse is bred here, nor does it live if it be introduced; when brought over, it runs immediately away and leaps into the sea. If it be stopped, it instantly dies.

Chapter VII: Of the wonderful natures of some fountains.

There is a well in Munster, in the waters of which whoever bathes has his hair immediately turned grey. I have seen a man, part of whose beard, having been washed in this water, had become white, while the other part retained its dark natural colour. On the contrary, there is a spring in Ulster, which prevents people who wash in its waters from ever becoming grey-haired. It is frequented by women, and by men who are desirous of avoiding grey hairs.⁷¹

There is also a spring of fresh water in Connaught, at the top of a high mountain, and far from the coast, which ebbs twice a day, and flows over as often, like the tides in the sea. There is also in Wales, not far from the castle of Dinevur,⁷² in the province of Canterbochan, a spring whose waters have similar changes. Trojus Pompeius mentions a town of the Garamantes, in which a fountain bursts forth, which is alternately cold by night and warm by day.⁷³

In the southern part of Britain also, which takes its name from that of its lord, several springs bubbling out from the naked rocks not far from each other, but at a great distance from the sea, are of a very changeable nature. The waters of these are neither sweet nor salt, but brackish. One of them, which springs out on the summit of a high rock having the appearance of a lofty tower, at the full tides of every month, which accompany the moon's increase, throws up a much larger volume of water than usual, to the admiration of all beholders.

Likewise, in the Chiltern district of Britain,⁷⁴ there are many springs which are entirely dried up when the crops are abundant, the earth being parched for want of their refreshing streams. Against a time of dearth and famine, however, the waters bubble up freely from the veins of the earth, and bursting their channels, the precursors of evil, are seen to overflow. There is a fountain equally remarkable for the same prognostics at the village of Nicbatensis,⁷⁵ in the territory of Vimoux, in the kingdom of France.

⁶⁹These legends belong to an island called Inisgluair, off the coast of Erris, co. Mayo, which was sacred to St. Brandan, and which Giraldus seems to have confounded with Aran. According to the legend, the latter island was visited by St. Brandan when he set out on his grand voyage. St. Bean is supposed to be the saint of that name commemorated in the Romish calendar on the 16th of December.

⁷⁰Giraldus uses the word *mures*, but some of the Irish antiquaries believe that by this word he meant the small black rat which abounds in Ireland.

⁷¹It is not at present known to what wells Giraldus here refers. A well, the water of which turned the hair grey, is mentioned as being in the parish of Gallorn, in the county of Monaghan, and therefore in Ulster, while that spoken of by Giraldus was in Munster. But holy and legendary wells are abundant in Ireland.

⁷²This spring is again mentioned in the Itinerary of Giraldus, lib. 1, c. x.

⁷³This statement is taken from Solinus, c. 29.

⁷⁴The Chiltern hills are in Buckinghamshire, on the borders of Berkshire and Oxfordshire, deriving their name from "chilt," or "cyllt" the old English word for chalk, of which the district is composed.

⁷⁵We have not been able to identify this place.

In some parts of Normandy, however, it happens just the contrary. The springs are full in seasons of plenty, and fail when the crops are deficient. There is a spring in the most northern part of Ulster, which is so excessively cold that it hardens wood, which has been immersed in it for seven years, into stone. We find in Norway another spring having the same property, only being nearer the Frigid Zone, it is still more powerful; for not only timber, but flax and woollen webs, are congealed into the hardest stone when they have been immersed in this spring a single year. In consequence, Oxippale, a Norwegian bishop, brought to Waldemar, king of Denmark in our time, an object which he had received from him the year before, for the purpose of making the experiment. It had now two different parts, as far as the middle, having been immersed in the water, it was stone; the other part, which had lain out of the water, retained its original nature.

In Great Britain, near the monastery of Wimborn, stands a grove of fruit trees, the wood of which, when it happens to fall into the water, or on the earth at that spot, is at a year's end converted to stone; so that stakes fixed in a hedge and planted in the soil, have different properties above and below the surface of the ground. Moreover, any articles carved in wood, and deposited either in the water, or in the earth, at that place for a year, are taken out by the inhabitants changed into stone.⁷⁶ What Palladius says on this subject I think worth quoting here. "There is in Cappadocia an extensive lake, situated on the road between Mazaca and Tuana. When reeds or other things are partially immersed in this lake, on their being drawn forth the next day, the part which is taken out is found stony, but that which remained out of the water retains its natural condition." Lo! how potent are the effects of the water of that lake, which accomplishes in the space of one day what elsewhere it requires one year, or even seven years, to perform. In Hungary, there is a fountain, the streams of which, not far from their source, are congealed to crystal ice. And what is still more remarkable, when the sun's rays first strike the ice, it is condensed into a solid mass of stone, impervious to the sight, although it might rather be expected that the ice would be dissolved by the sun. Hence a rocky mount has been formed of considerable size from liquids suddenly converted into solid matter, contrary to the usual course of nature.⁷⁷ In Switzerland, in the province called Suitis (Schwytz), there is a spring on the top of a high mountain which never flows except when the sun is above the horizon. As soon as the sun descends below the horizon it ceases to flow, until the sun has performed its revolution and appears to us again the next day. In the morning, not at daybreak, but when the sun has just risen and emerged from below the horizon, it pours forth its waters in great quantity. During the entire night it does not yield a drop, although it is the general character of night, being humid and cold, to be congenial to the production of water.⁷⁸

There is a fountain in Poitou, at St. Jean d'Angeli,⁷⁹ where the head of St. John the Baptist is preserved, from which no water issues in winter, while, contrary to the usual nature of springs, it pours

⁷⁶What Giraldus relates of the petrification of wood and other substances immersed in certain springs, was probably derived from reports which had reached him of the calcareous and silicious incrustations produced by the deposits of these waters. There are none more active than the stream which flows into the lake of the Solfatara, between Rome and Tivoli, where we have gathered reeds and aquatic plants, crystallized during the process of vegetation. Sir Humphrey Davey, "Consolations of Travel," says that he fixed a stick in a mass of travertin, covered by the water, in the month of May, and in April following he had some difficulty in breaking with a sharp-pointed hammer the mass which adhered to the stick, and which was several inches in thickness. The principal edifices of ancient and modern Rome are built of travertin from the quarries, composed of solid calcareous tufa, the deposit from such springs which abound in the Campagna di Roma.

⁷⁷Our author appears to have received some accounts of the effects of glacial action in the formation of *Moraines* in Alpine countries. See Lyell's *Elements*, chap. xx., and Forester's *Norway*.

⁷⁸It can be no wonder that in one of the most elevated cantons of Switzerland, the streams fed by the melting of the snow under the influence of the sun's rays in the day-time should cease to flow during the night.

⁷⁹St. Jean d'Angeli is a town in the S.W. of France, in the department of *La Charente Inférieure*. The fine façade of the Benedictine Abbey, from whence the town derived its name, is still standing.

forth copious streams during the summer. In Cornwall there is wood, the timber of which thrown into the water, even in very small pieces, will not float. There is also in France, not far from the city of Paris, a wood adjoining the bank of the river Seine, and intersected by a public road. If you throw into the water a piece of timber taken from one side of this road, such is its peculiar gravity from occult causes, that, quite contrary to the usual nature of wood, it instantly sinks to the bottom like a mass of stone. On the other side of the road the timber preserves its natural lightness. This wood, therefore, presents a stupendous prodigy of two sorts. We have to wonder at the unnatural gravity of light substances contained in it, and also at the wonderful difference exhibited in a small space of ground.

In Auvergne, in the same kingdom of France, there is a forest, very thickly wooded, and exhibiting a nature quite contrary to the usual character. Part of it, when by some accident it has taken fire and burnt down to the roots of the trees, spontaneously shoots up again without any labour bestowed on its cultivation.⁸⁰ But who shall presume to investigate or to assign the causes of such occurrences, when it is plain that the use of the elements is common to all classes of animated nature? In Connaught there is a fountain whose waters are salubrious to man only, but pestilential to beasts of burden, cattle, and animals of all sorts, when they venture to taste them. Pebbles taken from this fountain allay thirst, if held in the mouth when it is parched. There is a fountain in Hungary still more noxious than the former, inasmuch as it is more universally injurious, its stream being poisonous to mankind as well as to all kinds of animals. There is also in the kingdom of France, not far from the castle of Pascensis,⁸¹ a fountain, the waters of which only suit males, being unserviceable for women, either as a beverage or for exterior use. It is reported that these waters retain their cold temperature in spite of all applications of heat; no contrivance will change their natural properties, and neither by art or by accident can they be disguised or got rid of, even for a single hour.

In the kingdom of Germany and province of Cambray, on the frontiers of France, there is a river with a ford staked out across the stream, with two rows of stakes, one above, one below the ford. Within these bounds the water is always pestiferous to horses; but outside the boundary both horses and all other sorts of animals come to drink in common without injury. There is a fountain in Munster which, being touched or even looked at by any human being, will immediately inundate the whole province with rain.⁸² Nor will it cease until a priest, specially appointed, and who has been continent from his birth, has appeased the fountain by performing mass in a chapel, which is known to have been founded not far off for this purpose, and by sprinkling holy water and the milk of a cow having only one colour—a rite, indeed, extremely barbarous, and void of all reason.

Chapter VIII: Of two extraordinary fountains, one in Britany, the other in Sicily.

There is a fountain in Armorican Britain of a somewhat similar nature; for if you draw its water in the horn of an ox, and happen to spill it on the nearest road, however serene the sky may be and contrary to rain, you will not avoid its immediately falling. In Sicily there is a most wonderful fountain. If any one

⁸⁰Any one who has travelled in forest districts may have had opportunities of observing that the growth of young underwood from the stools of the burnt trees, after a conflagration, is no uncommon occurrence; but had Giraldus known that sometimes the young wood which springs up consists of species of trees wholly different from those which covered the ground before, he might well have classed the fact among the “wonders” of nature. We are not aware in what part of Auvergne the forest alluded to is situated. It would have been more to our author’s purpose to have noticed the calcareous springs of that district, which have formed limestone elevations of surprising magnitude.

⁸¹It would be difficult to ascertain what was the place here alluded to by Giraldus.

⁸²According to other authorities, this well was in the mountain of Slieve-Bloom, in Leinster, and was, in fact, identical with the spring which forms the source of the river Barrow.

approaches it dressed in a red garment, its waters, bubbling up, suddenly rise to the height of the man's stature, although other colours produce no agitation of the surface. On the man's departure, the waters, sinking to their usual level, return into their firmer channels.

“Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,
Et fontem lustrasse boni.”

“‘Tis blest to learn the principles of nature, And scan the source of good.”

But since bounds are set to the powers of the human mind and everything mortal is far from perfection, the causes of such occurrences

“Dicite Pierides:—Non omnia possumus omnes.”

“Ye Muses tell; we cannot master all.”

Envious nature has locked up the causes of these and other unusual occurrences among her own mysterious wonders. There is on the sea-shore of Connaught a rocky point of considerable size, which, when the tide is out, appears to rise above the strand no higher than it does above the returning waves which cover all larger objects when the tide is full. There is also in Connaught a walled place, having the appearance of a large castle, consecrated, they say, by St. Patrick. Into this inclosure they never drive so many cattle (although the booty of the whole province is very often shut up in this place of refuge), but that it would contain many more, until by chance it is reported that it is full, or supposed to be full.

Chapter IX: Of a great lake which originated in a remarkable manner.

There is a lake in Ulster of vast size, being thirty miles long and fifteen broad,⁸³ from which a very beautiful river, called the Banna, flows into the Northern ocean. The fishermen in this lake make more frequent complaints of the quantity of fish inclosed in their nets and breaking them than of the want of fish. In our time a fish was caught here which had not come up from the sea, but was taken descending the lake, and was in shape very like a salmon, but it was so large that it could neither be dragged out or conveyed whole, and therefore was carried through the province cut in pieces. It is reported that this lake had its origin in an extraordinary calamity. The land now covered by the lake was inhabited from the most ancient times by a tribe sunk in vice, and more especially incorrigibly addicted to the sin of carnal intercourse with beasts more than any other people of Ireland. Now there was a common proverb in the mouths of the tribe, that whenever the well-spring of that country was left uncovered (for out of reverence shown to it, from a barbarous superstition, the spring was kept covered and sealed), it would immediately overflow and inundate the whole province, drowning and destroying all the population. It happened, however, on some occasion that a young woman, who had come to the spring to draw water, after filling her pitcher, but before she had closed the well, ran in great haste to her little boy, whom she heard crying at a spot not far from the spring, where she had left him. But the voice of the people is the voice of God; and on her way back, she met such a flood of water from the spring that it swept off her and the boy, and

⁸³Giraldus refers to Lough Neagh, in the N.W. of Ulster, from which the river Bann issues, forming the boundary between the counties of Londonderry and Antrim in its course northward. The legend given by Giraldus, from ancient traditions, of the inundation which formed this vast lake, is recorded by Tigernach, the oldest of the Irish annalists; and the names of the tribes who occupied the plain so covered are given in ancient documents. The date of the catastrophe is fixed to A.D. 62.

the inundation was so violent that they both, and the whole tribe, with their cattle, were drowned in an hour in this partial and local deluge. The waters, having covered the whole surface of that fertile district, were converted into a permanent lake, as if the Author of nature judged the land which had been witness to such unnatural bestialities against the order of nature to be unfit for the habitation of men, either then or thereafter.

A not improbable confirmation of this occurrence is found in the fact, that the fishermen in that lake see distinctly under the water, in calm weather, ecclesiastical towers,⁸⁴ which, according to the custom of the country, are slender and lofty, and moreover round; and they frequently point them out to strangers travelling through those parts, who wonder what could have caused such a catastrophe. In a manner not very dissimilar, and for the same detestable crime, the region of the Pentapolis was converted into a bituminous lake, called the Dead, or Barren, Sea; because neither birds, nor fishes, nor anything else can live there. It was first burnt up by sulphureous fire sent down from heaven, and then overwhelmed with an inundation which for ever covered it; suffering thus for the enormity of its wickedness a double fate.

It must, however, be observed that the river before mentioned (the Bann), which now flows out of the lake in full stream, had its source in the aforesaid spring from the time of Bartholanus, who lived soon after the flood, when it was fed also by other rivulets, and took its course through the same district, but with a far less volume of water; and it was one of the nine principal rivers of Ireland.

Chapter X: Of a fish which had three golden teeth.

Not⁸⁵ long before the time when the English came over to Ireland, a fish was found at Carlenford (Carlingford), in Ulster, of an immense size and an uncommon species. Among its other prodigies, it is reported that it had three golden teeth of fifty pounds weight. I should suppose that these teeth had rather the outward appearance of gold than that they were really such; and that the colour they assumed was a presage of the golden times of the future conquest immediately impending. Moreover, within our time a stag was found and taken in Great Britain, in the forest of Durham, all the teeth of which were of a golden hue.

Chapter XI: On the northern islands, most of which are in subjection to the Norwegians.

In the Northern ocean, beyond Ulster and Galway, there are various islands, for instance, the Orcades and Inchades, and many others, of nearly all of which the Norwegians have obtained the dominion and lordship.⁸⁶ For, although these islands lie far nearer to other countries, the Norwegian people, exploring

⁸⁴The round towers of Ireland have given rise to a multitude of opinions, and to many very wild speculations; but the most recent and careful researches seem to confirm the account of Giraldus, and to show that they were erected for ecclesiastical purposes, and at a comparatively late period. The reader is referred to Mr. Petrie's able work on this subject.

⁸⁵Another MS. reads, *Non Biennio elapso*, not two years ago. Lynch, in his *Cambrensis Eversus*, chap. vi., has given us an older legend, which was perhaps the origin of this story of Giraldus. "Not two, but more than four hundred years before the English invasion, and while Fiacha Dubhadrochtech, the son of Aid Ronius, was king of Ulster, an enormous whale was drifted along by the tide, and cast up on the shore in Ulster. It had three teeth of gold, one of which was given by Fiacha as wages to some men whom he had employed in erecting a bridge over the rivers Fersus and Monidamh; the other two were presented to the church to make a reliquary case, on which the inhabitants of that country were accustomed to purge or bind themselves by oath." These teeth are stated in the Irish chronicles to have weighed fifty ounces.

⁸⁶The Orkney and Shetland islands were colonized by the Norwegian vikings in the ninth century, and completely subjugated by Harold Harfaager in 895. By degrees the Norwegians also subdued and colonized the

the ocean, are addicted to piratical enterprises far more than any other nation. Hence all their expeditions and wars are conducted by naval armaments. It should be observed that both Orosius and Isidore reckon that there are thirty-three islands in the Orcades, of which twenty were uninhabited and thirteen inhabited; but at the present time the greater part are inhabited.

Chapter XII.: Of an island which at first floated, and afterwards was firmly fixed by means of fire.

Among the other islands is one newly formed, which they call the phantom isle, which had its origin in this manner. One calm day, a large mass of earth rose to the surface of the sea, where no land had ever been seen before, to the great amazement of the islanders who observed it. Some of them said that it was a whale, or other immense sea monster; others, remarking that it continued motionless, said, "No; it is land." In order, therefore, to reduce their doubts to certainty, some picked young men of the island determined to approach nearer the spot in a boat. When, however, they came so near to it that they thought they should go on shore, the island sank in the water and entirely vanished from sight. The next day it re-appeared, and again mocked the same youths with the like delusion. At length, upon their rowing towards it on the third day, they followed the advice of an older man, and let fly an arrow, barbed with red-hot steel, against the island; and then landing, found it stationary and habitable. This adds one to the many proofs that fire is the greatest of enemies to every sort of phantom; insomuch that those who have seen apparitions fall into a swoon as soon as they are sensible of the brightness of fire. For fire, both from its position and nature, is the noblest of elements, being a witness of the secrets of the heavens. The sky is fiery; the planets are fiery; the bush burnt with fire, but was not consumed; the Holy Ghost sat upon the apostles in tongues of fire.

Chapter XIII: Of Iceland, which is inhabited by a people of few words, who speak the truth, and never take an oath.

Iceland, the largest of the northern islands, lies at the distance of three natural days' sail from Ireland, towards the north. It is inhabited by a race of people who use very few words, and speak the truth. They seldom converse, and then briefly, and take no oaths, because they do not know what it is to lie; for they detest nothing more than falsehood. Among this people the offices of king and priest are united in the same person. Their prince is their pontiff. Their bishop performs the functions of government as well as of the priesthood.⁸⁷ Here never or very seldom lightnings flash, thunder-bolts fall, or the crash of thunder terrifies. But they are troubled with another, and still more grievous calamity; for once in a year, or two years, a fiery stream bursts forth in some quarter of the island, boiling up like a whirlpool, and the hissing flood, rushing violently on, burns up whatever lies in its way. But whether this fire has its origin casually,

Hebrides and all the islands on the west coast, from Lewis to the Isle of Man, which they called the Sudrijar, or Southern islands, from their situation as respects the Orkneys.

⁸⁷The chiefs, or petty kings, of the territories into which Norway was divided, before the reign of Harald Harfaager, in the ninth century, united the functions of civil and military government with the sacerdotal office, and continued to exercise the same joint authority in their colonies in Iceland. After the introduction of Christianity, the bishops succeeded to the spiritual, and in some measure shared the temporal authority of the *Godar*, or pontiff-chiefs. In 925, the Icelanders, in their *Al-Thing*, or national assembly, enacted a very strict code of laws, containing many excellent regulations, one especially providing for the maintenance of the poor; but it would appear that the people were more distinguished for legal chicanery than for the virtues attributed to them by Giraldus:—See the Supplement to *Mallet's Northern Antiquities* chaps. ii. and iii.

from below or above, is not known with any certainty.⁸⁸ Gerfalcons and goss-hawks are bred in the island and exported.⁸⁹

Chapter XIV.: Of a whirlpool in the sea which sucks in ships.

Not far from the islands, towards the north, there is an astonishing whirlpool in the sea, towards which there is a set current of the waves from all quarters, until, pouring themselves into nature's secret recesses, they are swallowed up, as it were, in the abyss. Should a vessel chance to pass in that direction, it is caught and drawn along by the force of the waves, and sucked by the vortex without chance of escape.⁹⁰ There are four of these whirlpools in the ocean, described by philosophers as existing in the four different quarters of the world; whence it has been conjectured that the currents of the sea, as well as the winds, are regulated, by fixed principles.

Chapter XV: Of the Isle of Man, which, on account of the venomous reptiles it harbours, is considered to belong to Britain.

There is an island, not the least of the smaller islands, which is now called Man, but had in old times the name of Ewania, and lies, they say, in the mid-channel between the northern shores of Ireland and Britain. Which country it rightly belonged to was a matter of great doubt among the ancients; but the controversy was settled in this way. Since the island allowed venomous reptiles, brought over for the sake of experiment, to exist in it, it was agreed by common consent that it belonged to Britain.⁹¹

Chapter XVI: That islands were formed long after the flood, not suddenly, but by degrees, from alluvial matter.

Whether islands were formed before the flood, or during the flood, when the parents of all living creatures were shut up in the ark, there seems reason to doubt how noxious animals, and especially venomous reptiles, replenished the remoter islands, as it is quite clear that no sane person would ever have wished to transport them thither. With respect to this, it may be reasonably suggested that long after the

⁸⁸Giraldus seems to have blended in this description the phenomena, of which he may have heard a confused account, of the volcanic eruptions and boiling fountains, the Geysers, of Iceland. See Henderson's Journal of a Residence in Iceland, pp. 74 and 229; and Sir William Hooker's Tour in Iceland, vol. i. pp. 128 and 149.

⁸⁹The gerfalcon was in great request in times when falconry was one of the principal sports of our ancestors; and Iceland had always the reputation of furnishing the most generous breed. Those whose plumage was white were most highly esteemed, and bore a great price. Gerfalcons do not appear to have been ever found wild in Britain, or in Ireland. See before, Distinction I., c. 18. They are still common in Norway. The goss-hawk is a native of England, but they are now rare, though plentiful in Scotland.

⁹⁰Giraldus speaks of the maelstrom, a whirlpool in the northern ocean, on the coast of Norway, between the island of Wéro and the southern part of the Loffoden island. Some Latin writers fancifully called it *umbilicus maris*, the navel of the sea; while our author describes the vortex as *secretæ naturæ penetralia*. This whirlpool, formerly painted in the most frightful colours, is only a strong current of the sea, which roars loudly, as it rises every day during six hours, after which it is more calm for the same period.

⁹¹Whatever may be thought of this experiment to determine the relative geographical position of the Isle of Man, we know that the island had an intimate political union with Ireland long before its sovereignty became a dependency on Britain. Colonized by the Norwegians in the eighth and ninth centuries, and governed by a succession of independent kings, nominally, perhaps, tributary to Norway, the connection between the kings of Man and the Scandinavian kings of Dublin was so close in the eleventh century that either the same, or, at all events, nearly related kings reigned both in Dublin and Man.

flood, when living things multiplied, and the earth was replenished with them in all parts, the islands were formed not by any violent or sudden action, but gradually by alluvial deposits.⁹²

Chapter XVII: Of Thule, the western island, very celebrated among the orientals, though it be totally unknown to the people of the west.

Thule, which is said to be the furthest of the Western islands, is very remarkable for having been well known among the Orientals both in name and position, although entirely unknown to the people of the West.⁹³ Virgil says to Augustus:

“——et tibi serviat ultima Thule.”

“And furthest Thule own thy rule.”

And Solinus mentions Thule as the furthest among the islands which surround Britain. He says that at the summer solstice there is no night there, and at the winter solstice no day; and both Solinus and Isidore relate that beyond Thule lies the thick and frozen ocean.

Solinus places Thule, the most remote island in the ocean, between the Northern and Western regions beyond Britain, and says it derives its name from the sun, because the sun causes the summer solstice there, and beyond it there is no day. But this island is so unknown to the people of the West, that it appears that no one of the western or northern islands have the same name or character. We find, however, that in the furthest parts of the Arctic regions, the sun in summer is seen by the inhabitants revolving constantly for several nights about the edge of the earth, but above the horizon; and when it returns from the constellation of Capricorn, as though under the dark confines of the Antarctic pole, the cheerful beams of that luminary vanish during the same space of days. Either, therefore, Thule is an island as fabulous as it was famous, or it must be looked for in the most remote and distant recesses of the northern ocean, far off under the Arctic pole. Hence Orosius, speaking with more certainty than others respecting doubtful points, says that Thule, which is separated on all sides by boundless space from the rest of the world, and faces towards the south in the midst of the ocean, is known but to few persons, and to them imperfectly. Augustine, however, in his twenty first book, *De Civitate Dei*, says that Thule, an island in India, is to be preferred to other lands, because there the trees which it produces keep their leaves all the whole year round. So that it appears to be situated in India. But he was led astray by a doubtful meaning, which is more apparent than real; for Tylis is the name of the one, Tyle (Thule) of the other. Hence Isidore also says, Tylis is an island of India, where the leaves are always green. And, again, Solinus says, Tylis is an

⁹²Although islands and deltas are formed by diluvial deposits at the mouths of rivers, the theory that such islands as those on the north coast of Scotland, of which Giraldus is treating, had such origin, is only suited to the state of science in the times of our author. These islands were more probably severed from the mainland by the action of the strong currents and the storms of the Northern Ocean, through a process of disintegration, which is still going on. See Lyell's *Elements of Geology*, pp. 299–301. Giraldus raises in this chapter another curious question, which, on received opinions, we are as little able to solve as he was, how, not to say venomous creatures only, but all animals replenished (*impleverunt*) not only the remoter islands, but, we may add, continents.

⁹³It is a question full of doubt, to what island the ancients applied the name of Thule, or rather, it is probable that at different times they applied it to different islands, for they seem to have wished to indicate by it the most distant, land towards the North-west of which they had any intelligence. Some have supposed that it was Iceland; others, that it was some one of the most distant islands off the northern coast of Scotland; and others, again, have held that by Thule the Romans meant Norway.

island in India,⁹⁴ which bears palms, produces oil, and abounds in vines, and it excels all lands in the miracle that every tree which grows there is clothed with perpetual verdure.

Chapter XVIII: Of the Giants' Dance, which was transferred from Ireland to Britain.

In ancient times there was in Ireland a remarkable pile of stones, called the Giants' Dance,⁹⁵ because the giants brought it from the furthest parts of Africa into Ireland, and set it up, partly by main strength, partly by artificial contrivances, in an extraordinary way, on the plains of Kildare, near Naas. Hence, certain stones exactly resembling the rest, and erected in the same manner, are seen there to the present day. It is wonderful how these stones, in such numbers and of such vast size, could ever be collected together on one spot, and raised upright, as well as by what mechanical contrivance others, not inferior in dimensions, were placed as lintels on top of the other massive and lofty piles, so that they appear suspended, and, as it were, hanging in the air, rather by some artificial contrivance than resting on the columns supporting them. According to the British History,⁹⁶ Aurelius Ambrosius, king of Britain, caused these stones to be transported from Ireland to Britain by the divine aid of Merlin; and in order to leave some memorial of so great a deed, they were erected on the spot where, before that time, the flower of the youth of Britain died by the concealed knives of the Saxons, who fell upon them and slew them, under the guise of peace, with their treacherous weapons.

Chapter XIX: Of the prodigies of our times, and first of a wolf which conversed with a priest.⁹⁷

I now proceed to relate some wonderful occurrences which have happened within our times. About three years before the arrival of earl John in Ireland, it chanced that a priest, who was journeying from Ulster towards Meath, was benighted in a certain wood on the borders of Meath. While, in company with only a young lad, he was watching by a fire which he had kindled under the branches of a spreading tree, lo! a wolf came up to them, and immediately addressed them to this effect: "Rest secure, and be not afraid, for there is no reason you should fear, where no fear is." The travellers being struck with astonishment and alarm, the wolf added some orthodox words referring to God. The priest then implored him, and adjured him by Almighty God and faith in the Trinity, not to hurt them, but to inform them what creature it was that in the shape of a beast uttered human words. The wolf, after giving catholic replies to all questions, added at last: "There are two of us, a man and a woman, natives of Ossory, who, through the curse of one Natalis, saint and abbot, are compelled every seven years to put off the human form, and depart from the dwellings of men. Quitting entirely the human form, we assume that of wolves. At the end of the seven years, if they chance to survive, two others being substituted in their places, they return to their country and their former shape. And now, she who is my partner in this visitation lies dangerously sick not far

⁹⁴Pliny, b. xii. c. 11, mentions an island called Tylos in the Persian Gulf; and Arrian, b. vii., one of the same name in the Indian Ocean.

⁹⁵"Chorea Gigantum," from *xorog*, a dance, or company of dancers or singers. Giraldus refers, of course, to the celebrated monument on Salisbury Plain, called Stonehenge, which the old legends represent as having been brought from Ireland.

⁹⁶By "the British History," Giraldus of course means Geoffrey of Monmouth, from whom, in fact, this account of the removal of the stones from Ireland to England is taken. See Geoffrey's British History, book viii. chapters x. to xii.

⁹⁷The belief in men who could transform themselves into wolves, was a very prevalent superstition, not only in the middle ages, but it continued in force to much more recent times, and formed part of the witchcraft superstitions, from which plenty of stories like this told by Giraldus might be collected. In England, where wolves have long disappeared, the witches of later times turned themselves into hares.

from hence, and, as she is at the point of death, I beseech you, inspired by divine charity, to give her the consolations of your priestly office.”

At this word the priest followed the wolf trembling, as he led the way to a tree at no great distance, in the hollow of which he beheld a she-wolf, who under that shape was pouring forth human sighs and groans. On seeing the priest, having saluted him with human courtesy, she gave thanks to God, who in this extremity had vouchsafed to visit her with such consolation. She then received from the priest all the rites of the church duly performed, as far as the last communion. This also she importunately demanded, earnestly supplicating him to complete his good offices by giving her the viaticum. The priest stoutly asserting that he was not provided with it, the he-wolf, who had withdrawn to a short distance, came back and pointed out a small missal-book, containing some consecrated wafers, which the priest carried on his journey, suspended from his neck, under his garment, after the fashion of the country. He then intreated him not to deny them the gift of God, and the aid destined for them by Divine Providence; and, to remove all doubt, using his claw for a hand, he tore off the skin of the she-wolf, from the head down to the navel, folding it back. Thus she immediately presented the form of an old woman. The priest, seeing this, and compelled by his fear more than his reason, gave the communion; the recipient having earnestly implored it, and devoutly partaking of it. Immediately afterwards, the he-wolf rolled back the skin, and fitted it to its original form.

These rites having been duly, rather than rightly, performed, the he-wolf gave them his company during the whole night at their little fire, behaving more like a man than a beast. When morning came, he led them out of the wood, and, leaving the priest to pursue his journey, pointed out to him the direct road for a long distance. At his departure, he also gave him many thanks for the benefit he had conferred, promising him still greater returns of gratitude, if the Lord should call him back from his present exile, two parts of which he had already completed. At the close of their conversation, the priest inquired of the wolf whether the hostile race which had now landed in the island would continue there for the time to come, and be long established in it. To which the wolf replied:—“For the sins of our nation, and their enormous vices, the anger of the Lord, falling on an evil generation, hath given them into the hands of their enemies. Therefore, as long as this foreign race shall keep the commandments of the Lord, and walk in his ways, it will be secure and invincible; but if, as the downward path to illicit pleasures is easy, and nature is prone to follow vicious examples, this people shall chance, from living among us, to adopt our depraved habits, doubtless they will provoke the divine vengeance on themselves also.”

The like judgment is recorded in Leviticus:—“All these abominations have the inhabitants of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled. Beware, therefore, that the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nation which was before you.”⁹⁸ All this was afterwards brought to pass, first by the Chaldeans, and then by the Romans. Likewise it is written in Ecclesiasticus:—“The kingdom is made over from one nation to another, by reason of their unjust and injurious deeds, their proud words, and divers deceits.”

It chanced, about two years afterwards, that I was passing through Meath, at the time when the bishop of that land had convoked a synod, having also invited the assistance of the neighbouring bishops and abbots, in order to have their joint counsels on what was to be done in the affair which had come to his knowledge by the priest’s confession. The bishop, hearing that I was passing through those parts, sent me a message by two of his clerks, requesting me, if possible, to be personally present when a matter of so much importance was under consideration; but if I could not attend, he begged me at least to signify my opinion in writing. The clerks detailed to me all the circumstances, which indeed I had heard before from other persons; and, as I was prevented by urgent business from being present at the synod, I made up for my absence by giving them the benefit of my advice in a letter. The bishop and synod, yielding to it, ordered the priest to appear before the pope with letters from them, setting forth what had occurred, with

⁹⁸Levit. xviii. 27, 28.

the priest's confession, to which instrument the bishops and abbots who were present at the synod affixed their seals.

It cannot be disputed, but must be believed with the most assured faith, that the divine nature assumed human nature for the salvation of the world; while in the present case, by no less a miracle, we find that at God's bidding, to exhibit his power and righteous judgment, human nature assumed that of a wolf. But is such an animal to be called a brute or a man? A rational animal appears to be far above the level of a brute; but who will venture to assign a quadruped, which inclines to the earth, and is not a laughing animal, to the species of man? Again, if any one should slay this animal, would he be called a homicide? We reply, that divine miracles are not to be made the subjects of disputation by human reason, but to be admired. However, Augustine, in the 16th book of his *Civit. Dei*, chapter 8, in speaking of some monsters of the human race, born in the East, some of which had the heads of dogs, others had no heads at all, their eyes being placed in their breasts, and others had various deformities, raises the question whether these were really men, descended from the first parents of mankind. At last, he concludes, "We must think the same of them as we do of those monstrous births in the human species of which we often hear; and true reason declares that whatever answers to the definition of man, as a rational and mortal animal, whatever be its form, is to be considered a man." The same author, in the 18th book of the *Civit. Dei*, chapter 18, refers to the Arcadians, who, chosen by lot, swam across a lake and were there changed into wolves, living with wild beasts of the same species in the deserts of that country. If, however, they did not devour human flesh, after nine years they swam back across the lake, and re-assumed the human form. Having thus further treated of various transformations of man into the shape of wolves, he at length adds, "I myself, at the time I was in Italy, heard it said of some district in those parts, that there the stable-women, who had learnt magical arts, were wont to give something to travellers in their cheese which transformed them into beasts of burthen, so that they carried all sorts of burdens, and after they had performed their tasks resumed their own forms."⁹⁹ Meanwhile, their minds did not become bestial, but remained human and rational." So in the Book which Apuleius wrote, with the title of the Golden Ass, he tells us that it happened to himself, on taking some potion, to be changed into an ass, retaining his human mind.

In our own time, also, we have seen persons who, by magical arts, turned any substance about them into fat pigs, as they appeared (but they were always red), and sold them in the markets. However, they disappeared as soon as they crossed any water, returning to their real nature; and with whatever care they were kept, their assumed form did not last beyond three days. It has also been a frequent complaint, from old times as well as in the present, that certain hags in Wales, as well as in Ireland and Scotland, changed themselves into the shape of hares, that, sucking teats under this counterfeit form, they might stealthily rob other people's milk. We agree, then, with Augustine, that neither demons nor wicked men can either create or really change their natures; but those whom God has created can, to outward appearance, by his permission, become transformed, so that they appear to be what they are not; the senses of men being deceived and laid asleep by a strange illusion, so that things are not seen as they actually exist, but are strangely drawn by the power of some phantom or magical incantation to rest their eyes on unreal and fictitious forms.

It is, however, believed as an undoubted truth, that the Almighty God, who is the Creator of natures, can, when he pleases, change one into another, either for vindicating his judgments, or exhibiting his divine power; as in the case of Lot's wife, who, looking back contrary to her lord's command, was turned into a pillar of salt; and as the water was changed into wine; or that, the nature within remaining the same, he can transform the exterior only, as is plain from the examples before given.

⁹⁹Similar stories are told by other old writers; see William of Malmesbury, book ii. ch. 10. It is rather amusing to find Giraldus believing that, in the metamorphosis of the ass, Apuleius was giving a bona fide relation of what had happened to himself.

Of that apparent change of the bread into the body of Christ (which I ought not to call apparent only, but with more truth transubstantial, because, while the outward appearance remains the same, the substance only is changed), I have thought it safest not to treat; its comprehension being far beyond the powers of the human intellect.

Chapter XX: Of a woman who had a beard, and a hairy crest and mane on her back.

Duvenald, king of Limerick, had a woman with a beard down to her navel, and, also, a crest like a colt of a year old, which reached from the top of her neck down her backbone, and was covered with hair. The woman, thus remarkable for two monstrous deformities, was, however, not an hermaphrodite, but in other respects had the parts of a woman; and she constantly attended the court, an object of ridicule as well as of wonder. The fact of her spine being covered with hair neither determined her gender to be male or female; and in wearing a long beard she followed the customs of her country, though it was unnatural in her. Also, within our time, a woman was seen attending the court in Connaught, who partook of the nature of both sexes, and was an hermaphrodite. On the right side of her face she had a long and thick beard, which covered both sides of her lips to the middle of her chin, like a man; on the left, her lips and chin were smooth and hairless, like a woman.

Chapter XXI: Of an animal which was half-ox, half-man.

In Wicklow (Gwykingelo), at the time Maurice Fitzgerald held possession of that territory and castle, there was seen a man-monster, if he may be called a man, the whole of whose body was human, except the extremities, which were those of an ox; they having the shape of hoofs, from the joints by which the hands are connected with the arms and the feet with the legs. His whole head was deformed by baldness, there being no hair either behind or before; but instead of it there was down in a few places. He had large eyes, round and of the colour of those of an ox. His face was flat down to the mouth, there being no protuberance of the nose, but only two orifices to serve for nostrils. He could not speak, the sounds he uttered resembling the lowing of an ox. He frequented for some time the court of Maurice, coming daily to dinner; and the food which was served he took up between the fissures of his cloven hoofs, which he used as hands. He was at last secretly put to death, a fate of which he was not deserving, in consequence of the jibes with which the young men about the castle assailed the natives of the country for begetting such monsters by intercourse with cows.

It is a fact, that shortly before the arrival of the English in the island, a cow gave birth to a man-calf, the fruit of an union between a man and a cow, in the mountains of Glendalough (Glindelachan), that tribe being especially addicted to such abominations; so that you maybe perfectly convinced that there is another instance of a progeny half-ox half-man, half-man half-ox. This creature, having followed his mother with the rest of the calves, sucking her teats for nearly a year, was afterwards admitted into human society, as it had more of the man in it than of the beast. Shall the slayer of this creature be called a homicide? Who can associate such a monster, an irrational animal, wanting altogether speech as well as reason, with the family of rational beings? On the other hand, who can disallow the claims of a creature which stands erect, laughs, and goes on two feet, to belong to the human species? Is it not true that

“Os homini sublime dedit cœlumque tueri
Jussit?”

In nature’s mould, to man the stamp is given,
Which lifts his face from earth and points his eyes to heaven.

But nature’s eccentricities of this kind must be excused, and her judgments are rather to be dreaded, than made the subject of discussion and disputation.

Chapter XXII: Of an animal engendered by a stag and a cow

Within our time, a stag had intercourse with a cow, at Chester, in Britain, and their offspring was a doe-calf. In the fore-parts, as far as the groin, it had entirely the form of a cow; but the thighs, tail, hind-legs, and feet were exactly those of a deer, with the same fur and colour. Having more of the nature of cattle about it than of a wild animal, it found its place in the herd.

Chapter XXIII: Of a goat which had intercourse with a woman.

Roderic, king of Connaught, had a white tame goat, remarkable for its flowing hair and the length of its horns. This goat had intercourse, bestially, with the woman to whose care it had been committed; the wretched creature having seduced it to become the instrument of gratifying her unnatural lust, rather than that the animal was the guilty actor. O foul and disgraceful deed! How dreadfully has reason given the reins to sensuality! How brutally does the lord of brutes, discarding his natural privileges, descend to the level of brutes, when he, rational animal, submits to such intercourse with a beast! For although on both sides it is detestable and abominable, it is by far the least that brutes should be entirely submissive to rational creatures. But though brutes are destined by nature for the service of men, they were created for use, not abuse. The indignation of nature, strongly repudiating it, thus vents itself in verse:

“Omnia jam novitate placent, nova grata voluptas,
Et naturalis inveterata Venus.
Arte minus natura placet, consumitur usus;
In reprobos ratio, jam ratione carens.
Vis genitiva gemit, violata cupidinis arte,
Et violans vindex publicat ira scelus.
Pandit enim natura nefas, proditque pudorem
Criminis infandi, prodigiosa creans.”

Chapter XXIV: Of a lion that was enamoured of a woman.

I saw at Paris a lion which some cardinal had presented, when it was a whelp, to Philip, the son of king Louis.¹⁰⁰ This lion was in the habit of having bestial intercourse with a silly girl, whose name was Joan. If, by any chance, it broke out of its den, and became so infuriated that no one dared to approach it, Joan was called, and instantly disarmed its malice and pacified its rage. Soothed by female allurements, it followed her where she pleased, and immediately changed its fury to love. Both of these brutes merited a shameful death. But not only in modern times have these abominations been attempted, but in the earliest ages, remarkable for their greater innocence and simplicity of manners, society was polluted by these infamous vices. Thus we find it written in Leviticus:—“If a woman approach unto any beast and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast shall be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them.”¹⁰¹ The beast was commanded to be slain, not for its guilt, of which its nature as a brute exculpated it, but as a memorial, to recall to the mind the enormity of the sin. It is also the opinion of many persons, that the story of Pasiphaë being leaped by a bull was not a mere fable, but an actual fact.

¹⁰⁰The celebrated Philippe Auguste, son of Louis VII. or Louis le Jeune. Philippe reigned over France from 1180 to 1223, but at the time Giraldus wrote this book he had not yet succeeded to the throne.

¹⁰¹Levit. xx. 16.

Chapter XXV: That cocks in Ireland crow at different hours from those in other countries.

Cocks at roost in Ireland do not, as in other countries, divide the third and last watches of the night, by crowing at three successive periods in the interval. Here they are heard a little before dawn; and the day is known to be as far off from the first cock crowing here as it is elsewhere from the third. Nor is it to be supposed that they have here a different nature from those in other countries; for cocks which are brought over to the island from other parts crow here at these periods. As Britain is satisfied with a short night, so is Ireland; and it is all the shorter for the sun's setting so much nearer the west. But the shorter the night is here, so much faster the day breaks after cock-crow. Hence always in the summer time the rising morn, as it were, soon brings on day; and as the sun dips its rays but little under the earth, all night long there is light in the sky about the horizon.

Chapter XXVI: Of wolves which whelped in the month of December.

In Ireland, the wolves often have whelps in the month of December, either in consequence of the great mildness of the climate, or, rather, in token of the evils of treason and rapine, which are rife here before their proper season.

Chapter XXVII: Of the ravens and owls which once had young ones at Christmas.

At the Christmas when earl John first quitted the island, the ravens and owls had young ones in several parts of Ireland, and particularly in Meath, prognosticating, perchance, the occurrence of some new and premature event. Thus was proclaimed the fatal death, in the same year, of Hugh de Lacy, the lord of that territory, through the treachery of his subjects.¹⁰²

Chapter XXVIII: Of miracles; and, first, of the apples, and ravens, and blackbirds of St. Keiwin.

Let us now pass to the miracles, beginning with those of St. Keiwin, the illustrious confessor and abbot.¹⁰³ When St. Keiwin had become celebrated for his life and sanctity at Glindelachan,¹⁰⁴ a noble boy, one of his scholars, happened to fall sick, and had a craving for some apples. The saint, taking compassion on him, and having prayed to the Lord, a willow-tree, which stood near the church, bore apples, to the relief of the boy as well as of other sick persons. And even to the present day that willow, and other sets from it, planted in the neighbouring cemetery, produce apples every year, as if it were an orchard,

¹⁰²For Hugh de Lacy see afterwards b. ii. cc. 18–20, and 22 of the “Conquest of Ireland.”

¹⁰³St. Kevin was born, according to the legend, soon after St. Patrick, in the year 498, being related to the O'Tooles, the ancient kings of this part of Ireland. He was baptized by St. Cronan, educated by Petroc a Briton, and went into a monastery, from which he visited St. Columba and many other famous contemporary saints. Retiring to the wilderness of Glendalough, he is said to have founded there the abbey and cathedral, and other churches, the remains of which are still seen. St. Kevin lived a hundred and twenty years, and died on the 3rd June, 618, which day is commemorated by a “patron,” or festival, held in the Valley of the Seven Churches.

¹⁰⁴Glen-da-lough, or the Valley of the Two Lakes, lies in a hollow of the Wicklow mountains, about twenty-two Irish miles from Dublin. It is almost surrounded by lofty and precipitous mountains, the highest summit of which stands 2,268 feet above the level of the sea. Two dark lakes wind in the bottom of the valley; and the principal ruins are finely grouped on a green knoll, which slopes gradually from the breast of a mountain ridge, in the lower part of the valley. The most interesting of these buildings is the church called “St. Kevin's Kitchen,” one of the few remaining stone-roofed buildings in Ireland, and a “Round Tower.”

although in other respects, such as their boughs and leaves, the trees retain their natural properties.¹⁰⁵ These apples are white, and of an oblong shape, and more wholesome than pleasant to the taste. They are held in great reverence by the natives, who call them St. Keiwin's apples; and many carry them to the most distant parts of Ireland, as remedies for various diseases.

On the feast-day of the same saint, the ravens at Glindelachan, in consequence of his curse for his scholars having accidentally spilt their milk, neither come on the ground nor taste food; but, flying round the village and church, and making a loud cawing, enjoy no rest or refreshment on that day.¹⁰⁶

In Italy likewise, at the famous city of Ravenna, on the feast day of St. Apollinaris, the ravens, crows, and jackdaws flock together every year from all parts of Italy, as if by appointment. By ancient custom, the carcass of a horse is given them on that day. If you ask a question respecting this fact, and demand the reason, I do not venture to assign any, unless that from long use, through an extended period of time, custom has become a second nature, and "where the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." More probably, however, the matter is connected with some miracle of the saint. Hence, from this gathering of the ravens, the city was called at first Ravensburgh, which means the Town of Ravens, from which, as some conjecture, the name was altered to Ravenna.

Moreover, when St. Vincent was beheaded in Spain, the ravens which pounced upon his body, as they would on a carcass, all fell dead. And as the misdoings of an individual generally react on those of his kind, so here, as a punishment for this daring act, by the interposition of divine grace, which He wonderfully shows forth in his saints, from that hour ravens constantly settle and keep watch about the body of the martyr. Hence, when it was translated by sea from Carthage,¹⁰⁷ (I mean the Spanish and not the African town of that name) to Lisbon, even then ravens constantly hovered about the ship in which the body was conveyed. Moreover, in the church of St. Vincent, at Lisbon, where the remains of the saint first deposited in a splendid shrine, ravens were wont to roost round the altar, even to almost modern times. There were about six of them, not always the same, but different ones in succession. In token of this, the signs¹⁰⁸ which pilgrims bring away from thence, impressed with the martyr's image, have also on them the effigy of a raven. In common phrase this martyr is also called St. Vincent de Corvo, so that an occurrence after his death gave him a surname, which did not belong to him when he was alive.

¹⁰⁵The tradition of St. Kevin's willow-apples is still current at Glendalough, but the trees have disappeared, and the veneration paid to them appears to be transferred to a group of ancient thorn-bushes standing between the cathedral and the lake, and supposed to have been planted by the hands of the saint.

¹⁰⁶We have not met with any explanation of the cause of St. Kevin's wrath against the ravens at Glendalough, which forms a contrast with his humane conduct to a blackbird, related at the close of this chapter. According to a story which rests only on the legends of tradition, the skylark also fell under the saint's ban. When St. Kevin was building the churches in the valley, he observed that the masons and labourers employed in the pious work were gradually losing their health and vigour; and on his inquiring the cause, it was found that their hours of labour were regulated by the maxim, "to rise with the lark and lie down with the lamb." Now the lark in the valley used to rise so unconscionably early, that the labourers were insensibly led into insupportable hardships; and to remove this evil the saint prayed that the lark might never be permitted to sing in the valley of Glendalough; which petition was accordingly granted. This tradition is alluded to in one of Moore's Irish Melodies, while the subject is taken from another legend of St. Kevin, the love of the hapless Cathleen:—

"By that lake, whose gloomy shore
Skylark never warbles o'er," &c.

¹⁰⁷Carthagen, in Spain.

¹⁰⁸The medieval practice of pilgrims bringing away signs or tokens, generally cast in lead, of the saints whose shrines they had visited, is now well known to antiquaries, and abundance of these pilgrims' signs are found in collections. They generally represent figures or emblems of the particular saint visited, and often both.

When the body of St. Firmin, bishop of Auch,¹⁰⁹ and a native of Narbonne, was carried through some parts of the province to Auch, the oxen which drew the vehicle being unyoked and turned out to graze, one of them was suddenly devoured by a bear. On discovering this, St. Ferreolus, who was nephew of St. Firmin, and the conductor of the noble procession, as well as St. Firmin's immediate successor in his episcopal see, instantly calling on the name of God, summoned the bear before him, who, making his appearance, forthwith submitted his neck to the yoke, and devoutly took the place of the ox he had slain as his successor in drawing the load. The body of St. Firmin having been thus miraculously drawn from that spot for several miles to the city of Auch, and his obsequies celebrated there with great pomp, the bear, having obtained, as it were, the permission of St. Firmin, returned unhurt to his mountain lair. Moreover, every year afterwards, as long as he lived, he regularly came to the church on the festival of St. Firmin, and, laying aside for the time all the ferocity of a beast of prey, he showed himself to the people as a tame animal, allowing them to touch and stroke him; as if he were ready to undergo the punishment merited by his atrocious act, and the offence he had committed. Wherefore, his skin, carefully preserved in the church of St. Firmin to the present day, is held in great veneration, and is shewn to travellers and pilgrims as a memorial of this great miracle.

In the region of Constantinople, in the province of the Chersonese, where the body of St. Clement was miraculously discovered in the sea,¹¹⁰ the festival of the saint is held every year, and, during about eight days, the waters recede from the shore further than was ever known for ages before, and leave the bed of the sea dry, a miraculous road for the people and pilgrims who devoutly come to the feast. The solemnities ended, the wide sea flows all around, returning to its ancient bounds, and immediately occupies the whole space; nor can any traces of the road be discovered until the return of the, same period in the revolving year. Thus, even in our days, on whom the ends of the world are come, the glorious miracle of the Red Sea is wont to be represented, in some sort, every year. Blessed, therefore, be the Lord God of Israel, who alone doeth wondrous things, and blessed be the name of his Majesty for ever. For to set forth the merits of his saints, and still to glorify on earth those who are glorified in heaven, birds and seas obey his commands. But enough of these: let us now return to our Keiwin.

St. Keiwin, then, upon some occasion, when, during the season of Lent, he had fled, as he was wont, from converse with men, retired to a little cabin in the wilderness, where, sheltered only from the sun and rain, he gave himself up to contemplation, and spent all his time in reading and prayer.¹¹¹ One morning,

¹⁰⁹Auch is a very ancient city, the seat of an archbishop, in the S.W. of France, twenty leagues from Toulouse. The ancient cathedral and best part of the place stand on an elevated ridge commanding a view of the Pyrenees, and washed at its foot by the river Gers, which, running northward, falls into the Garonne.

¹¹⁰St. Clement, the second or third Bishop of Rome, is said to have been banished by a rescript of the Emperor Trajan, "to the city of Cherson, beyond the Euxine Sea." According to the legend, after making numerous converts there, Clement, in a general massacre of the Christians, was cast into the sea with an anchor attached to his neck. In the midst of the grief of the survivors of his flock, a strange spectacle was presented to their view. The sea receded for almost three miles from the shore, and the people, walking on dry land, discovered a small building, having the appearance of a marble chapel, built by angelic hands, and the body of St. Clement deposited therein in a stone coffin by the ministry of angels, with the anchor by which the body had been sunk laid near. It was revealed to the disciples that they should not remove the body, as on the recurrence of the anniversary of St. Clement's martyrdom, the sea would again recede, and for seven days permit approach to the tomb.—Orderic. Vital., B. II. c. xviii. (vol. i. p. 316, in *Bohn's Antiq. Lib.*)

¹¹¹The site assigned to this retreat of St. Kevin is one of the most romantic spots in the valley of Glendalough. Beneath the dark and frowning cliff of Lugduff, on a little patch of arable land, are the low ruins of the church of Rhefeart, *the sepulchre of kings*, overgrown with ivy and wild shrubbery, beneath which a slab of grey marble marks the tombs of the great O'Tooles, the former kings of this territory, seven of whom are supposed to lie there. The church is also called Teampull-na-Skellig, the temple of the desert or rock, and St. Kevin's cell. It must not be

having raised his hand to heaven, as was his custom, through the window, it chanced that a blackbird pitched upon it and laid her eggs in his palm, treating it as her nest. The saint, taking pity on the bird, shewed so much gentleness and patience that he neither drew in nor closed his hand, but kept it extended and adapted it to the purpose of a nest, without wearying, until the young brood was entirely hatched. In perpetual memory of this wonderful occurrence, all the images of St. Keiwin throughout Ireland represent him with a blackbird in his extended hand.

Chapter XXIX: Of St. Colman's teal, which were tamed by him, and cannot be injured.

There is in Leinster a small pool frequented by the birds of St. Colman,¹¹² a species of small ducks, vulgarly called teal (*cercellæ*). Since the time of the saint, these birds have become so tame that they take food from the hand, and until the present day exhibit no signs of alarm when approached by men. They are always about thirteen in number, as if they formed the society of a convent.¹¹³ As often as any evil chances to befall the church or clergy, or the little birds themselves, or any molestation is offered them, they directly fly away, and, betaking themselves to some lake far removed from thence, do not return to their former haunts until condign punishment has overtaken the offenders. Meanwhile, during their absence, the waters of the pond, which were before very limpid and clear, become stinking and putrid, unfit for the use either of men or cattle. It has happened occasionally that some person fetching water from this pond in the night-time, has drawn up with it one of the birds, not purposely but by chance, and having cooked his meat in the water for a long time without being able to boil it, at last he has found the bird swimming in the pot, quite unhurt; and having carried it back to the pond, his meat was boiled without further delay.

It happened, also, in our time, that as Robert Fitz-Stephen, with Dermot, king of Leinster, was passing through that country,¹¹⁴ an archer shot one of these birds with an arrow. Carrying it with him to his quarters, he put it in a pot to be cooked with his meat, but after thrice supplying the fire with wood, and waiting till midnight, he did not succeed in making the pot boil, so that after taking out the meat for the third time, he found it as raw as when he first placed it in the pot. At last, his host observing the little bird among the pieces of meat, and hearing that it was taken out of this pond, exclaimed with tears: "Alas me, that ever such a misfortune should have befallen my house, and have happened in it! For this is one of St. Colman's birds." Thereupon the meat being put alone into the pot, was cooked without further difficulty. The archer soon afterwards miserably expired.

Moreover, it chanced that a kite, having carried off one of these little birds, and perched with it in a neighbouring tree, behold, all his limbs immediately stiffened in the sight of many persons, nor did the robber regard the prey which he held in his claws. It also happened that one frosty season a fox carried off one of these birds, and when the morning came, the beast was found in a little hut on the shore of the lake which was held in veneration from its having been formerly the resort of St. Colman, the bird being in the fox's jaws, and having choked him. In both cases the spoiler suffered the penalty of death, while his prey was unhurt, the birds returning to the lake without the slightest injury, under the protection of their holy patron.

confounded with "St. Kevin's Bed," a narrow cave in the face of an escarped rock, hanging perpendicularly thirty feet over the waters of the upper lake.

¹¹²Colman was an Irish ecclesiastic of the seventh century, who succeeded Finan as bishop of Lindisfarne, but in consequence of the great dispute on the subject of Easter, he abandoned his bishopric, and returned to Ireland, where he established a monastery in the isle of Inisbofinde. He died there in 676.

¹¹³A religious convent, strictly speaking, consisted of thirteen monks, or nuns, of whom one was prior or prioress.

¹¹⁴See afterwards, "Conquest of Ireland," Part I. c. iv.

Chapter XXX: Of the stone in which a cavity is every day miraculously filled with wine.

In the southern part of Munster, in the neighbourhood of Cork, there is an island with a church dedicated to St. Michael, famed for its orthodox sanctity from very ancient times. There is a stone outside the porch of this church, on the right hand, and partly fixed in the wall, with a hollow in its surface, which, every morning, through the merits of the saint to whom the church is dedicated, is filled with as much wine as will conveniently suffice for the service of the masses on the day ensuing, according to the number of priests there who have to celebrate them. A like miracle is mentioned in the Dialogues of St. Gregory, where he speaks of a certain Campanian monk named Martin, who secluded himself for many years in a narrow cave of Mount Marisco. The first miracle he wrought was that, on closing the hole in the mountain in which he shut himself up, he caused a fresh rill of water to gush forth from the hollow of the rock in which he had dug out his narrow cave. It dropped just enough for the daily use of the servant of God, with none to spare, nor was a sufficiency ever wanting.

Chapter XXXI: Of the fleas which were got rid of by St. Nannan.

There is a village in Connaught celebrated for a church dedicated to St. Nannan, where swarms of fleas had so multiplied during a long course of years, that the plague with which they were infested drove nearly all the inhabitants away, and the place became deserted. At length, by the intercession of St. Nannan, they were expelled into a neighbouring meadow, and not a single one could afterwards be found in the village, so largely did the Divine influence overflow in that place through the merits of the saint. The fleas, however, swarmed in the meadow in such numbers, that neither man nor beast could venture to enter it.

Chapter XXXII: Of the rats which were expelled by St. Yvorus.

There is in the province of Leinster a district called Fernigenan (Ferns), which is only separated from Wexford by the river Slaney. From this district the larger species of mice, commonly called rats, were so entirely expelled by the curse of St. Yvorus, the bishop, whose books they had probably gnawed, that none were afterwards bred there, or could exist if they were introduced.

Chapter XXXIII: Of a wandering bell.

In Leinster, in the land of Mactalewi, there is a bell, which, unless it is adjured by its keeper every night with an exorcism composed for the purpose, and fastened by some cord, however slight, is found next morning at Clunarech, in Meath, in the church of St. Finnan, from which it had come. It is certain that this occurred on several occasions.

Chapter XXXIV: Of various miracles in Kildare; and first, of the fire which never goes out, and the ashes which never increase.

At Kildare, in Leinster, celebrated for the glorious Brigit, many miracles have been wrought worthy of memory. Among these, the first that occurs is the fire of St. Brigit, which is reported never to go out. Not that it cannot be extinguished, but the nuns and holy women tend and feed it, adding fuel, with such watchful and diligent care, that from the time of the Virgin, it has continued burning through a long course

of years; and although such heaps of wood have been consumed during this long period, there has been no accumulation of ashes.¹¹⁵

Chapter XXXV: How the fire is kept alive by St. Brigit on her night.

As in the time of St. Brigit twenty nuns were here engaged in the Lord's warfare, she herself being the twentieth, after her glorious departure, nineteen have always formed the society, the number having never been increased. Each of them has the care of the fire for a single night in turn, and, on the evening before the twentieth night, the last nun, having heaped wood upon the fire, says, "Brigit, take charge of your own fire; for this night belongs to you." She then leaves the fire, and in the morning it is found that the fire has not gone out, and that the usual quantity of fuel has been used.

Chapter XXXVI: Of the hedge round the fire, which no male can enter.

This fire is surrounded by a hedge, made of stakes and brushwood, and forming a circle, within which no male can enter; and if any one should presume to enter, which has been sometimes attempted by rash men, he will not escape the divine vengeance. Moreover, it is only lawful for women to blow the fire, fanning it or using bellows only, and not with their breath. Moreover, by virtue of a curse pronounced by the virgin, goats here never have any young. In this neighbourhood there are some very beautiful meadows called St. Brigit's pastures, in which no plough is ever suffered to turn a furrow. Respecting these meadows, it is held as a miracle that although all the cattle in the province should graze the herbage from morning till night, the next day the grass would be as luxuriant as ever. It may be said, indeed, of them,

"Et quantum longis carpunt armenta diebus,
Exigua tanturn gelidus ros nocte reponit."¹¹⁶

"Cropt in a summer's day by herds, the dew's
Refreshing moisture verdure still renews."

Chapter XXXVII.: Of the falcon in Kildare which appeared tame and domesticated.

From the time of Brigit, a beautiful falcon frequented that spot, and was accustomed to perch on the top of the church tower.¹¹⁷ Hence it was popularly called Brigit's bird, and held by all in great veneration. At the beck of the townspeople or of the knights in the castle, just as if it was tamed and trained for the purpose, it would chase ducks and other birds, both those which frequent the plains and the rivers in the plain of Kildare, to the great delight of the spectators, pouncing upon them in the air, and striking them to

¹¹⁵St. Brigit, or Bridget, the illegitimate daughter of an Irish chieftain, was born, according to the legend, in 453, and at the age of fourteen received the veil from the hands of St. Patrick, or one of his immediate disciples. She founded a nunnery at Kildare, over which she presided, and where she was buried on her death, in the odour of sanctity, and having wrought many miracles, in 523. Her remains were afterwards removed, as Giraldus informs us, under his own superintendence to Down. See Dist. iii. c. 18. In a sanctuary attached to, or near the Abbey, a perpetual fire, instituted by St. Brigit, was kept up by the nuns, like that of Vesta by her virgins at Rome. It will be seen in the ensuing chapters what veneration was paid to this sacred fire, which General Vallancy supposes to have been a tradition of Eastern origin. Henry de Londres, archbishop of Dublin, caused it to be extinguished in 1220; but it was afterwards renewed, and continued till the suppression of monasteries by Henry VIII.

¹¹⁶Virg. Georg. ii. 201, 2.

the ground with its instinctive velocity. What chance of escape was left to these poor birds, when the ground and the waters were beset by man, and their cruel tyrant had possession of the air! It was remarkable in this falcon, that it never suffered any bird to pair with it in the neighbourhood of the church which it frequented, but at the proper season withdrew to the mountains of Glendalough (Glindelachan),¹¹⁸ and pairing there, in the usual manner, indulged its natural instinct. This ended, it returned to the church without its mate; thus setting a good example to ecclesiastical persons, and especially to those engaged in divine offices within the recesses and precincts of a church. At the time of earl John's first departure from Ireland, this bird, after existing so many centuries, and affording so much delight, as well as adding glory to St. Brigit's shrine, at length, incautiously settling on a quarry it had pierced, and fearless of the footsteps of man, was killed by the staff of some passing rustic. Hence it is evident, that in prosperity we ought to be prepared for misfortune, and that we must not trust in the prospect of long life and cherished happiness.

Chapter XXXVIII: Of a book miraculously written.

Among all the miracles in Kildare, none appears to me more wonderful than that marvellous book which they say was written in the time of the Virgin [St. Brigit] at the dictation of an angel. It contains the Four Gospels according to St. Jerom, and almost every page is illustrated by drawings illuminated with a variety of brilliant colours. In one page you see the countenance of the Divine Majesty supernaturally pictured; in another, the mystic forms of the evangelists, with either six, four, or two wings; here are depicted the eagle, there the calf; here the face of a man, there of a lion; with other figures in almost endless variety. If you observe them superficially, and in the usual careless manner, you would imagine them to be daubs, rather than careful compositions; expecting to find nothing exquisite, where, in truth, there is nothing which is not exquisite. But if you apply yourself to a more close examination, and are able to penetrate the secrets of the art displayed in these pictures, you will find them so delicate and exquisite, so finely drawn, and the work of interlacing so elaborate, while the colours with which they are illuminated are so blended, and still so fresh, that you will be ready to assert that all this is the work of angelic, and not human, skill. The more often and closely I scrutinize them, the more I am surprised, and always find them new, discovering fresh causes for increased admiration.¹¹⁹

Chapter XXXIX: How the book was composed.

Early in the night before the morning on which the scribe was to begin the book, an angel stood before him in a dream, and showing him a picture drawn on a tablet which he had in his hand, said to him, "Do you think that you can draw this picture on the first page of the volume which you propose to copy?" The scribe, who doubted his skill in such exquisite art, in which he was uninstructed and had no practice, replied that he could not. Upon this the angel said, "On the morrow, intreat your Lady to offer prayers for

¹¹⁷One of the finest round towers in Ireland is still standing at Kildare, and it is supposed to be the same which Giraldus here calls *ecclesiastica turris*. See the note to D. ii. c. 9.

¹¹⁸See before, c. xxviii.

¹¹⁹If the manuscript were written in the time of St. Brigit, who flourished in the fifth century, having been born in the year 439, its rich style of ornament might well be supposed miraculous among a people so little conversant with art as the Irish of that age. The Book of Kildare is unfortunately lost; but there is preserved in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, an early copy of the Gospels, called the "Book of Kells," which for the beauty and splendour of its calligraphy and illuminations is not surpassed by any of its age that is known to exist. Indeed, as Mr. Petrie remarks, on looking at this exquisite piece of penmanship, it is difficult to avoid thinking that it is the very manuscript so elaborately described by Giraldus.

you to the Lord, that he would vouchsafe to open your bodily eyes, and give you spiritual vision, which may enable you to see more clearly, and understand with more intelligence, and employ your hands in drawing with accuracy.” The scribe having done as he was commanded, the night following the angel came to him again, and presented to him the same picture, with a number of others. All these, aided by divine grace, the scribe made himself master of, and faithfully committing them to his memory, exactly copied in his book in their proper places. In this manner the book was composed, an angel furnishing the designs, St. Brigit praying, and the scribe copying.

Chapter XL: Of the places of refuge miraculously protected by the saints.

In the farthest part of Ulster, there are some mountains in which cranes and *grutæ*,¹²⁰ and various other birds, build their nests during the season in vast numbers, on account of the peaceful asylum it offers not only to men, but also to beasts and birds, who are unmolested by the natives out of reverence for St. Beanus, whose church gives celebrity to the place. The saint protects not only the birds, but their eggs, in a wonderful and unheard-of manner. For if you put forth your hand to rob them of their eggs, you instantly see a brood of young birds, but red and flaccid, as if they had been hatched that same hour. Withdraw your hand spontaneously, and, either by a miracle or some phantasm, you will see the brood again changed to eggs, contrary to the course of nature. Let two approach, the robber and a companion who is only a witness, and one will see chicks while the other sees eggs.

In the north of Munster, between Brendan’s hill¹²¹ and the wide sea which flows between Spain and Ireland, there is a large tract bounded on one side by a river, full of fish, and on the other by a rivulet, which, out of reverence to St. Brendan and the other saints of that place, affords a wonderful refuge, not only to men and cattle, but to the very animals which run wild, whether bred there, or migrated from some other district. Hence, both stags, wild boars, and hares, and other beasts of chase, when, pursued by the hounds following in their tracks, they perceive that they cannot otherwise escape, make for this asylum from a great distance with the utmost speed. As soon as they have crossed the rivulet, the hounds stop their running and chase them no further; so that they find themselves instantly out of danger. How wonderful is the power of God, which, through the merits of his saints, stops the impious and persevering devourers from seizing their ready prey, although their instinct is voracious, the hunters cheer them on, and the game is at their feet.

In these two places of refuge, birds and wild animals have so long enjoyed tranquillity, and become almost tame, that they do not flee from the footsteps of man. On the other side of this tract of land, there flows a river which is full of fish, and especially of salmon, in marvellous abundance. This great supply of fish was granted for the sake of supplying, in the cause of charity, sufficient means for that unwearied hospitality which the saints were in the custom of exhibiting in this place, to the utmost of their power, and beyond it, towards pilgrims and strangers. And, lest this very abundance should provoke the covetous minds of men, tempted by avarice, which is so common, to turn it to gain, a remedy was divinely provided, as in the case of the manna; for the fish can never be kept to be eatable after the first night they are taken. Even if salted, they are always liable to become putrid, and are insipid and tasteless; and if by any means they are reserved for the morrow, they can neither be eaten or used.

¹²⁰In a previous chapter, p. 35, this word has occurred, and in the note it is stated to have not been yet explained. It ought to be remarked, that some of the Irish antiquaries have translated it by “grouse,” though this interpretation does not appear to rest on very positive grounds.

¹²¹Query, Mount Brandon, in Kerry?

Chapter XLI: Of the salmon-leap.

Moreover, this river flows through and over a great rock, and falls with great force, as usual in such cases, from the top to the bottom. On the summit of the rock is a small cavity, hollowed out in old times by holy men, into which the salmons leap in great numbers from below, the distance of the length of a full-sized spear, in a manner so wonderful that it might be thought miraculous, unless such were the habits of the fish; for this species has the natural instinct to take such leaps. Hence the place derives its name of the salmon-leap.

Chapter XLII: How the salmon leap.

Their peculiar mode of leaping is as follows. Fishes of this sort naturally struggle against the stream; for as birds fly against the wind, so fishes swim up the current. Upon meeting however, with any very precipitous obstacle, they bend their tails backward towards their mouths, and sometimes, in order to gain more power for their leap, firmly compress their tails in their mouths. Then suddenly releasing themselves from the sort of circle thus formed, with a particular jerk, like the sudden reaction of a bent rod, they spring from the bottom to the top of the leap, to the great astonishment of the beholders. There is a similar leap in the river Liffy, not far from Dublin, but it is not so great.¹²² A third of these salmon-leaps is to be seen in the river Teivy in South Wales, and it is the highest of the three.¹²³

Chapter XLIII: Of the life of St. Brendan.

Among the miracles which are related of St. Brendan,¹²⁴ which have been reduced to writing, it is told with what toils he wandered over the sea during a voyage which lasted seven years. There is also an account of the various appearances of angels; of his having celebrated the feast of Easter annually during seven years on an enormous sea monster; how the most miserable, but not pitiable, traitor Judas is chained to a rock in the sea, and deprived of the blessing of light; and, finally, how after Brendan's long and indefatigable labours, and his having attained to the blissful vision of the terrestrial paradise, he, by the aid of divine grace, returned happily to his own country. These things might truly be thought incredible, except that, to those who believe, all things are possible; and that the Lord hath done whatever he would in the heaven and in the earth, in the sea, and in the depths; and that God is wonderful in his saints, and great in all his works; and that the ends of the world are always producing some new wonder. Nature, who in a sort of way maintains her dignity in public, sports with more freedom in private. If any one, however, should desire to have fuller accounts of these matters, let him read the book which is written of the life of Brendan.

¹²²Leixlip, about eight miles above Dublin. *Leax*, or *lex*, was the Anglo-Saxon name for the salmon.

¹²³Giraldus mentions the salmon-leap on the Teivy, in his Itinerary of Wales, lib. ii. c. 3.

¹²⁴St. Brendan, or Brandan, was the legendary navigator of the Middle Ages, and was made to be an Irishman, because Ireland presented a bold front to the Western Ocean. His legend appears to be made up of various traditionary stories of adventures of men who were carried out to sea, or ventured out to sea, to a great distance westward, and some of whom, perhaps, reached the Canary islands, and even the coast of America. The legend of St. Brandan was very popular from the twelfth century downwards, and was published first in a Latin narrative, and subsequently in translations in all the languages of Western Europe. The original Latin text, and several of the translations, have been printed.

Chapter XLIV: Of the cross at Dublin which spake and bore testimony to the truth.

We come now to treat of occurrences in modern times. There is a cross possessed of great virtues in the church of the Holy Trinity at Dublin, and having the features of a crucifix. Not many years before the arrival of the English, namely, in the time of the Ostmen,¹²⁵ this crucifix opened its sacred mouth and spoke in the presence of many persons who heard the words. The circumstances were these: one of the citizens had invoked the crucifix as the sole witness, and a kind of surety, in a contract which he had entered into. In process of time, however, the party with whom he had contracted repudiating his engagements, and persisting in denying his obligation for the money which the other had lent him on his credit, his fellow citizens, rather ironically than seriously, tried the case before the cross, and having assembled in the church for that purpose, the crucifix, on being adjured and called to witness, gave testimony to the truth in the presence of many persons who heard the words.

Chapter XLV: How the same cross became immoveable.

At the time that earl Richard¹²⁶ came first with an army to Dublin, the citizens, having a presage in their minds of the many evils which were impending, and fearing that the city would be taken, as they despaired of its defence, were contriving how they could make their escape by sea, and wished to carry away this cross with them to the islands. They used every effort in their power to effect this; but the whole population of the city failed to move it from its place either by force or contrivance.

Chapter XLVI: How a penny, offered before the cross, twice leapt back, but the third time, after confession made, remained, and of the iron greaves that were miraculously restored.

After the city was taken, as a certain archer, among others, was offering a penny before the cross, when he retired, it flew back behind him; and upon his taking it up and again carrying it back to the cross, the same thing happened a second time, to the surprise of many beholders. He then confessed, in the presence of the multitude, that he had that day pillaged the bishop's residence within the precincts of that same church. Upon this, being enjoined to give up the money, and having restored everything which he had pillaged, he brought back the same penny for the third time, with great fear and reverence, to the foot of the cross, where at length it remained motionless.

Moreover, some young man in the household of earl Richard, when Raymond¹²⁷ was constable, having stole a pair of iron greaves, the whole of the household purged themselves of the guilt upon their oaths, before the crucifix already mentioned, in the church of the Holy Trinity. Not long afterwards, this young man, on his return from England, where he had gone under no suspicion of the robbery, threw himself at the feet of Raymond, worn to a skeleton, and in great misery on account of the crime he had committed, and offered to make satisfaction and implored forgiveness. He also made public confession that he had suffered such severe persecution from the cross, which from the time of his perjury had seemed to hang constantly about his neck with a heavy weight, that he could never afterwards sleep or enjoy any rest. Thus, at the period of our first arrival, this cross, so generally venerated for these and other various virtues and signs, shewed itself to be worthy of the reverence it here receives.

¹²⁵See afterwards, Distinction iii., c. 43.

¹²⁶Richard Strongbow, earl of Strigul. See afterwards, in B. i. cc. 2 and 12 of our author's History of the Conquest of Ireland.

¹²⁷See History of the Conquest of Ireland, B. ii. c. 2.

Chapter XLVII: Of a phrenetic man at ferns, who predicted future events.

When the Fitz-Maurices had obtained possession of the castle of Ferns, a young man of their household, who had received the surname of "The Phantastic," having pillaged the church of St. Maidoc, immediately fell into a phrenzy and became mad. Inspired also by some spirit, I know not of what kind, he began to prophesy, and foretold future events. "I behold," he said, "our men slain with the sword," mentioning several by name, "and the castle laid in ruins; and it is no longer here." This he shouted from day to day, to the great astonishment of everybody; nor did he cease until there came an attack by the enemy, and in a short time all that he had predicted came to pass.

Chapter XLVIII: Of an archer who crossing St. Brigit's hedge was struck with madness; and of another who lost the use of his leg.

At Kildare, an archer belonging to the household of earl Richard leapt over the hedge of St Brigit and blew the fire with his mouth.¹²⁸ On leaping back over the hedge, he began to lose his senses, and blew into every one's mouth he met, exclaiming, "See how I blew St. Brigit's fire." In the same way, running from house to house, through the city, wherever he found a fire, he began to blow it, using the same words. At last, having been seized by his comrades and bound, he entreated to be taken to the nearest water. Being conducted there, and parched with thirst, he took such deep draughts that he burst in the midst of them, and died in their hands. Another, who attempted to enter the circle round the fire, and with that intention had already planted one of his legs across the hedge, though he was dragged back and held by his companions, had his leg and foot instantly withered; whence afterwards, as long as he lived, he was lame and an idiot.

Chapter XLIX: Of the seed-wheat which, cursed by the bishop of Cork, failed to spring up, and the next year was miraculously produced from rye.

A certain knight, at Cork, having taken possession of the land of St. Finbar, and ploughed it, without the consent of the bishop, was sowing it with seed-wheat, when the bishop of that see, coming to the spot, prohibited him in the name of God and the saints of his church from any longer forcibly occupying, or sowing the land. The knight obstinately refusing to desist from his purpose, the bishop turning back, and shedding tears, said, "I pray the Almighty that his seed may never produce you a crop." And it happened that year, to the great astonishment of all the people in the city, that those fields did not produce a single ear of corn, nor did one grain of seed germinate and spring into blade. Others having in the following year sown rye in the fields, with the bishop's consent, when autumn came they harvested ordinary wheat, having very little rye mixed with it; the grains of the rye being either miraculously changed into wheat or rather the seed of the former year, which did not then vegetate, being reserved for the harvest of the second year, through the merits of the holy man.

Chapter L: How Philip of Worcester was struck with sudden illness at Armagh, and Hugh Tyrrell divinely scourged.

Philip of Worcester having led troops during the season of Lent to Armagh, the see of St. Patrick, and the special seat of the primacy of all Ireland, and during those holy days having extorted by violence a large tribute from the sacred clergy, he was struck with a sudden illness as he returned with the spoils, and hardly escaped with his life. Moreover, Hugh Tyrrell having carried off with him to Louth a great boiler

¹²⁸See before, cc. xxxv., xxxvi.

which belonged to the convent of clerks, pursued by the maledictions of the whole body of clergy, the same night a fire broke out in his lodgings, in which the two horses which had drawn the boiler, and many other things, were burnt. Great part of the town became also a prey to the flames on that occasion. Hugh Tyrrell, finding in the morning that the boiler had received no injury, sent it back to Armagh, in a fit of penitence. The bishop of Louth, who was there at that time, said of this Hugh, in the hearing of many persons belonging to the army, "some great misfortune will certainly happen to that man during the present year; for the lamentations of so many good men, and so many maledictions, can never be uttered in vain." And this, as we have seen, came to pass before the year was ended, through the quarrel between Hugh Tyrrell and Hugh de Lacy, fomented by their followers, which plunged nearly the whole kingdom into confusion and ruin.

Chapter LI.: Of the mill which will not work on sundays, or grind any corn which has been pilfered or pillaged.

At Ossory is the mill of St. Lucherinus, the abbot, which does not work on Sundays, and never grinds any corn which has been obtained by thieving or pillage.

Chapter LII: Of the mill which no women enter.

There is a mill at Foure, in Meath, which St. Fechin made most miraculously with his own hands, in the side of a certain rock. No women are allowed to enter either this mill or the church of the saint; and the mill is held in as much reverence by the natives as any of the churches dedicated to the saint. It happened that when Hugh de Lacy was leading his troops through this place, an archer dragged a girl into the mill and there violated her. Sudden punishment overtook him; for, being struck with infernal fire in the offending parts, it spread through his whole body, and he died the same night.

Chapter LIII: How two horses, having fed on oats pillaged from this mill, immediately died.

Moreover, the army having quartered for the night in this place, Hugh de Lacy caused all the corn which they had pillaged from the churches and the mill to be restored; but a small quantity of oats which had been pilfered from the mill by two of the soldiers was surreptitiously placed by them before their steeds. One of these men became insane, and dashed his brains out the same night in the stable. The other, after a comrade had jeered those who made restitution of the corn, for their hypocritical pretences to religion, fell suddenly dead the next morning, by the side of Hugh de Lacy, in sight of the greatest part of the troops, who were filled with amazement.

Chapter LIV: How some archers at Finglass were punished by heaven.

It happened in our time, during an unusually violent thunder-storm, while king Henry was engaged in his expedition to Ireland, that several troops of archers were quartered for a time at a town of the archbishop of Dublin, called Finglass. The illustrious abbot Kenach and other holy men in succession, through whose fervent piety the place became celebrated, had formerly planted with their own hands ash trees and yews, and various other kinds of trees, round the cemetery for the ornament of the church.¹²⁹ On

¹²⁹It is a pleasant relief to the dark shades of the ascetic life of these old recluses, to picture them planting trees. *quæ alteri sæculo prosint*, for shelter and ornament in future ages, about their churches and religious houses. Finglas, an agreeable village, about two miles from Dublin, is still remarkable for its shady groves. Besides the modern

these the archers began to lay violent hands in the most irreverent and atrocious manner. For there being no woods near at hand, they fell on these trees with the usual insolence and recklessness of a depraved people and the license of soldiers, and lopping off the boughs of some of them, and tearing up others by the roots, speedily consumed nearly the whole in their fires.¹³⁰ But they were forthwith smitten by God, whose divine indignation reserves vengeance to himself, and condescends to vindicate the injuries offered to his saints, on earth, by a sudden and singular pestilence; so that most of them miserably perished within a very few days in the same village, being brought to judgment by a severe inquisitor in the same court wherein they had offended. The rest endeavoured to save themselves by flight, but the ship in which they embarked being wrecked, they found in their extremity that He who rules the land rules the sea also. Who, indeed, can flee from his presence, who can escape?

“Quo fugis ergo manum Regis, gens impia, regum?
An nescis longas regibus esse manus?”

For—

“Quo fugis ex illo, qui claudit cuncta, pugillo?”

But among a thousand kinds of deaths, that is most to be dreaded which is only the beginning of death. Thus we find that the wrath of the only true and mighty Thunderer, which had been provoked by wickedness on the earth, was vindicated by Neptune in the waves. Hear what the prophet Amos says. “He that fleeth of them shall not escape, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered. Though they go down to hell, thence shall my hand bring them up; though they climb up to heaven, thence I will bring them down; and though they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence. And though they hide themselves from my eyes in the bottom of the sea, there will I command my serpent, and he shall bite them. And though they go into captivity before their enemies, there will I command the sword, and it shall slay them; and I will set my eyes upon them for evil and not for good.”¹³¹

Listen also to Obadiah: “Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord.”¹³² Hear also Jonah, who fled from the face of the Lord, and yet he says, “I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”¹³³ On which St. Jerom thus comments: “Since he confesses him the Creator of the sea and the dry land, why should he suppose that quitting the dry land he could avoid his Maker in the sea?” Hear also the words of the Psalmist: “If I ascend up to heaven thou art there; if I go down to hell thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.”¹³⁴

cemetery, it possesses at Glassnevin the most picturesque of botanical gardens, in the grounds of which are old trees, that we may almost fancy coeval with the plantations of abbot Kenach or his successors.

¹³⁰The sentence following is omitted, it not being material to the sense, and so full of alliterations and antithesis, that it is impossible to give it point in a translation:—“Et vere *officium* illud et ab *officiendo*, non per antiphrasin sed proprie dictum est. Talibus enim ascripti *officiis*, *officiocissime* semper potius *officere* parati sunt, quam *proficere*.”

¹³¹Amos, ix. 1–4.

¹³²Obadiah, v. 4.

¹³³Jonah, i. 9.

¹³⁴Psalm cxxxix. 9.

Chapter LV: That the saints of this country appear to be of a vindictive temper.

It appears to me very remarkable, and deserving of notice, that, as in the present life the people of this nation are beyond all others irascible and prompt to revenge, so also in the life that is after death, the saints of this country, exalted by their merits above those of other lands, appear to be of a vindictive temper. There appears to me no other way of accounting for this circumstance, but this:—As the Irish people possessed no castles, while the country is full of marauders who live by plunder, the people, and more especially the ecclesiastics, made it their practice to have recourse to the churches, instead of fortified places, as refuges for themselves and their property; and, by divine Providence and permission, there was frequent need that the church should visit her enemies with the severest chastisements; this being the only mode by which evil-doers and impious men could be deterred from breaking the peace of ecclesiastical societies, and for securing even to a servile submission the reverence due to the very churches themselves, from a rude and irreligious people.

Distinction III: Of the inhabitants of this country.

For the rest, it seems now time for me to employ my pen on the first inhabitants of this country, and the various arrivals of other races, successively, in the island; and I shall relate as briefly and clearly as I can, how and from what parts they came hither, how long they stayed, or in what manner they disappeared. For a due attention to method requires that, having fixed the site of the island as lying in the ocean; having described its surface and character, and the peculiarities of the various animals which inhabit it, noticing those that are not found there; and having mentioned several new and strange objects, I should now introduce man himself, the noblest part of the creation, and for whose sake I have treated of the rest; and that I should give an account of the manner and customs of the people, the various events in their history, and their changes of fortune until the present time. So that even as the subjects of our studies in the present age are enriched by the laudable industry of ancient writers, my labours also may make some additions to the stores of knowledge handed down to posterity, although I am sensible that in comparison with theirs, I strike a weak-toned lyre, and use a feeble pen: such is the difference between us; and in speaking of my own labours I follow the example of comparing little things to great. However, I am unwilling to lead my life in idleness and sloth, as if it were not given me for the common good, but to be spent uselessly in utter selfishness, without motives for action—a mere animal existence. How far more admirable and excellent is their spirit, who do not lock up the inestimable treasure of knowledge, that noble gift of God, but with a large and commendable liberality open it gratuitously to all, freely giving with increase what they freely receive, and offering to public view the light of wisdom burning clearly and carefully trimmed, that it may shine the brighter when brought into common use. So also their designs are most laudable, who, remembering how short the days of man are, and how transitory his life, watch and labour diligently to accomplish some noble task which shall hand their names to future ages, and perpetuate their renown by works worthy of their virtues.

Chapter I: Of the first arrival of Cæsara, the granddaughter of Noah, before the flood.

According to the most ancient histories of the Irish, Cæsara, a granddaughter of Noah,¹³⁵ hearing that the flood was near at hand, resolved to escape by sailing with her companions to the farthest islands of the west, as yet uninhabited by any human being, hoping that, where sin had never been committed, the flood, its avenger, would not come. The ships in company with her having been lost by shipwreck, that in which she herself sailed, with three men and fifty women, was saved, and thrown by chance on the coast of Ireland in the year before the flood. But although, with ingenuity laudable in a woman, she had planned to escape the destined visitation, it was not in her power by any means to avoid the common and almost universal fate. The shore where the ship first came to land was called the bay of small ships, and the mound of earth in which she was buried is called the tomb of Cæsara to this day. But it appears to be

¹³⁵It is, perhaps, hardly necessary to say that all these stories relating to the first inhabitants of Ireland are in the highest degree fabulous. They are told fully in Keating's History of Ireland, which, indeed, forms the best commentary on this part of the "Topography" of Giraldus Cambrensis. According to some of the Irish legends, long before the arrival of Cæsara, Ireland had received a colony, consisting chiefly of beautiful women, led by three daughters of Cain and their husbands.

matter of doubt how, if nearly all perished in the flood, the memory of these events and of their arrival could have been preserved. However, those who first committed to writing these accounts must be answerable for them. For myself, I compile history: it is not my business to impugn it. Perhaps some record of these events was found, inscribed on a stone or a tile, as we read was the case with the art of music before the flood.

Chapter II: How Bartholanus was the second immigrant, three hundred years after the flood.

In the three-hundredth year after the flood, Bartholanus,¹³⁶ the son of Terah, a descendant from Japhet, the son of Noah, with his three sons and their wives, is reported to have landed on the coast of Ireland, either by chance or design; having either erred in their course, or, as the better opinion is, mistaken the country. He had three sons, Languinus,¹³⁷ Salanus, and Raturugus, whose names having been conferred on localities where they are still extant, their memories have been thus perpetuated, so that they seem still to live among us. Lake Lagini¹³⁸ derived its name from the eldest son; and a very high mountain, towering over the sea which flows between Britain and Ireland, is named after the second son. St. Dominic having many ages afterwards built a noble monastery at the foot of this mountain, it is now better known by the name of Mount Dominic. Raturugus, who succeeded his two brothers, gave his name to Lake Raturugus.

We find few remarkable occurrences in the time of Bartholanus; indeed not any, except that four¹³⁹ vast lakes burst suddenly out of the bowels of the earth, and four woods were felled and grubbed up, as agriculture made progress, and having been cleared with great toil, were turned into open country. For at that period the whole country, except some of the mountains, and generally even these, was overspread by immense forests and dense thickets, so that an open plain, suitable for tillage, could scarcely be found. Even to the present day such spots are very rare in comparison with the woods. However, Bartholanus and his sons and grandsons were no less fortunate in their affairs than in having a numerous posterity; for in three hundred years after their arrival, his descendants are said to have already increased to the number of nine thousand men. At length, having gained the victory in a great battle he fought with the Giants, since human prosperity is never durable, and

“Et quoniam faciles dare summa deos, eademque tueri
Difficiles; et quia summis hunc numina rebus
Crescendi posuere modum;
In se magna ruunt, summisque negatum
Stare diu, nimiumque graves sub pondere lapsus.”

“Although the gods their bounties freely send,
Slow are their aids such favours to defend,
And highest fortunes find the speediest end.
Thus great things soonest fall, the noblest die,

¹³⁶He is called in the Irish annals Partholan, and is said to have been the ninth in descent from Noah. Some MSS. of Giraldus read Serah, instead of Terah, as the name of his father. According to the Irish legend, he was driven from Greece on account of his wickedness, and passing by Sicily, and along the coasts of Spain, reached Ireland, and landed at Inber-Sceine, on the coast of Kerry on a Wednesday, the 14th day of May. This event is said to have taken place three hundred years after the deluge.

¹³⁷Another reading of the MSS. is *Langurius*.

¹³⁸*Lagurini*, according to another reading.

¹³⁹According to the Irish legends, seven lakes burst forth on the arrival of Partholan.

The loftiest totter, and in ruins lie.”

Bartholanus, with nearly all his people, was carried off by a sudden pestilence, which probably was produced by the air being corrupted by the putrefying carcasses of the slain giants. Ruanus alone is said to have escaped the mortality, and to have lived, as ancient chronicles inform us, for a vast number of years (more indeed than it is easy to believe), surviving till the time of St. Patrick, by whom he was baptized.¹⁴⁰ It is reported that he gave a faithful account of the history of Ireland, having related to St. Patrick all the national events, the memory of which had faded, from their great antiquity. For there is nothing so firmly fixed in the mind that it is not lost by neglect and the lapse of time. Notwithstanding Ruanus had extorted from death a long truce, he could not succeed in making a permanent peace with him; for, although he had warded off his attacks for a term far exceeding the common and usual bounds of this mortal life, he could not escape the fate which awaits all miserable flesh. As far as can be collected from Irish annals, Ruanus is stated to have had his life prolonged for many years beyond the utmost longevity of the ancient patriarchs, although this account may appear very incredible and open to objection.

Chapter III: How, thirdly, Nemedus came from the country of Scythia, with his four sons.

Bartolanus and all his descendants having thus perished under the stroke of a prolonged and severe pestilence, the land remained for sometime uncolonized, until Nemedus,¹⁴¹ son of Agnominius, a Scythian, was with his four sons conveyed over to the shores of the desolated country. The names of his sons were Starius, Gerbaueles, Antimus, and Fergusius. In the time of Nemedus, four lakes suddenly burst their bounds, and the inundations swept off many thickets and woods, and cleared the ground, so that it was converted into open fields. He fought four battles with the pirates¹⁴² who were continually making devastations in Ireland, and was always victorious. He died in an island on the south of Ireland, to which he bequeathed his name, which it still bears. Nemedus's sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons, with their posterity, increased so fast and in such numbers, that they soon peopled the whole island, and every corner of it, to an extent never before known. But since

“Plus gravitatis habent res quæ cum tempore crescunt, et
Rara solet subitis rebus inesse fides;”

“Things that are slow of growth, the longest last;
What springs up suddenly, decays as fast;”

¹⁴⁰A different account of the long existence of Ruanus, who is elsewhere called Tuan, is given in the *Ogygia*, p. 4:—“In varias brutorum formas per multa sæcula transmutatus, tandem circa A.D. 527, e salmone, filius Carelli regis Ultoniæ evasit.” [After having been for many ages transmuted into the shape of various animals, at last, about the year of our Lord 527, he came out from that of a salmon, as the son of Carell, king of Ulster.] It appears that the earliest Irish races held the eastern doctrine of the transmigration of souls; and fabulous accounts of the transmutation of the human species into animals received credit in Ireland even as late as the time of Giraldus. See before, *Distinct*. ii. c. 19.

¹⁴¹Nemedus, according to the legends, was the eleventh in descent from Noah, and came from the shores of the Euxine Sea, with, his four sons.

¹⁴²These were the Fomorians, powerful sea-rovers from Africa, who are celebrated in the old Irish poetry.

as their numbers had suddenly increased, so they sunk under sudden and unexpected calamities, and their fall was quicker than their rise. The greater part soon perished in the war with the Giants,¹⁴³ who were then numerous in the island, and by various sufferings and misfortunes. The rest, determining to take refuge in flight from the numberless evils with which they were threatened at that time, embarked in ships, and part of them sailed to Scythia, the rest to Greece. The descendants of Nemedus held possession of Ireland during two hundred and sixteen years; and for two hundred years afterwards it was uninhabited.

Chapter IV: Of the fourth immigration by the five brothers and sons of Dela.

These events having occurred in the order related, at length five chiefs, all brothers, who were the sons of Dela, and among the descendants of Nemedus, who had taken refuge in Greece, arrived in Ireland, and, finding it uninhabited, divided the country into five equal parts, of which each took one.¹⁴⁴ Their bounds meet at a stone standing near the castle of Kyllari, in Meath, which stone is called the navel of Ireland, because it stands in the middle of the country.¹⁴⁵ Hence that part of Ireland is called Meath (*Media*), because it lies in the middle of the island; but it formed neither of the five famous provinces whose names I have before mentioned. For when the aforesaid five brothers, Gandius, Genandius, Sagandius, Rutherrargus, and Slanius, had divided the island into five parts, each of those parts had a small portion of Meath, abutting on the stone just mentioned; inasmuch as that territory had from the earliest times been the richest part of the country, having a level plain, and being very fertile and productive of corn. Hence none of the five brothers wished to be shut out from it.

Chapter V: Of Slanius, the first sole king of Ireland.

In process of time, as fortune changed, and according to wont caused many disasters, Slanius alone obtained the monarchy of the whole of Ireland. Hence he is called the first king of Ireland. He first reunited the five portions of Meath, and forming them into one province, appropriated the whole of Meath to the royal table. Hence Meath continues to this day a separate province, since the time that Slanius, as already stated, detached it from the other five; nor does it contain as much land as one of the other five, but only one-half. For as even in the time of Slanius each of those provinces contained thirty-two cantreds, Meath was content with sixteen only. The number of all the cantreds in Ireland is one hundred and seventy-six. Cantred is a word common to both languages, British and Irish, and signifies a quantity of land usually containing one hundred vills. Including these brothers and their successors, nine kings succeeded each other; but their reigns were short, and altogether lasted only thirty years. Slanius was buried on a hill in Meath,¹⁴⁶ which takes its name from him.

¹⁴³The Nemedians, according to the Irish annals, were driven from Ireland not by giants, but by the invasion of the piratic Fomorians.

¹⁴⁴The colony brought by Dela were those known in Irish legend by the name of the Firbolgs. They are said to have arrived in Ireland in the year 1024 after the Deluge. Some antiquaries have identified them with the Belgæ, and pretend that they went from Britain to Ireland.

¹⁴⁵This spot was called Usneach, now Usny Hill, in the parish of Killare, Westmeath. It was a celebrated place of pagan worship.

¹⁴⁶Slieve Slange, now called Slieve Donard, in the county Down.

Chapter VI: Of the fifth immigration, when the sons of king Milesius came over from Spain; and how Herimon and Heber divided the land between them.

The nation being much enfeebled, and almost exterminated, by various hostilities among themselves, and still more by the war they waged, with great loss, against another branch of the posterity of Nemedus,¹⁴⁷ which had also come over from Scythia; at last, four nobles, sons of king Milesius,¹⁴⁸ arrived from Spain with a fleet of sixty ships, and quickly reduced the whole island under their dominion, no one opposing them. In process of time, the two most distinguished of these nobles, namely, Heber and Herimon, divided the kingdom between them in two equal portions, the southern part falling to Herimon, and the northern to Heber.

Chapter VII: How the brothers quarrelled, and Heber having been slain, Herimon was the first sole king of the Irish people.

After reigning jointly for some time prosperously and happily enough, as no faith can be put in a kingly consort, and power is always impatient of being shared, reckless ambition, the mother of mischief, tore asunder by degrees the ties of brotherly concord, soon broke every bond of peace, and the prosperous state of affairs was alloyed by discord, which perverts and disturbs everything. After several engagements between the brothers, with the doubtful issues common to war, victory at last declared in favour of Herimon; and his brother Heber being slain in a battle,¹⁴⁹ Herimon obtained the sole possession of the entire kingdom of Ireland, and became the first monarch of the Irish race who inhabit the island to the present day. According to some statements, the Irish (*Hibernenses*) derived their name from the aforesaid Heber; or rather, according to others, they were so named from the Hiberus (the Ebro), a river in Spain. They are likewise called Gaideli, and also Scots. Ancient histories relate that one Gaidelus, a grandson of Phœnius,¹⁵⁰ after the confusion of tongues at the tower of Nimrod, was deeply skilled in various languages. On account of this skill, Pharaoh, king of Egypt, gave him his daughter Scota for wife. Since, therefore, the Irish, as they say, derive their original lineage from these two, Gaidelus and Scota, as they were born, so are they called Gaideli and Scots. This Gaidelus, they assert, formed the Irish tongue, which is therefore called Gaidelach, as if it were collected from all languages. The northern part of the British island is also called Scotia, because a tribe which sprung from them is understood to inhabit that country. This is proved by the affinity of the two nations in language and habits, in arms as well as in customs, even to the present day.

¹⁴⁷These were the Tuatha-de-Danaan, who, according to the Irish antiquaries, came from the north of Scotland to the north of Ireland. They were, according to tradition, far more civilized than any of the colonies who preceded them.

¹⁴⁸The Milesians are the most celebrated of all the legendary colonies of Ireland, and those from whom the modern Irish claim descent.

¹⁴⁹This battle is said to have taken place near Glashill, in Offaly.

¹⁵⁰Phœnius, king of the Scythians, was the grand ancestor of the Milesian race, and the first purifier of the Irish tongue, which, according to the legend, was the general language of the human race before the confusion of tongues at Babel. He also invented the Ogham characters. Nial, Phœnius's younger son, went to Egypt, married the princess Scota, and had a son, Gaidel, from whom came the name Gael. From Scots, the Irish of the Milesian race were called Scoti, or Scots, and to them this name belonged, until it, as well as that of Gael, was carried by the Irish colonies into Scotland. Their leaders were Heber (Eiber) and Herimon, or Hereamon (Eireamon).

Chapter VIII: Of Gurguntius, king of the Britons, who brought over the Basclenses to Ireland, and settled them in the country.

According to the British History,¹⁵¹ Gurguntius, king of the Britons, the noble son of Belinus, and grandson of the famous Brennus, as he was returning from Denmark, which his father had formerly subdued, and, on its rebelling, he had again subjugated, met with a fleet in the Orkney islands, on board which the Basclenses had sailed thither from Spain. Their chieftains having presented themselves to the king, and told him whence they came, and the object of their expedition, namely, to settle in some country in the western parts, earnestly intreated him to give them land to dwell in. At length the king, by the advice of his counsellors, granted them the island, now called Ireland, which was then almost deserted, or thinly peopled, that they might settle there. He also gave them pilots from his own fleet to steer them to the island. Hence it appears that the kings of Britain have claims to Ireland by some right, although it be ancient. We read also that Arthur, the famous king of the Britons, had the kings of Ireland tributary to him, and that some of them came to his court at the great city of Caerleon.

Chapter IX: Of the triple, and new, claim.

The city of Bayonne stands on the frontier of Gascony, and is under the same government. It is also the capital of Basclonia (Biscay), from whence the Irish came. At the present day, Gascony and the whole of Aquitaine are under the same rule as Britain.¹⁵² The kings of Britain, besides this claim, have also new claims of two sorts in this respect. One is the voluntary cession and spontaneous offer of fealty by the princes of Ireland (for every one is free to renounce his own rights); the other is the confirmation of the title by the Pope.¹⁵³ For Jove thundering on the western confines of the ocean, and Henry II., king of England, directing an expedition into those parts, the petty kings of the West, alarmed at his thunderings, warded off the bolt by means of a treaty of peace.¹⁵⁴ But we shall treat of this more fully in the proper place.

Chapter X: Of the character, customs, and habits of this people.

I have considered it not superfluous to give a short account of the condition of this nation, both bodily and mentally; I mean their state of cultivation, both interior and exterior. This people are not tenderly nursed from their birth, as others are; for besides the rude fare they receive from their parents, which is only just sufficient for their sustenance, as to the rest, almost all is left to nature. They are not placed in cradles, or swathed, nor are their tender limbs either fomented by constant bathings, or adjusted with art. For the midwives make no use of warm water, nor raise their noses, nor depress the face, nor stretch the legs; but nature alone, with very slight aids from art, disposes and adjusts the limbs to which she has given birth, just as she pleases. As if to prove that what she is able to form she does not cease to shape also, she gives growth and proportions to these people, until they arrive at perfect vigour, tall and handsome in person, and with agreeable and ruddy countenances. But although they are richly endowed with the gifts

¹⁵¹This chapter is taken from Geoffrey of Monmouth, lib. iii c. 12, The Basclenses are evidently the Basques, but this colony does not appear to be admitted by the Irish writers.

¹⁵²Henry II, by his marriage with Eleanor of Guienne, acquired the duchy of Aquitaine and the county of Poitou, embracing, with their dependencies, the whole of the south-west of France, as far as the Pyrenees.

¹⁵³Giraldus has preserved the bulls of Popes Adrian and Alexander. See hereafter, Conquest of Ireland, B. ii. c. 6.

¹⁵⁴Ib. B. i. c. 32.

of nature, their want of civilization, shown both in their dress and mental culture, makes them a barbarous people. For they wear but little woollen, and nearly all they use is black, that being the colour of the sheep in this country. Their clothes are also made after a barbarous fashion.

Their custom is to wear small, close-fitting hoods, hanging below the shoulders a cubit's length, and generally made of parti-coloured strips sewn together. Under these, they use woollen rugs instead of cloaks, with breeches and hose of one piece, or hose and breeches joined together, which are usually dyed of some colour.¹⁵⁵ Likewise, in riding, they neither use saddles, nor boots, nor spurs, but only carry a rod in their hand, having a crook at the upper end, with which they both urge forward and guide their horses. They use reins which serve the purpose both of a bridle and a bit, and do not prevent the horses from feeding, as they always live on grass. Moreover, they go to battle without armour, considering it a burthen, and esteeming it brave and honourable to fight without it.

But they are armed with three kinds of weapons: namely, short spears, and two darts; in which they follow the customs of the Basclenses (Basques); and they also carry heavy battle-axes of iron, exceedingly well wrought and tempered. These they borrowed from the Norwegians and Ostmen,¹⁵⁶ of whom we shall speak hereafter. But in striking with the battle-axe they use only one hand, instead of both, clasping the haft firmly, and raising it above the head, so as to direct the blow with such force that neither the helmets which protect our heads, nor the plating of the coat of mail which defends the rest of our bodies, can resist the stroke. Thus it has happened, in my own time, that one blow of the axe has cut off a knight's thigh, although it was incased in iron, the thigh and leg falling on one side of his horse, and the body of the dying horseman on the other. When other weapons fail, they hurl stones against the enemy in battle with such quickness and dexterity, that they do more execution than the slingers of any other nation.

¹⁵⁵*Seu braccis caligatis, seu caligis braccatis.* The account given by Giraldus of the ancient dress of the Irish, in a language which supplied no equivalent terms, is necessarily obscure; but, connecting it with other sources of information, we find that it consisted of the following articles:—1. What our author calls *caputium*, was a sort of bonnet and hood, protecting not only the head, but the neck and shoulders from the weather. It was of a conical form, and probably made of the same sort of stuff as the mantle. 2. The cloak or mantle; to describe which Giraldus has framed the Latin word *phalingium*, from the Irish, *falach*, which signifies a rug or covering of any sort. This cloak had a fringed border sown or wove down the edges. It was worn almost as low as the ankles, and was usually made of frieze, or some such coarse material. It was worn by the higher classes of the same fashion, but of better quality, according to their rank and means; and was sometimes made of the finest cloth, with a silken or woollen fringe, and of scarlet or other colours. Many rows of the shag, or fringe, were sown on the upper part of the mantle, partly for ornament and partly to defend the neck from the cold; and along the edges ran a narrow fringe of the same texture as the outward garment. 3. The covering for the lower part of the body, the thighs and legs, consisted of close breeches, with hose or stockings made in one, or sewn to them. It was a garment common to the Celtic nations, and is often mentioned by Roman writers. One of the provinces of Gaul had the name of Gallia Braccata from this distinguishing article of the native dress. The word might be translated “trowsers” (Fr., *trusser*, to truss), or “trews,” with which and the plaid, both used by the Scots, there seems to have been a great similarity in shape, material, and the particolour. The Irish were so much attached to this national costume. that, in order to break down the line of demarcation between the natives and the English settlers, they were forbidden to wear it by laws passed in the 5 Edw. IV., 10 Henry VII., and 28 Henry VIII., just as the distinguishing dress of the Scotch Highlanders was prohibited, in order to break the spirit of the clans, after their faithful adhesion to the Stuart princes had drawn upon them the severities of the English government. Giraldus might have added to the list of articles formerly worn by the Irish the brogues, made of dried skins, or half-tanned leather, and fastened with latches, or thongs of the same material.

¹⁵⁶“Danish battle-axes are usually mentioned in the old English and Frankish chronicles as excellent and dangerous weapons of attack. Nay, even from the distant Myklegaard, or Constantinople, where the northerners, under the name of Varangians, served for a long series of years as the Greek emperors' body-guards, stories have reached us of the particular kinds of battle axes which they wielded with such strength.”— *Worsaae's Danes in England, &c.*, p. 46.

The Irish are a rude people, subsisting on the produce of their cattle only, and living themselves like beasts—a people that has not yet departed from the primitive habits of pastoral life. In the common course of things, mankind progresses from the forest to the field, from the field to the town, and to the social condition of citizens;¹⁵⁷ but this nation, holding agricultural labour in contempt, and little coveting the wealth of towns, as well as being exceedingly averse to civil institutions—lead the same life their fathers did in the woods and open pastures, neither willing to abandon their old habits or learn anything new. They, therefore, only make patches of tillage; their pastures are short of herbage; cultivation is very rare, and there is scarcely any land sown. This want of tilled fields arises from the neglect of those who should cultivate them; for there are large tracts which are naturally fertile and productive. The whole habits of the people are contrary to agricultural pursuits, so that the rich glebe is barren for want of husbandmen, the fields demanding labour which is not forthcoming.

Very few sorts of fruit-trees are found in this country, a defect arising not from the nature of the soil, but from want of industry in planting them; for the lazy husbandman does not take the trouble to plant the foreign sorts which would grow very well here. There are four kinds of trees indigenous in Britain which are wanting here. Two of them are fruit-bearing trees, the chestnut and beech; the other two, the *arulus*¹⁵⁸ and the box, though they bear no fruit, are serviceable for making cups and handles. Yews, with their bitter sap, are more frequently to be found in this country than in any other I have visited; but you will see them principally in old cemeteries and sacred places, where they were planted in ancient times by the hands of holy men, to give them what ornament and beauty they could.¹⁵⁹ The forests of Ireland also abound with fir-trees, producing frankincense and incense.¹⁶⁰ There are also veins of various kinds of metals ramifying in the bowels of the earth, which, from the same idle habits, are not worked and turned to account. Even gold, which the people require in large quantities, and still covet in a way that speaks their Spanish origin, is brought here by the merchants who traverse the ocean for the purposes of commerce. They neither employ themselves in the manufacture of flax or wool, or in any kind of trade or mechanical art; but abandoning themselves to idleness, and immersed in sloth, their greatest delight is to be exempt from toil, their richest possession the enjoyment of liberty.

This people, then, is truly barbarous, being not only barbarous in their dress, but suffering their hair and beards (*barbis*) to grow enormously in an uncouth manner, just like the modern fashion recently introduced;¹⁶¹ indeed, all their habits are barbarisms. But habits are formed by mutual intercourse; and as this people inhabit a country so remote from the rest of the world, and lying at its furthest extremity, forming, as it were, another world, and are thus secluded from civilized nations, they learn nothing, and practise nothing but the barbarism in which they are born and bred, and which sticks to them like a second nature. Whatever natural gifts they possess are excellent, in whatever requires industry they are worthless.

¹⁵⁷We have here the progress from the pastoral to the agricultural life, and social state, very justly described, and we find that the Irish in the time of Giraldus had not advanced beyond the earliest stage. This may have resulted in part from other causes besides the natural bent of the people. Britain owed the first rudiments of progress to the Roman civilization; other races were successively mingled with her population; and she had powerful kings, and a wealthy aristocracy, while Ireland was still parcelled out under a number of petty princes, and a prey to internal feuds.

¹⁵⁸Other MSS. read *alarus*; but it is uncertain to what tree he alludes.

¹⁵⁹See before, B. ii. c. 54.

¹⁶⁰“Abundat et *abiete* sylvositas Hiberniæ, thuris et incensi matre.” Giraldus means, no doubt, the *pinus sylvestris*, which is also indigenous in Scotland, whence it has acquired its common name of the Scotch fir. He speaks somewhat poetically of its inflammable products in resin and pitch.

¹⁶¹Giraldus alludes probably to the fashion of wearing the hair and beard long, which came into vogue in the reign of Henry I., to the great scandal of the clergy; so that our author slyly classes it with the barbarisms of an uncivilized race. See Orderic. Vital. vol. iii. p. 363–4, in *Bohn's Antiq. Lib.*, and *the notes*.

Chapter XI: Of the incomparable skill of the Irish in playing upon musical instruments.

The only thing to which I find that this people apply a commendable industry is playing upon musical instruments, in which they are incomparably more skilful than any other nation I have ever seen. For their modulation on these instruments, unlike that of the Britons to which I am accustomed, is not slow and harsh, but lively and rapid, while the harmony is both sweet and gay. It is astonishing that in so complex and rapid a movement of the fingers, the musical proportions can be preserved, and that throughout the difficult modulations on their various instruments, the harmony is completed with such a sweet velocity, so unequal an equality, so discordant a concord, as if the chords sounded together fourths or fifths.¹⁶² They always begin from B flat, and return to the same, that the whole may be completed under the sweetness of a pleasing sound. They enter into a movement, and conclude it in so delicate a manner, and play the little notes so sportively under the blunter sounds of the base strings, enlivening with wanton levity, or communicating a deeper internal sensation of pleasure, so that the perfection of their art appears in the concealment of it.

Si lateat prosit; ...ferat ars deprensa pudorem.

From this cause, those very strains which afford deep and unspeakable mental delight to those who have skilfully penetrated into the mysteries of the art, fatigue rather than gratify the ears of others, who seeing do not perceive, and bearing do not understand;¹⁶³ and by whom the finest music is esteemed no better than a confused and disorderly noise, and will be heard with unwillingness and disgust. It must be remarked, however, that both Scotland and Wales strive to rival Ireland in the art of music; the former from its community of race, the latter from its contiguity and facility of communication. Ireland only uses and delights in two instruments, the harp and the tabor. Scotland has three, the harp, the tabor, and the crowth or crowd; and Wales, the harp, the pipes, and the crowd.¹⁶⁴ The Irish also used strings of brass instead of leather. Scotland at the present day, in the opinion of many persons, is not only equal to Ireland, her teacher, in musical skill, but excels her; so that they now look to that country as the fountain, head of this science.

Chapter XII: On the beneficial effects of music.

The sweet harmony of music not only affords us pleasures, but renders us important services. It greatly cheers the drooping spirit, clears the face from clouds, smooths the wrinkled brow, cheeks moroseness, promotes hilarity; of all the most pleasant things in the world, nothing more delights and

¹⁶²*Seu diateperon, seu diapente.* "The antients acknowledged no other concords than the diapason, the diapente, and the diateperon."—*Hawkins' History of Music*, i. 273. Giraldus repeats this account of the Irish instrumental music in his Description of Wales, B. i. c. 12.

¹⁶³Caradoc of Llancarvan, in his Chronicle of Wales, says, that Griffith ap Conan, king of Wales, being by his mother and grandmother an Irishman, and also born in Ireland, carried with him from thence into Wales divers cunning musicians, who devised in a manner all the instrumental music there, as appears both by the books written of the same, and by the tunes and measures used among them to this day.

¹⁶⁴*Choro*, the crowth or crowd, which was played upon by a sort of bow, and is supposed to have been the origin of the violin. The *clairseach* of the Irish, and *harp* of the Britons, differed in form and the number of strings from the *lyra* or *cithara* of the ancients. The shape of the former is preserved in the national escutcheon. Venantius Fortunatus appears to draw a distinction between these several instruments—

"Romanusque *lyra* plaudat tibi, Barbarus *harpa*,
"Græcus achillea, *crotta* Britanna canat."

B. vii. c. 8.

enlivens the human heart. There are two things which, more than any other, refresh and delight the mind, namely, sweet odours and music. Man, as it were, feeds upon sweet odours and sweet music. In whatever pursuit the mind is engaged, it draws forth the genius, and by means of insensible things quickens the senses with sensible effect. Hence in bold men it excites courage, and in the religious it nourishes and promotes good feeling. Hence it happened that bishops and abbots and holy men in Ireland were in the habit of carrying their harps with them in their peregrinations, and found pious delight in playing upon them. In consequence of this, St. Keivin's harp was held in great reverence by the natives, and to this day is considered a valuable relic, possessed of great virtues.¹⁶⁵

Further, the war-trumpet, with its blast, shows the corresponding effect of music, inasmuch as when its loud alarm gives the signal for battle, its echo raises the spirit of the brave to the highest pitch. Sometimes music has the contrary effect, for its influence may be used to heighten the pleasures of the vicious, as well as to animate the virtuous and brave. It is written of Alexander of Macedon, that when on some occasion he heard the sweet tones of a harp, while at table with his friends, he had the strings broken. Upon being asked why he had done this, he replied, "It is better that chords should be broken than hearts [*corda*]." For he was sensible, from his knowledge of human weakness, that his mind was highly excited, however he might struggle against it, by what he pointed out to them; and that such soft strains inclined him rather to pleasure (to which, perhaps, he was already disposed) than to war; to indulgence than to hardship; to Venus than to virtue; to voluptuousness, rather than to voluntary sacrifices of his ease. For our passions are by no means in our own power.

Moreover, music soothes disease and pain; the sounds which strike the ear operating within, and either healing our maladies, or enabling us to bear them with greater patience. It is a comfort to all, and an effectual remedy to many; for there are no sufferings which it will not mitigate, and there are some which it cures. David's lyre restrained the unclean spirit from vexing Saul, and while he played his trouble ceased; but as soon as the strains ceased, he was vexed again. What Solomon says may, however, appear opposed to this: "Music is out of season in time of affliction." For the man who can amuse himself with singing when he is in trouble, and affect to be gay and lift his voice in jocund strains at the moment he is suffering from severe pain, must be either a stoic or a fool. But although any sort of trouble, while it is fresh and on the increase, refuses comfort, still under the alleviating influence of time it loses its sting and admits of consolation. Grief which can neither be mitigated by reason, nor cured by medicine, yields to the softening effects of time, which brings all evils to an end. For such is the constitution of human nature, that things are always either on the increase or decrease, are getting better or growing worse, and never stand still. When they have reached their summit, the fall is far more rapid than the rise. If, therefore, you discern the times and observe moderation, having a mind well toned and regulated under all circumstances, you may turn to good account what would be otherwise out of season.

"Quis matrem, nisi mentis inops, in funere nati

Flere neget? Non hoc illa monenda loco est."

Wherefore—

"Dum dolor in cursu est, currenti cede dolori;

Tempore cum residet, tum medicina valet."

It appears, then, that music acts in contrary ways; when employed to give intensity to the feelings, it inflames, when to abate them, it lulls. Hence the Irish and Spaniards, and some other nations, mix

¹⁶⁵This relic is lost; but the harp of king Brian Boroimhe is still preserved in the library of Trin. Col. Dublin. See a description of the Irish harp in Lynch, "Cambrensis Eversus," c. iv. p. 37.

plaintive music with their funereal wailings,¹⁶⁶ giving poignancy to their present grief, as well as, perhaps, tranquillizing the mind when the worst is past. Music also alleviates toil, and in labour of various kinds the fatigue is cheered by sounds uttered in measured time. Hence, artificers of all sorts relieve the weariness of their tasks by songs. The very beasts, not to speak of serpents, and birds, and porpoises, are attracted by musical harmony to listen to its melody; and what is still more remarkable, swarms of bees are recalled to their hives, and induced to settle, by musical sounds. I have sometimes observed, when on a voyage, shoals of porpoises long following in the wake of the ship when she pursuing her course, and how they leaped above the surface, and erected their ears to listen to the tones of the harp or the trumpet.

Moreover, as Isidore remarks, “No teaching can be perfect without harmony. Indeed, there is nothing in which it is not found. The world itself is said to be harmoniously formed, and the very heavens revolve amidst the harmony of the spheres. Sounds, the materials of which melodies are composed, are threefold; first, they are harmonic, being produced by the voices of singers; secondly, they are organic, being produced by wind; thirdly, they are rythmical, produced by the touch of the fingers. For sounds are either produced by the voice, through the throat, or by wind, as a trumpet or pipe; or by the touch, as by the harp, or any other instrument the melody of which is produced by the finger.” What Cassiodorus says in favour of the harp, well deserves a place here. Rewrites thus: “These are the benefits which the harp confers:—It changes grief and melancholy to mirth; assuages the effervescence of rage; charms away the most savage cruelty; effaces cowardice; rouses the languid and sleepy; and sheds a soothing repose on the wakeful. It recalls man from foul lusts to the love of chastity; and heals that weariness of the mind which is always adverse to good thoughts. It converts pernicious sloth into kindly succour; and, what is the most blessed sort of cure, expels the passions of the mind by its sweetest of pleasures. It soothes the spirit through the body, and by the mere sense of hearing moulds it to its will, making use of insensible things to exercise dominion over the senses. The divine mercy has scattered abroad its favours, and made all its works to be highly praised. David’s lyre expelled the devil; the evil spirit obeyed its sound; and while the minstrel sung to the harp, thrice was the king released from the foul bondage to which he had been subjected by his spiritual enemy.” I have made a delightful digression, but to the purpose; for it is always pleasant to converse of science with those who are skilled in it.

Chapter XIII: Of the first inventors of the art of music.

We read in the Book of Genesis, that Tubal, a descendant of Cain, who lived before the flood, was the inventor of music; and he is called “the father of all such as handle the harp and organ.”¹⁶⁷ And, as Adam, had heard some prophecy of two judgments to come, in order that the art which had been invented might not be lost, he inscribed it on two columns, one of stone, the other of brick; that the one might not be dissolved by the flood, nor the other melted in the fire. In the teaching of the philosophers we are told that the rudiments of this science were introduced by Pythagoras, from the sounds given by the stroke of hammers, and by strings struck while they were stretched. Some, however, say that Linus of Thebes, Zetus, and Anxeos, were the first who were celebrated for their musical skill; after whom the science gradually made such progress, that it became as disgraceful to know nothing of music as not to have learned to read.

Chapter XIV: Of an eminent patron and improver of musical instruments.

King David was an eminent patron and improver of musical instruments, many of which he invented, as well as made additions to all. He was the inventor of the psaltery with ten strings, and of several other

¹⁶⁶Every one knows that among the Irish this custom has lasted till the present day.

¹⁶⁷Gen. iv. 21.

instruments. Knowing well the influence of music, he exhorted the people to praise the Lord with musical instruments, that the Creator might receive the praises of his creatures in manifold ways; and that the feelings of the performers in acts of melody might be inflamed to higher degrees of divine love. Hence Augustine says, in his book of Confessions, “As often as I take more pleasure in the sound than in the sense, I confess that I am guilty of mortal sin. But it is well appointed by the church, that her services in praise of God shall be performed with musical chaunts, that so, by the influence of internal melody, the hearts of the faithful should be more powerfully led to the duties of piety.” And again, in the same book.—“How often have I shed tears, deeply moved by the sweet sounds of hymns and canticles in the church. My ears drank in the voices of the singers, and my heart was melted to receive the truth; it glowed with pious emotions, while my tears flowed, and it was well for me to be there.”¹⁶⁸

Chapter XV: Whence music derived its name.

Music derived its name from the Muses; and the Muses are so called from the Greek word *mazo*,¹⁶⁹ which means to investigate, because by them, as the ancients supposed, the powers of the human voice in ringing were first discovered. But enough of this; let us now return to our history.

Chapter XVI: How many kings reigned from Herimon to the coming of Patrick, by whom the island was converted to the faith.

From the first arrival, then, of this king, namely, Herimon, to the coming of Patrick, one hundred and thirty-one kings of the same race reigned in Ireland, Patrick, a native of Britain, and a man eminent for the sanctity of his life, came over to the island during the reign of Laegerius, the son of Nellus the Great,¹⁷⁰ and finding the nation sunk in idolatry, and immersed in all kinds of superstitions, he was the first who, aided by divine grace, preached the faith of Christ, and planted it among them. The people flocking in crowds to be baptized by him, and the whole island having been converted to Christianity, he chose Armagh for his see, making it the [ecclesiastical] metropolis, and fixing there the primacy over the whole of Ireland. He also established bishops in suitable places, that, being called to share his labours, they might water what he had planted, and so God might give the increase.

It seems proper to remark in this place, that, when the before-mentioned Nellus became sole king of Ireland, the six sons of Muredus, king of Ulster, sailed with a numerous fleet and took possession of the northern parts of Britain;¹⁷¹ and their posterity, known by the special name of Scots, inhabit that corner of Britain to the present day.

What caused them to migrate there, and how and with what treachery, rather than force, they expelled from those parts the nation of the Picts, long so powerful, and vastly excelling them in arms and valour, it

¹⁶⁸Conf. l. ix. c. 6. The Ambrosian chant was established in the Church of Milan, of which St. Augustine speaks in this beautiful passage. On the introduction of music, into the church, see Burney’s History, Vol. ii. c. i.

¹⁶⁹The Greek word is *μάω* or *μαίω*, vehementer cupio, ut Eustathius expon. etiam. ζῆτῶ = quaero.

¹⁷⁰Laeghaire, the son of Nial; the latter, popularly called Nial of the Nine Hostages, was one of the most powerful monarchs of the Milesian race. Laeghaire is said to have ascended the throne in the year 428, and St. Patrick is reported to have come to Ireland in the fourth year of this reign, that is in A.D. 432. The saint is said to have died in A.D. 449.

¹⁷¹This was the celebrated Dalreadic colony, but Giraldus has made some confusion of dates and circumstances. It was in the course of the fifth century that the Irish tribe of Dalreada in Ulster began to settle on the promontory of Cantyre, whence they gradually spread themselves over the surrounding districts. There was no Muredus, or Muireadhach, king of Ulster, in the time of Nial, but a king of that name began to reign in 451.

will be my business to relate, when I come to treat of the remarkable topography of that part of Britain.¹⁷² Another benefit, worthy, perhaps, of the dignity of the subject, and attractive to studious minds, will then be conferred by the author on his own age.

Chapter XVII: That there were no archbishops in Ireland before the arrival of John Papyrio, who planted there four archiepiscopal sees, in the year of Our Lord 1152.

There were no archbishops in Ireland, but the bishops consecrated each other mutually, until John Papyrio came as legate from the see of Rome not many years ago.¹⁷³ He brought four palls to Ireland, one of which he conferred on Armagh; another he gave to Dublin, where Gregory was then bishop; the third to Cashel; the fourth to Tuam (Toeniam), in Connaught. St. Patrick died and rested in the Lord in the one hundred and twentieth year of his age, in the year of our Lord 185, and from the arrival of the Irish 1800.¹⁷⁴

Chapter XVIII: How the bodies of three saints, Patrick, Columba, and Brigit, were found in these our days at the city of Down, in Ulster, and translated.

St. Columba and St. Brigit were contemporaries with St. Patrick; and the bodies of all three were deposited in Ulster in the same city, namely, Down, where they were discovered in my time, that is, in the year that the lord earl John first came to Ireland. They were lying in a vault, containing three recesses, the body of St. Patrick lying in the centre, and those of the two others, one on each side. John de Courcy was then governor,¹⁷⁵ and under his directions these three noble treasures were discovered, through a divine revelation, and translated. The following verses were written on the occasion:

“In burgo Dano, tumulo tumulantur in uno
Brigida, Patritius, atque Columba pius.”

“Patrick, Columba, Brigit, rest in glorious Down;
Lie in one tomb, and consecrate the town.”

Chapter XIX: How the Irish are very ignorant of the rudiments of the faith.

The faith having been planted in the island from the time of St. Patrick, so many ages ago, and propagated almost ever since, it is wonderful that this nation should remain to this day so very ignorant of the rudiments of Christianity. It is indeed a most filthy race, a race sunk in vice, a race more ignorant than all other nations of the first principles of the faith. Hitherto they neither pay tithes nor first fruits; they do not contract marriages, nor shun incestuous connections; they frequent not the church of God with proper reverence. Nay, what is most detestable, and not only contrary to the Gospel, but to every thing that is right, in many parts of Ireland brothers (I will not say marry) seduce and debauch the wives of their

¹⁷²Giraldus speaks elsewhere of his intention to write a Topography of Scotland, but nothing is known of it. See the present book, *Distinc. i. c. 21.*

¹⁷³John Papyro was sent as legate to Ireland by Pope Eugenius III., who occupied the papal chair from 1145 to 1153.

¹⁷⁴The following scholium, or various reading, is given in the margin of our printed edition:—“Elsewhere, in the year of his age 123, in the year of our Lord 493, when Felix I. was pope, Anastasius emperor, Aurelius Ambrosius ruling in Britain, and Forkerus in Ireland.”

¹⁷⁵See afterwards, “Conquest of Ireland,” B. i. cc. 15, 16, 17.

brothers deceased, and have incestuous intercourse with them; adhering in this to the letter, and not to the spirit, of the Old Testament,¹⁷⁶ and following the example of men of old in their vices more willingly than in their virtues.

Chapter XX: Of their abominable treachery.

They are given to treachery more than any other nation, and never keep the faith they have pledged, neither shame nor fear withholding them from constantly violating the most solemn obligations, which, when entered into with themselves, they are above all things anxious to have observed. So that, when you have used the utmost precaution, when you have been most vigilant, for your own security and safety, by requiring oaths and hostages, by treaties of alliance firmly made, and by benefits of all kinds conferred, then begins your time to fear; for then especially their treachery is awake, when they suppose that, relying in the fullness of your security, you are off your guard. That is the moment for them to fly to their citadel of wickedness, turn against you their weapons of deceit, and endeavour to do you injury, by taking the opportunity of catching you unawares.

Chapter XXI: How they always carry an axe in their hands instead of a staff.

From an ancient and wicked custom, they always carry an axe in their hands instead of a staff, that they may be ready promptly to execute whatever iniquity their minds suggest. Wherever they go they carry this weapon with them, and watching their opportunity as occasion offers, it has not to be unsheathed like a sword, nor bent like a bow, or thrust out like a spear. Raised a little, without any preparation, it deals a deadly wound. They have, therefore, always at hand, nay, in their hands, that which is sufficient to inflict death. From these axes [*securibus*] there is no security: while you fancy yourself secure, you will feel the axe [*securim*]. You put yourself heedlessly in danger, if you permit the axe, and omit to take precautions for your security. This race is inconstant, changeable, wily, and cunning. It is an unstable race, stable only in its instability, faithful only in its unfaithfulness.

“Hoc solum servans, quod nunquam firma, fidele;
Hoc solum retinens, quod nesciat esse fideles.”

“Firm only in their faithless levity,
And true in nought but infidelity.”

Their arts are, therefore, more to be feared than their arms, their friendship than their fire-brands, their sweets than their bitters, their malignity than their martial spirit, their treachery than their open attacks, their specious friendship than their spiteful enmity.¹⁷⁷ For this is their opinion:

“Dolus an virtus quis in hoste requirat?”

“Who will be prompt to ask a foe,
If fraud or valour deal the blow?”

¹⁷⁶See Deut. xxv. 5; Mark xii. 19; and Luke xx. 28.

¹⁷⁷In the original the whole of this chapter consists of a play upon words, which cannot be effectually represented in the translation.

Chapter XXII: Of a new mode of making a league: a proof of their wickedness.

Among many other inventions of their abominable guile, there is one which especially proves it. When they wish to take off any one, they assemble in company with him at some holy place, under the guise of religious and peaceful meeting; then they go in procession round the church, and afterwards, entering within its walls, they confederate themselves in an indissoluble alliance before the altar, with oaths prodigally multiplied upon the relics of the saints, and confirmed by the celebration of the mass and prayers of the holy priests, as if it were a solemn affiancement. At length, as a still stronger ratification of their league, and, as it were, the completion of the affair, they drink each others' blood, which is shed for the purpose. This custom has been handed down to them from the rites of the heathens, who were wont to seal their treaties with blood. How often, in the very act of such an alliance being made by bloody and deceitful men, has so much blood been fraudulently and iniquitously spilt, that one or other of them has fainted on the spot! How often has the same hour which witnessed the contract, or that which followed it, seen it broken in an unheard-of manner by a bloody divorce!

Chapter XXIII: How they love their foster-children and foster-brothers, and hate their own brothers and kindred.

Woe to brothers among a barbarous race! Woe also to kinsmen! While alive, they pursue them to destruction; and even when dead they leave it to others to avenge their murder. If they have any feeling of love or attachment, it is all spent on their foster-children and foster-brothers.¹⁷⁸

Chapter XXIV: How new-comers are stained with the same vices.

Thus it appears that every one may do just as he pleases; and that the question is not what is right, but what suits his purpose: although nothing is really expedient but what is right. However, the pest of treachery has here grown to such a height—it has so taken root, and long abuse has so succeeded in turning it into a second nature—habits are so formed by mutual intercourse, as he who handles pitch cannot escape its stains—that the evil has acquired great force. A little wormwood, mixed with a large quantity of honey, quickly makes the whole bitter; but if the mixture contains twice as much honey as it does wormwood, the honey fails to sweeten it. Thus, I say, “evil communications corrupt good manners;” and even strangers who land here from other countries become generally imbued with this national crime, which seems to be innate and very contagious. It either adopts holy places for its purposes, or makes them; for, as the path of pleasure leads easily downwards, and nature readily imitates vice, who will doubt the sacredness of its sanctions who is predisposed and foretaught by so many sacrilegious examples, by so many records of evil deeds, by such frequent forfeitures of oaths, by the want of all obligations to honesty?

Chapter XXV: Of a new and monstrous way of inaugurating their kings.

There are some things which shame would prevent my relating, unless the course of my subject required it. For a filthy story seems to reflect a stain on the author, although it may display his skill. But the severity of history does not allow us either to sacrifice truth or affect modesty; and what is shameful in itself may be related by pure lips in decent words. There is, then, in the northern and most remote part of

¹⁷⁸The custom of fostering prevailed among the Celtic and Teutonic races, and was the means of forming alliances which were, as Giraldus intimates, kept much more firmly and pertinaciously than those of blood. The ties of the latter were seldom regarded, while a man was rarely deserted by his foster-son, or even by his foster-brother.

Ulster, namely, at Kenel Cunil,¹⁷⁹ a nation which practises a most barbarous and abominable rite in creating their king. The whole people of that country being gathered in one place, a white mare is led into the midst of them, and he who is to be inaugurated, not as a prince but as a brute, not as a king but as an outlaw, comes before the people on all fours, confessing himself a beast with no less impudence than imprudence. The mare being immediately killed, and cut in pieces and boiled, a bath is prepared for him from the broth. Sitting in this, he eats of the flesh which is brought to him, the people standing round and partaking of it also. He is also required to drink of the broth in which he is bathed, not drawing it in any vessel, nor even in his hand, but lapping it with his mouth. These unrighteous rites being duly accomplished, his royal authority and dominion are ratified.

Chapter XXVI: How numbers in the island are not baptized, and have never come to the knowledge of the faith.

Moreover, though the faith has been planted for so long a period in this country that it has grown to maturity, there are some corners of the land in which many are still unbaptized, and to whom, through the negligence of their pastors, the knowledge of the truth has never penetrated. I heard some sailors relate that, having been once driven by a violent storm, during Lent, to the northern islands and the unexplored expanse of the sea of Connaught, they at last took shelter under a small island. Here they could hardly hold their ground, by the help of their anchor, though they had three cables out, or more. After three days, the storm abating, the sky becoming again clear, and the sea calm, they beheld at no great distance the features of a land which was before entirely unknown to them. From this land not long afterwards they saw a small boat rowing towards them. It was narrow and oblong, and made of wattled boughs, covered and sewn with the hides of beasts.¹⁸⁰ In it were two men, stark naked, except that they wore broad belts of the skin of some animal fastened round their waists. They had long yellow hair, like the Irish, falling below the shoulders, and covering great part of their bodies. The sailors, finding that these men were from some part of Connaught, and spoke the Irish language, took them into the ship. All that they saw there was new to them, and a subject of wonder. They said that they had never seen before a large ship, built of timber, or anything belonging to civilized man. Bread and cheese being offered to them, they refused to eat them, having no knowledge of either. Flesh, fish, and milk, they said, were their only food. Nor did they wear any clothes, except sometimes the skins of beasts, in cases of great necessity. Having inquired of the sailors whether they had on board any flesh with which they could satisfy their hunger, and being told in reply, that it was not lawful to eat flesh during Lent, they were utterly ignorant what Lent was. Neither did they know anything about the year, the month, or the week; and by what names the days of the week were called was entirely beyond their conception. Being asked whether they were Christians, and had been baptized, they replied that to the present hour they had never heard of the name of Christ, and knew nothing about him. On their return, they carried back a loaf and a cheese, that they might be able to astonish their countrymen by the sight of the provisions which the strangers ate.

It must be observed also, that the men who enjoy ecclesiastical immunity, and are called ecclesiastical men, although they be laics, and have wives, and wear long hair hanging down below their

¹⁷⁹Tirconnell, now the county of Donegal. Irish antiquaries utterly repudiate the disgusting account here given by Giraldus of the inauguration of the kings of this territory. See Ware, vol. ii. p. 64.

¹⁸⁰These coracles, or *corrags*—wicker boats covered with hides, and so light that a man can carry one of them on his back—are still used in Ireland and Wales. Though adapted only to quiet waters, such as rivers, lakes, and bays on the coast, the men of old times are said to have been venturous enough to put to sea in them. In the Chronicle of Marranius, under the year 892, we are told that three pilgrims embarked from Ireland in such a boat, taking with them a week's provisions, and that they reached Cornwall after an extraordinary voyage of seven days, without sails or tackling, and afterwards paid a visit to king Alfred.

shoulders, but only do not bear arms, wear for their protection, by authority of the Pope, *fillets* on the crown of their heads, as a mark of distinction. Moreover, these people, who have customs so very different from others, and so opposite to them, on making signs either with the hands or the head, beckon when they mean that you should go away, and nod backward as often as they wish to be rid of you. Likewise, in this nation, the men pass their water sitting, the women standing. They are also prone to the failing of jealousy beyond any other nation.¹⁸¹ The women, also, as well as the men, ride astride, with their legs stuck out on each side of the horse.

Chapter XXVII: Of many laudable qualities in the Irish clergy.

We come now to the clerical order. The clergy, then, of this country are commendable enough for their piety; and among many other virtues in which they excel, are especially eminent for that of continence. They also perform with great regularity the services of the psalms, hours, lessons, and prayers, and, confining themselves to the precincts of the churches, employ their whole time in the offices to which they are appointed. They also pay due attention to the rules of abstinence and a spare diet, the greatest part of them fasting almost every day till dusk, when by singing complines they have finished the offices of the several hours for the day. Would that, after these long fasts, they were as sober as they are serious, as true as they are severe, as pure as they are enduring, such in reality as they are in appearance. But among so many thousands you will scarcely find one who, after his devotion to long fastings and prayers, does not make up by night for his privations during the day by the enormous quantities of wine and other liquors in which he indulges more than is becoming.

Dividing the day of twenty-four hours into two equal parts, they devote the hours of light to spiritual offices, and those of night to the flesh; so that in the light they apply themselves to the works of the light, and in the dark they turn to the works of darkness. Hence it may be considered almost a miracle, that where wine has the dominion lust does not reign also. This appears to have been thought difficult by St. Jerome; still more so by the apostle: one of whom forbids men to be drunken with wine, wherein there is excess: the other teaches that the belly, when it is inflamed by drink, easily vents itself in lust.

There are, however, some among the clergy who are most excellent men, and have no leaven of impurity. Indeed this people are intemperate in all their actions, and most vehement in all their feelings. Thus the bad are bad indeed—there are nowhere worse; and than the good you cannot find better. But there is not much wheat among the oats and the tares. Many, you find, are called, but few chosen: there is very little grain, but much chaff.

Chapter XXVIII: Of the neglect of the prelates in pastoral discipline.

I find it especially worthy of reproach in the bishops and prelates, that they are very slothful and negligent in their duty of correcting a people guilty of such enormous delinquencies. As they neither preach nor correct, I predict that they will be corrected themselves; as they do not reprove others, I reprove them; as they neglect to censure others, I censure them. For, as St. Gregory says, whosoever is raised to the priesthood takes on himself the office of a preacher.

If, therefore, a priest neglects preaching, what sort of proclamation can such a dumb herald make. But if the prelates, during the many ages which have elapsed from the time of Patrick, had steadfastly devoted

¹⁸¹The Irish annalists tell us that jealousy was brought into Ireland by Partholan or Bartholanus. This primeval colonizer, not long after his arrival in the island, detected his wife, the beautiful Dealgnait, in an intrigue with one of his domestics, and, summoning them to his presence, he wreaked his vengeance, not on the lady or her paramour, but on Dealgnait's favourite greyhound, which he seized and dashed to pieces on the ground. This, we are told, was the first case of jealousy that ever occurred in Ireland.

themselves to the duties of preaching and teaching, of censure and of correction, which their office required, and had in some degree rooted out the enormities of this people, already mentioned, doubtless they would have imprinted on them some form of religion and honesty. But there was no one among them to exalt his voice like a trumpet; there was no one to take the contrary part, and be as a wall of defence to the house of Israel: there was no one to contend even unto exile and death for the church of Christ, which he hath purchased to himself with his precious blood. Hence all the saints of this country were confessors, and none martyrs; a thing which it would be difficult to find in any other Christian kingdom.

It is wonderful therefore, that in a nation so cruel and blood-thirsty, in which the faith had been planted in very early times, and was always very flourishing, there should be no crown of martyrdom for the church of Christ. No one was found in those parts to cement the foundations of the rising church by shedding his blood; there was none to do it this service; no, not one. For there are pastors whose object it is, not to feed others, but to be fed themselves; there are prelates who aim not at doing good, but at preeminence; there are bishops who assume the name without the virtues, the honour without the burthens of the office.

Thus the prelates of this country, secluding themselves according to ancient custom within the inclosures of their churches, are generally content with indulging in a contemplative life, and are so smitten with delight in the beauty of Rachel, that they turn away from the blear-eyed Leah. Hence it happens that they neither preach to the people the word of the Lord, nor tell them of their sins; neither extirpate vices nor implant virtues in the flock committed to their charge.

Chapter XXIX: How nearly all the bishops of Ireland are elected from the monasteries.

For as nearly all the prelates of Ireland are elected from the monasteries over the clergy, they scrupulously perform all the duties of a monk, but pass by all those which belong to the clergy and bishops.¹⁸² An anxious care for the good of the flock committed to them is little cultivated, or made a secondary concern. They are either entirely ignorant of what St. Jerom addressed to Rusticus the monk, or they pretend to be so: "So live in your monastery, that you may be worthy to become one of the clergy; devote a long time to learning yourself what you may have to teach; among good men always be a follower of the best: and when you are elected into the number of the clergy, fulfil all the clerical duties." And again he writes to the same person: "If you covet the office of a clerk, learn first what you may teach; be not a soldier before you have learnt discipline, nor a master before you have been a scholar." But they take little heed to themselves, they ill provide for their own welfare, when, through their own unconcern and negligence, they withhold that careful superintendence which the office they have undertaken requires over those who are committed to their charge. They ruin themselves even more fatally than their flocks.

Chapter XXX: How the clergy differ from monks, and are to be preferred to them.

They ought to know, as Jerome reminds Eleutherius, that as the care of the monks differs from that of the clergy, the clergy feeding the sheep, and the monks being fed; the monks are in the same relation to the clergy as the flock to the shepherds. The monk has only the guardianship of a single person, he has to take care of himself; the clerk is bound to have a deep concern for the welfare of many. The monk is therefore like a single grain of wheat deposited in the ground, the clerk like a grain that sprouts up and brings an abundant crop into the granary of the Lord.

¹⁸²In England there was, and had been from Anglo-Saxon times, a strong feeling of hostility between the monks and the secular clergy, the latter being far less bigoted, as well as better informed, and more identified in life and sentiment with the laity. Giraldus had a strong leaning to the secular clergy, and, as will be seen in many parts of his writings, a hostile feeling towards the monks.

Prelates of this sort have a double character; in some things they are monkish, in others clerical. As monks, they learn a dove-like simplicity; as clerks, the wisdom of the serpent: as the one, prudence, as the other, eloquence; as the one, words, as the other, deeds; as the one, to know themselves, as the other, to know others. In the one they cultivate fruitful thoughts, in the other fluency of speech; that being admitted into the tabernacle among the priests, the bells on their vestments may tinkle, and the words of instruction and reproof may be heard from their mouths. For Jerome rebukes in clear terms those foolish and dumb prelates, who have more of the monk than the clergy; saying. “A life of innocence and silence, though it may profit as an example, is rendered useless by its taciturnity; for the wolves are to be driven away by the baying of the dogs and the staves of the shepherds.” He speaks in like manner in the first Prologue to the Bible: “A life of retirement, though holy, is profitable only to him who leads it; and, however his worth may edify the church of God, he injures it when he does not resist its destroyers. For error, when it is not opposed, is confirmed, and truth is stifled when it is not boldly defended.” Jerome also writes thus to Eleutherius: “Neglect in confounding the perverse, when you have opportunity, is nothing else than encouragement of them; and he who hesitates to make head against open wickedness, especially when the duties of his office require it, has the failings of a recluse.”

Chapter XXXI: That many seem to be in the fold who shall be shut out; and the contrary.

It is wonderful, however, that as the prelates have always been thus slothful in their duties, and negligent of the welfare of their people, so many of them have been reputed holy men while on earth, and are so devoutly revered and worshipped as saints. One of two things evidently results from this. Either that our writers of the lives of saints have omitted many accounts of a repulsive nature, both concerning the due exercise of the pastoral office, and other matters, and that as the earth is full of the mercy of the Lord, more is to be hoped from His clemency than feared from His justice, or rather, that the church militant is deceived in many things. The church triumphant, however, cannot be mocked; so that some who are accepted by the one are refused by the other, and those whose praises are sounded by the one are rejected by the other; and the contrary. The one raises to the rank of the elect, not without reason, many who are wholly discarded by the other. For many appear to be within the doors who are cast out, and many who are cast out, are within—for often what is highly esteemed among men is offensive to God.

Chapter XXXII: A sarcastic reply of the Archbishop of Cashel.

I once made objections of this kind to Maurice, archbishop of Cashel, a discreet and learned man, in the presence of Gerald, a clerk of the Roman church, who formerly came as legate into those parts; and throwing the blame of the enormous delinquencies of this country principally on the prelates, I drew a powerful argument from the fact that no one in that kingdom had ever obtained the crown of martyrdom for the church of God. Upon this the archbishop replied sarcastically, avoiding the point of my proposition, and answering it by a home-thrust: “It is true,” he said, “that although our nation may seem barbarous, uncivilized, and cruel, they have always shewn great honour and reverence to their ecclesiastics, and never on any occasion raised their hands against God’s saints.¹⁸³ But there is now come into our land a people who know how to make martyrs, and have frequently done it. Henceforth Ireland will have its martyrs, as well as other countries.

¹⁸³There was probably in this reply an allusion to the death of Thomas of Canterbury.

Chapter XXXIII: How bells and pastoral staves, and other such relics of the saints, are held in great reverence by the people both of Ireland, Scotland, and of Wales.

I must not omit that the portable bells, and the staves of the saints having their upper ends curved and inlaid with gold, silver, or brass, were held in great reverence by the people and clergy both of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales; insomuch that they had much greater regard for oaths sworn on these, than on the gospels. For by some occult virtue, with which they were in a manner divinely imbued, to say nothing of a vindictive power after which their saints seem to have had a great hankering, those who forfeited such oaths have often been severely punished, and the chastisement inflicted on transgressors have been severe.

Chapter XXXIV: Concerning the great virtues of the pastoral staff called the staff of Jesus; and how a priest had a twofold disease inflicted on him.

Of all the croziers in Ireland, and other relics in wood of the saints, the famous staff, which is called the Staff of Jesus, seems deservedly to hold the first place. It was with this, according to the vulgar belief, that St. Patrick expelled all venomous reptiles from the island. Its origin is as uncertain as its virtues are notorious. This great treasure was transferred from Armagh to Dublin, in our time, and by the means of our people.

I also saw in Wales, which made it the more remarkable, a mendicant who wore round his neck, as a relic, a horn of brass which was said to have belonged to St. Patrick. He told me that, out of reverence to the saint, no one dared to sound it. But having handed round the horn, according to the custom in Ireland, to be kissed by the bystanders, a certain priest, Bernard by name, snatched it out of his hands, and, placing it in the corner of his mouth, attempted to blow it and draw sounds from it. But at the same moment his mouth was twisted towards his ear by a paralytic stroke; nor did his punishment end there. He had before a burning eloquence, and a slanderer's foul tongue; but he instantly lost the use of speech; and so lasting was the injury, that he has stammered ever since. Besides which, he fell into a lethargy, and so totally forgot everything that he scarcely remembered his own name: such was his total loss of memory, that the psalms which he before knew by heart, I found him many days afterwards learning afresh, and wondered to see him again picking up the rudiments of letters when an old man, of which in his youth he had acquired a considerable knowledge. However at last, having crossed over to Ireland, on a pilgrimage to St. Patrick, in expiation of his rash attempt, he returned with better health, though it was not entirely restored.

Chapter XXXV: Of the number of persons in this nation who have bodily defects.

Moreover, I have never seen in any other nation so many individuals who were born blind, so many lame, maimed, or having some natural defect. The persons of those who are well-formed are indeed remarkably fine, nowhere better; but as those who are favoured with the gifts of nature grow up exceedingly handsome, those from whom she withholds them are frightfully ugly. No wonder if among an adulterous and incestuous people, in which both births and marriages are illegitimate, a nation out of the pale of the laws, nature herself should be foully corrupted by perverse habits. It should seem that by the just judgments of God, nature sometimes produces such objects, contrary to her own laws, in order that those who will not regard Him duly by the light of their own consciences, should often have to lament their privations of the exterior and bodily gift of sight.

Chapter XXXVI: How many kings reigned from the time of St. Patrick to the coming of Turgesius.

Thirty-three kings of this race reigned in Ireland, from the arrival of St. Patrick to the time of king Fedlimidius,¹⁸⁴ during a period of four hundred years; during whose days the Christian faith diffused here remained unshaken.

Chapter XXXVII: How in the time of king Fedlimidius, the Norwegians, under their chief Turgesius, subjugated Ireland.

In the time of this king Fedlimidius, in the year 838, the Norwegians landed on the coast of Ireland from a large fleet, and taking possession of the country with a strong hand, in the excesses of their heathen rage, destroyed almost all the churches. Their leader, whose name was Turgesius,¹⁸⁵ after many conflicts and fierce battles, in a short time reduced the whole island under his dominion, and making a circuit through the kingdom erected castles in suitable situations all over the country. They were surrounded with deep ditches, and very lofty; being also round, and most of them having three lines of defences.¹⁸⁶ Walled castles, the remains of them, and vestiges of an early age, are to be found to the present day, still entire, but empty and deserted. For the Irish people attach no importance to castles; they make the woods their stronghold, and the bogs their trenches. After this, Turgesius governed the Irish kingdom in peace for some time; until at last he fell into a snare laid for him by girls, and lost his life.¹⁸⁷

Chapter XXXVIII: How the English say that it was Gurmund, the Irish that it was Turgesius, who conquered the island.

It appears, however, to me very extraordinary that our English people proclaim that Gurmund conquered the island, and built the castles and sunk the ditches I have just referred to, making no mention whatever of Turgesius; while the Irish and their written annals attribute these to Turgesius, and are

¹⁸⁴In the text of the printed edition this king is called Felmidius, but the various reading of other manuscripts is adopted here, as being more correct. He was, in fact, Feidlim-mac-Criomthan, king of Munster, one of the celebrated monarchs in Irish history. According to the Irish annalists, his eagerness in following up domestic feuds gave an advantage to the northern invaders.

¹⁸⁵Turgesius is a corruption of the Scandinavian name Thorgils, a son of Harald Haarfager, who succeeded Halfdan the Black about the year 861, and was king of all Norway from about 900 or 910, to 931 or 936. The date assigned by Giraldus to the invasion of Thorgils is therefore incorrect. Thorgils had the fine province of Telemarken conferred upon him as an appanage by his father, but in the adventurous spirit of his race, he undertook an expedition to Ireland, where he perished. It is thus described in Harald Haarfager's Saga: "King Harald gave ships of war to Thorgils and Frode—another of his sons—with which they went westward on a viking cruise, and plundered in Ireland, Scotland, and Bretland (Briton-land or Wales). They were the first of the Northmen who took Dublin. It is said that Frode got poisoned drink there; but Thorgils was a long time king over Dublin, until he fell into a snare of the Irish and was killed."—*Snorri Sturleson's Heimskringla*, by Laing, vol. i. p. 304.

¹⁸⁶It must not be supposed that the Northmen of this age erected in Ireland stone fortresses such as their descendants, the Normans, constructed everywhere two centuries later. The "castles" of which Giraldus speaks were inclosures, surrounded with trenches and ramparts, many of which are still seen on elevated spots in England as well as Ireland in which latter country they are called by the common people Danes-forts, or raths. Some of them include subterranean vaulted chambers, and they are of various sizes, with one or more lines of circumvallation. There is one at Donaghadee which answers the description of Giraldus, having three great artificial ramparts surrounding it, and the largest fosse is 30 feet broad. Its conical height is 60 feet, raised by an artificial mound of the earth thrown up, and the circumference of the whole is 2100 feet. See Ware's *Ant. of Ireland*, vol. ii., p. 139.

¹⁸⁷See afterwards, c. 40.

altogether silent respecting Gurmund. Hence some say that the island was once subjugated by Gurmund, and again, the second time, by Turgesius. This, however, is quite contrary to the Irish histories, which assert that the Irish nation was never subdued but once before these times and that it was by Turgesius.

Others say that the conqueror was one and the same, but that he had two names; the English calling him Gurmund, and the Irish Turgesius: but the difference in their respective fates, and their dissimilar ends, forbid our accepting this solution.

The more truthful and probable account seems to be, that when Gurmund held the sceptre of the kingdom of Britain, which he had reduced under his own dominion, he sent over Turgesius with the flower of his army and a considerable part of his fleet to subdue this island. Which Turgesius, having been the commander of the expedition, remained here after the country had been subdued, as governor of the kingdom and Gurmund's seneschal. Thus the Irish nation handed down to future ages the name and glory of him only whom they had personally seen and known, and at whose hands they had suffered such great misfortunes.

Chapter XXXIX: Whence Gurmund came into Ireland or Britain.

We read in the British History¹⁸⁸ that Gurmund came to Ireland from Africa; and that, having been invited by the Saxons to pass over to Britain, he laid siege to Cirencester; which being at length taken, and, as it is said, reduced to ashes by the instrumentality of sparrows,¹⁸⁹ and Keredith, who was then the ignoble king of the Britons, being driven into Wales, he obtained the dominion of the whole kingdom in a short time. Whether, however, he was an African, or, what appears nearer the truth, a Norwegian, he never was in Ireland at all, or, having made a short stay there, left Turgesius as his seneschal.

Chapter XL: How when Gurmund was slain in Gaul, Turgesius perished in Ireland by the hands of young men disguised as girls.

When Gurmund was slain in Gaul, and the Britons had taken that opportunity to shake off the yoke of the barbarians, the Irish nation lost no time in resorting to their accustomed arts of treachery, with complete success. For Turgesius being at that time deeply enamoured of the daughter of Omachlachelin,¹⁹⁰ king of Meath, the king, dissembling his vindictive feelings, promised to give him his daughter, and to send her to a certain island in Meath, in the lake called Lochyrenus, attended by fifteen damsels of high rank. Turgesius, being highly pleased at this, went to meet them at the appointed day and place, accompanied by the same number of the nobles of his own nation. On his arrival in the island, he was met by fifteen courageous, but beardless youths, who had been selected for the enterprise, and were dressed as young women, with daggers secreted under their mantles; and as soon as Turgesius and his companions advanced to embrace them, they fell upon them and slew them.

¹⁸⁸This is taken from Geoffrey of Monmouth, Hist. Brit. lib. xi. c. 8. Kereditius, in Giraldus Cambrensis, is the Careticus of Geoffrey.

¹⁸⁹This legend of the destruction of the Roman town by the means of sparrows is a common one. The people of Wroxeter in Shropshire still tell how, when the barbarians laid siege to the Roman city of Uriconium (of which Wroxeter is the site), and could make no impression on its walls, they collected all the sparrows from the surrounding country, and having tied burning matches to their legs, set them at liberty. The sparrows flew into the city, and settled on the roofs of the houses, which, being thatched with straw, took fire immediately, and during the confusion caused by the general conflagration, the besiegers forced their way into the city. The same story is told of Silchester, the Roman Calleva. Cirencester was the Corinium of the Romans.

¹⁹⁰O'Melachlin, king of Meath. The lake alluded to was Loch-Var.

Chapter XLI: How the Norwegians were driven out of Ireland, after reigning there about thirty years.

Fame on her swift wings having quickly taken her flight over the whole island, and spread abroad, according to custom, the success of the enterprise, the Norwegians were massacred in all quarters, and in a short time all of them were put to the sword by force or fraud, or compelled to take ship and return again to Norway or to the islands from whence they had come.

Chapter XLII: A subtle question of the king of Meath.

The before-mentioned king of Meath, after he had planned in his mind the treacherous enterprise, having cunningly enquired of Turgesius by what contrivance or art certain birds which had lately migrated into the kingdom, and were very destructive throughout the country, could be got rid of and exterminated, he received for reply, that their nests should be everywhere destroyed, if it should be found that they had already built them. The Irish interpreting this of the castles of the Norwegians, rose to a man through the whole island, on the death of Turgesius, and laid the castles in ruins. The power of the Norwegians, and the tyranny of Turgesius in Ireland, lasted about thirty years, after which, the Irish race, having delivered themselves from slavery and recovered their ancient liberty, again succeeded to the government of the kingdom.

Chapter XLIII: Of the arrival of the Ostmen.

Not long afterwards, some adventurers arrived again in the island from Norway and the Northern islands, who were either the remains of the former immigrants of that race who had seen with their own eyes, or their sons who had learnt from the reports of their parents, the wealth of the land. They did not come in ships armed for war, but in guise of peace, and under the pretext of being merchant adventurers;¹⁹¹ so that having first established themselves in the seaports of Ireland, at length, with the consent of the lords of the territory, they built several cities in these places. For as the inherent sloth of the Irish race prevented them, as we have before observed, from making any efforts to explore the seas or engage in commerce, it was deemed advisable, in a general council of the whole kingdom, that some people should be admitted into parts of the kingdom, by whose commercial industry the products of other lands might be brought into the country, in order to supply them with such articles as their own land did not furnish. These foreigners had for leaders three brothers, whose names were Amelaus, Sytaracus, and Yvorus.¹⁹² They built first the three cities of Dublin, Waterford, and Limerick, of which Dublin fell to the share and was under the government of Amelaus, Waterford of Sytaracus, and Limerick of Yvorus; and from them colonies were sent in process of time to found other cities in Ireland.

This people, who are now called Ostmen, were at first submissive to the kings of the land, and peaceably disposed; but as soon as their numbers were increased to a great multitude, and they had fortified their cities with walls and ditches, they called to mind, at times, the ancient animosities buried in their bosoms, and began to rebel. They are called Ostmen in their own tongue, from a word corrupted in the Saxon language which means Eastern-men; for, as regards this country, they arrived here from the

¹⁹¹The Northmen, sometimes called Ostmen, because their country lay to the east of the British isles, were at this time, and long before, not only distinguished for their piratical or viking expeditions, but for their commercial enterprise. Almost all the trade of the north of Europe was in their hands, and as merchants they founded colonies in the principal seaports of England as well as of Ireland which long subsisted as independent communities, See Worsaae's *Danes in England, &c.* sect. x. p. 99.

¹⁹²The Norwegian names of these chiefs, by Giraldus latinized, were Anlaf or Olaf, who became kin, of Dublin; Sihtric, or Sigtryg, of Waterford; and Ifar, or Ivar, of Limerick.

East. From these new settlers, and the former immigration of the Norwegians (against whom they found little security), the natives learnt the use of the axe (*securis*); and as knowledge brings evil in its train, the mischief which they thus learnt from the foreigners was often poured forth on others.

Chapter XLIV: How many kings reigned in Ireland from the death of Turgesius to Roderic, the last sole king of Ireland.

The kingdom of Connaught subsisted from the time of king Fedlimidius and the death of Turgesius to the time of Roderic,¹⁹³ who was the last king of that nation, and governs Connaught to the present day; and by whom Dermotius, king of Leinster, the son of Murchard, was expelled from his kingdom. During this period, seventeen kings reigned in Ireland.

Chapter XLV: How many kings reigned from Herimon, the first, to Roderic, the last.

The number of all the kings who reigned in Ireland from Herimon, the first king of this nation, to Roderic, the last, was one hundred and eighty-one; whose names, acts, and times I here omit, both because I find little remarkable and worthy of record in their annals, and also that I may not incumber my compilation by a useless prolixity. The abovementioned kings acquired the monarchy of the entire island without the sanctions of a solemn coronation, and the sacrament of unction, nor even by hereditary right or any just claims to the succession, but by force of arms alone, and seized the reins of power after their own fashion.¹⁹⁴

Chapter XLVI: How from its first immigration to the time of Turgesius, and from his death to the expedition of Henry II., King of England, the Irish race maintained its independence.

The Irish race continued free and independent from the period of its first immigration, and of Herimon its first king, to the times of Gurmund and Turgesius, by whom its peace was disturbed and its tranquillity suffered a short interruption; and again from their death to these our times. During all this period it was unshaken by any incursions of foreign nations, until at last, in these our days, it has been subjugated by you, most invincible king, and your intrepid courage, in the forty-first year of your age, the seventeenth of your reign, and the year of our Lord 1172.

Chapter XLVII: Of the victories of Henry II., King of England.

For your victories vie with the world itself, since you, our Alexander of the West, have stretched out your arms from the Pyrenean mountains to the farthest and most western borders of the ocean. In these parts you have spread your triumphs as far as nature has spread her lands. If the bounds of your

¹⁹³Roderic Mac Tirdelvae O'Connor, king of Connaught, and last monarch of Ireland of the Milesian race, died A.D. 1198, and was buried in the abbey of Cong. Details of his history will be found in the "Conquest of Ireland," which forms a part of the present volume.

¹⁹⁴This is denied by Irish antiquaries who inform us that the kings of Ireland, in battle and other public solemnities, appeared crowned with a diadem. At the memorable battle of Clontarf king Brian Boromhe was recognised by the crown he wore, and such an ancient ornament was discovered in 1692, in a bog in the county of Tipperary. It appears also, that although the Irish kingdoms were elective, like those of the English Heptarchy and others, an hereditary right in the royal line was respected, except in a few cases of usurpation, during the long successions of Irish kings, although in those turbulent ages the most powerful and ambitious of the royal race often succeeded.

expeditions be sought, we reach the ends of the earth before we find their limits. For though your brave spirit may find no more lands to conquer, victory never deserts it; and its triumphs will never fail but with the want of materials for triumph.

Chapter XLVIII: A short recapitulation of the titles and triumphs of the same king.

How then has the Irish world been added to your titles and triumphs? By what great and glorious inspiration were you able to penetrate into the secrets of the ocean, and nature's hidden recesses? How prematurely, unreasonably, and iniquitously, were you recalled by an intestine conspiracy from your noble enterprise, when your triumph, indeed, was complete, but before you had restored order in the country? When your lightnings flashed, how did the petty kings of the West fly to your feet, dazzled at the light of your presence here, like moths to a candle? How unnaturally and scandalously has the conspiracy hatched in the bowels of your land, with such wicked and perfidious designs, much to the detriment of all Christendom, interrupted your victories both in the East, in Asia, and in Spain; which your noble mind proposed to extend to the West, and thereby notably enlarge the fold of Christ. What mercy and what laudable clemency, worthy of imitation and of everlasting remembrance, did you, a prince and mortally offended king, exercise towards your proud and haughty foes, on whose necks you trod with extraordinary vigour, and over whom you everywhere triumphed; you, a conqueror and king, ruling your spirit with temper, and subduing your wrath with moderation. For you did not forget the verse:—

“Vince animos iramque tuam, qui cætera vincis.”

You revolved also in your lofty mind that noble eulogium of Caius Cæsar: “The whole world had perished, if mercy had not extinguished wrath.” You had also frequently in your hands the book which Seneca addressed to Nero “On Clemency;” nor were you mindless of the counsel he so worthily gave to the emperor: “Follow,” he said, “the practice of physicians, who, when their usual remedies fail of success, try their contraries.” How nobly and exactly have you fulfilled the words of that great senator and excellent orator? “It is the part of a brave man to consider those as his enemies who contend with him for victory, but to judge the conquered as men; so that his courage may tend to diminish wars, while his clemency extends peace.” With how much pains, and with what laudable diligence for one of royal blood, did you apply yourself to the study of learning, from your earliest years and in the days of your youth? You did not forget the words of Jerome: “the root of learning is bitter, but the fruit is very sweet;” and those of David, the king and prophet: “Be learned ye that are judges of the earth.” You also, who are a second Solomon, called to your recollection the words of that king: “Learning prepareth food for old age, and discipline in youth maketh age fruitful.” Following such examples as these, you became a learned prince, and being tolerably versed in profane literature, you shone like a brilliant gem among all the princes of the world; and would have soon excelled the greatest philosophers, both by your high natural endowments, and by the aids of instruction and study, if you had not been so unseasonably drawn from the pursuits of learning to earthly cares. Having gained renown, during your tender years, in both services, namely, those of Mars and of Minerva, premature success attended your high genius and royal birth. With a grace that has no parallel on earth, but which was divinely conferred on you from above, you, the friend and promoter of concord, restored peace in your own dominions by your power in foreign kingdoms by your counsels and authority. How has the terror of your incomparable valour and great name, and your threatened attacks, and your renown blazing through the world, though less than it merited, curbed the raging fury of the heathens, both in Europe and Asia, and secured peace and tranquillity to the church of Christ. What prodigal liberality and profuse kindness have you ever shown to foreigners and strangers, to your own great glory, and sometimes to the loss of those about you: how indiscriminating has been your bounty to aliens. And since no one is born without fault, and he is best who has the least, the few spots which darken your fair fame are to be regarded with indulgence, like clouds which pass over the face of

the sun. Since then, from your earliest years, you have made your paths straight, and trodden down rough places, laying a heavy hand on those who withheld your crown, and disturbed your peace, how all things have prospered, and the divine favour has attended so pacific a king, and one so serviceable to all Christian people; all this, I say, who shall fully relate?

Chapter XLIX: Of the characters of his sons; and first of Henry III., King of England.

But since

Semper adest homini quo pectoris ima gemiscant,
 Ne possit plena prosperitate frui;
 Gaudia nunc luctu, nunc mutat amara secundis,
 Versans humanas sors inopina vices.
 Sola venire solent et vix, et sero, secunda;
 Et simul, et subito, semper amara fluunt:

So, I say, the divine mercy has always smiled on you in almost all affairs, giving a prosperous issue to events; and I wish that it had so continued to the end, that (like one cutting to the quick, and a too powerful dose of medicine) when the sons were in arms against their father, and counted his years before the time, it had spared the father more than, out of favour to the father, those who were dearest to him. The most illustrious of these, and, after one was taken, the eldest,¹⁹⁵ who enjoyed his father's name and style, like another Hector, son of Priam, was an honour to his friends, the terror of his enemies, and the delight of all. In arms he was like the thunderbolt winged by lightning, the only hope or fear of all.

Omnis honoris honos decoret, decus urbis et orbis,
 Militiæ splendor, gloria, lumen, apex.
 Julius ingenio, virtutibus Hector, Achilles
 Viribus, Augustus moribus ore Paris.

In peace, and in private life, he was courteous, affable, gentle, and amiable, kindly indulgent to those by whom he chances to be injured, and far more disposed to forgive, than to punish the offenders. His disposition was so good that he could never refuse to give anything that was fitting, thinking that no one ought to leave his presence sorrowful, or disappointed of his hopes. In short, he considered that he had lost a day when he had not secured the attachment of many by various acts of liberality, and bound them to him, body and soul, by multiplied favours conferred.

When in arms and engaged in war, no sooner was the helmet on his head than he assumed a lofty air, and became impetuous, bold, and fiercer than any wild beast. His triumphs were often gained more by his valour than by fortune; and he was in all respects another Hector, son of Priam, except that the one fought on behalf of his father and his country, and the other, alas! was led by evil counsels to fight against both. It was his only desire, and the summit of his wishes, to have the means and opportunity of employing his great valour, so that his martial genius might be fully displayed. Nothing human, however, can be entirely perfect, and so, envious nature, loth that so many good qualities should be united in one person without alloy, added one most signal blemish; making him only notorious for his ingratitude, and for the trouble he

¹⁹⁵Henry, the eldest son of Henry II., was crowned at Westminster on the 13th July 1170, in his father's lifetime. He was usually spoke of as Henry III., until the son of king John ascended the throne.

caused to his excellent father.¹⁹⁶ Wonderful as was his career, one thing appears almost miraculous, namely, that almost all the world attached themselves to a man who was totally without resources, either in money or territory. It was hoped that, before long, he would have restored order in the government of the world, had not the envious course of fate suddenly, prematurely, and unexpectedly, carried him off in the flower of his youth, and in the spring-time of the year. He died in the twenty-ninth year of his age, the fourteenth of his coronation, and the year of our Lord 1182.

Chapter L: Of the character of the count of Poitou.

The crier's voice shall not be silent on the merits of one who is worthy of praise. By his father's wise provision, he bore a name belonging to his father's family, and been invested with his mother's territories,¹⁹⁷ although still young, he speedily reduced to obedience a country hitherto ungovernable, and ruled it with so much prudence, that he not only brought its wildest parts to a state of tranquillity unknown before, but re-annexed to it many districts which had been long detached and dismembered from it. Introducing order amongst a disorderly people, establishing law where all was lawless, beating down opposing obstacles, and levelling all that was rough, he restored the ancient boundaries and rights of Aquitaine. Like another Cæsar, he pushed his fortune to the utmost, anticipated future, and was equal to present emergencies, and lost no time in following up his successes. Thinking "nothing done while aught remained undone," and fierce in his encounters in arms, he was only happy when he marked his steps with blood; nor could inaccessible cliffs, crowned with towers which art and situation had rendered hitherto impregnable, withstand his bold assaults; whether they were made by force of arms or stratagem; whether they were directed against the battlements, or sapped the foundations of the fortresses. But evil follows on the heels of good, and virtue itself is often led into error and crime. Thus the over zealous assertor of the rights of peace and justice, was led to execute the laws with furious rigour against evil-doers, in order to curb the audacity of a stubborn people, and make the innocent secure in the midst of the guilty. This ought to have earned for him due praise from those who were right-minded; but the railings of the disaffected raised against him a popular cry accusing him of cruelty. It appears, however, that he incurred this imputation without any sufficient grounds; as, the demands for such severity soon abating, he reassumed his natural gentleness and clemency, and his rigid administration gradually settled into the golden mean, as far from cruelty as it was from being remiss.

Besides, the author of nature has joined suffering to the nature it has called into existence. Thus our lion-hearted prince,¹⁹⁸ who is more than a lion, is troubled with a quartan ague, as lions are, as a means of subduing the fierce impulses of his spirit. Quaking under continual accesses of this disorder, but not from fear, his quaking makes the whole world to tremble and to fear likewise. In short, among the several virtues for which he is distinguished, there are three which are incomparably eminent, and shed a peculiar lustre on his character. These are, his brilliant courage; his boundless liberality so worthy of a prince, and gracing so well his other virtues; and his resolute firmness both of mind and word. In conclusion, to sum up much that might be said, in a brief eulogy, he is second to his illustrious brother in age only, and not in merit.

¹⁹⁶Roger de Hoveden gives particular details of the unhappy dissensions between Henry II. and his sons. See vol, i. p. 367, &c. in *Bohn's Antiq. Lib.*

¹⁹⁷Richard appears to have had that christian name conferred on him in consequence of his descent from the dukes of Normandy of the same name. His father invested him with his mother's territories in Poitou, &c.

¹⁹⁸Richard Cœur de Lion.

Of the difference in person and character between the two brothers.

Different as were the habits and pursuits of the two brothers,¹⁹⁹ sprung from the same stock and the same root, each has merited everlasting glory and endless fame. They were both tall in stature, rather above the middle size, and of commanding aspect. In courage and magnanimity they were nearly equal; but in the character of their virtues there was a great disparity. One was admirable for gentleness and liberality, the other distinguished himself by his severity and firmness. The one had a commendable suavity, the other gravity. One was commended for his easy temper, the other for his determined spirit. One was remarkable for his clemency, the other for his justice. The vile and undeserving found their refuge in the one, their punishment from the other. One was the shield of bad men, the other the hammer to crush them. The one was bent on martial sports, the other on serious conflicts. The one bestowed his favours on foreigners, the other on his own people; the one on all the world, the other on the worthy only. The one's ambition magnanimously compassed the world; the other coveted, to good purpose, what was rightfully his own.

But why should I dwell on such details? Neither the present age, nor any former times, have seen two princes born of the same king, so noble, and yet so different. Yet the germs of their great and various virtues, and of far greater still, if it were possible, might all be derived, different as they were, in rich abundance, from their illustrious stock. Whatever good qualities you find in either of them, you know were transfused from the root into the branches. For who was ever more merciful to the meek, or more cruel to the fierce, than their right noble father? But still his tendency was to mercy. After every victory, thinking it his supreme revenge to have had it in his power to take vengeance. Who was braver in arms—who more subtle in counsel? Who could ever be more cheerful with the lighthearted, or more serious with the grave? I must not defraud history of its truth, although there is sometimes danger in telling all that is true; for it is a perilous thing on any occasion to use your pen against one who can proscribe you by a stroke of his; it is hazardous to bring charges against one who can send you into banishment. Still, I will ask, who carried himself more nobly among the lower orders? who lowered himself so much among the nobility? Who more exalted the humble? who more humbled the proud? Again, who was evermore favourable to foreigners? who more burthensome to his own people? Who, I say, held himself more aloof from his friends, or was more friendly to aliens? For at one time pretending to a character not his own, at another dissembling what belonged to himself, he rendered his disposition so flexible in his great prudence, that filling different characters to different persons, and becoming all things to all men, he made all things conform to his own will, as time and place required

Of the princes of Britany and Ireland.²⁰⁰

The Armorican-British and the Irish dominions proclaim the well-merited praises of the two others. Both of them were of rather short stature, a little below the middle height; and for their size were well-shaped enough. Of these, the one is already distinguished by his virtues, and has attained the highest honours; the other will. The one is well versed in military affairs; the other has to be instructed in them. The one is corn in the ear, the other in the blade. The one is already great in action, the other leads us to expect he will be great; for not degenerating from his high origin, he has equalled his most noble brothers in worth as far as his powers admit. Hence whether he originally derived it from the parent stock or from parity [with his brothers], it could not degenerate in his time. The one is an eloquent and astute man, and as he could not easily be deceived, is most prudent, if he would not deceive. In two wars, and in various ways imitating Ulysses as well as Achilles, he has been ever, alas! ungrateful to his father, and in this has

¹⁹⁹Henry, the young titular king, and Richard, who succeeded to the throne on their father's death.

²⁰⁰Geoffrey, count of Britany, and John, on whom his father conferred the dominion of Ireland.

trod in the footsteps of his elder brother, too plainly marked. He has more aloes than honey in him; his tongue is smoother than oil; his sweet and persuasive eloquence has enabled him to dissolve the firmest alliances; and his powers of language to throw two kingdoms into confusion; for with wonderful industry he assumes all shapes, and dissembles all his designs. But as a man of many words will not be guided in his ways on the earth, the Lord hath not directed his goings, nor multiplied his days.

The other,²⁰¹ led away by the fervour of youth and ensnared by its passions, is prone to vice, and rude to his monitors; lending himself to the seductions of his time of life, instead of resisting the impulses of nature. Hitherto, therefore, by reason of his age, he is more given to pleasures than to arms, to dalliance than to endurance; to juvenile levity, more as yet, than to manly maturity, which he has not attained. He employs most of his time in those evil courses which gallants pursue, by which even youths who are naturally good are often roused to feats of arms, and soar from the camp of Cupid to the arts and towers of Pallas. As, then, he has obeyed the laws of green youth, so he will conform to those of subsequent age. Since, therefore, it is no disgrace to have enjoyed the pleasures of youth, but the shame lies in not bringing them to an end, juvenile levity is excusable if the mature age be commendable; and that stage of life is blameless, if age sets bounds to indulgence. The tree which bends its boughs downwards cannot strike deep roots.

This is the last of the three brothers; may he not be the last in virtue; but being always dutiful to both his parents, may his days be long and prosperous on earth! May he as truly conform to the description given by Merlinus Ambrosius, in a prophecy much noised abroad, of the man before whom the walls of Ireland shall fall, as he appears to answer to it. "His beginning," it says, "shall be abandoned to loose living, but his end shall waft him to heaven."

How the brothers quarrelled between themselves, and with their father.

O ye gods, if these illustrious brothers had been united by the ties of fraternal love, and had regarded their father with filial affection, if they had been bound together by the twofold cords of good-will and of nature, how great, how inestimable, how splendid and incomparable in the present age, would have been the glory of the father, and the triumphs of the sons? How worthy would have been their history, worthy of the genius of a Maro, to be given to memory? What valour could resist their prowess; what kings, such princes; what realms, such warlike chiefs? The world itself is too small to allow scope for the exercise of so much bravery; and the surface of the earth would scarcely suffice to contain the triumphal annals of such valour. To what a magnitude, and height, and strength the tree would have grown, if the branches had been naturally knit together, and had drawn their sap from the roots, is manifest from the premature decay and heavy fall of what was so precious. For as branches lopped from the stem of a tree cannot reunite, so the tree stripped of its boughs, a treasonable outrage, is shorn both of its dignity and gracefulness.

Of the Saxon, Spaniard, and Sicilian.²⁰²

How three noble shoots sprung from one weak root in the west, or rather, how three most brilliant rays of one sun which rose in the West, shone brightly on three opposite parts of Europe, would be a fitting sequel to my present theme. I shall endeavour to compile a full and true, but short, history of this important and difficult matter, which is worthy the pen of a far higher genius, if I have your commands to

²⁰¹Prince John, afterwards king of England, and lord of Ireland.

²⁰²The husbands of king Henry's three daughters, of whom the eldest, Maud, was married to Henry the Lion, duke of Saxony, the second, named Eleanor, to Alfonso VIII., king of Castile, and Joan, the youngest, to William II., king of Sicily. The last, after her husband's death, married Raymond, count of Toulouse.

employ mine on the subject. For nothing can or ought to be thought a heavy task which is enjoined by so high a Majesty.

The end of the Topography of Ireland.