The word *geilt* is found in early Irish literature chiefly associated with persons of a certain class who show distinctive mental phenomena. In the phrase *veotra at ghoiltum* it occurs also in early Norse literature, and here also the same mental characteristics are associated with the persons to whom it is applied. In Welsh we have a form *gwylit* which in tradition is again applied to similar mental features. The etymologies of both the Irish and the Welsh words are somewhat problematical. Early editors derived the Irish word *geilt* from a root *gel* "to eat," "graze." The root *gel* occurs frequently in early literature. In a gloss to fo. 58a of the *Southampton Psalter* we find: *rogell, depastus est,* and in a note on the passage Stokes adds: "rogell, 3rd. sing. pret. act. of a verb of which the 3rd. sing. pres. *gelid,* 'consumit,' 'depastitur,' occurs in Z. 432," and he further instances the phrase *ar gleith ind foir," 'for eating the grass,' which occurs in the *Tripartite Life of St Patrick,* B, 158a.

The word is found also in Cormac's *Glossary,* s.v. *serrach.* 'serrach, i. sarr each nuallach 7 each nogla. inde dicitur serrach lam. i. ogla leam. Serrech din. i. ser-ech. iar serid a mathar his oc geilt."2

In the *Félire Oengusso* xxxiv we find the phrase: 'amail geilt da each,' 'like the grazing of two horses."3

O'Donovan, in his Supplement to O'Reilly's Dictionary, glosses *pleith,* 'grazing.'

If the etymology which connects *geilt* with *gel,* "to graze," were correct, we must suppose that *geilt* is a nick-name having reference to the vegetarian diet of people of this class. Pedersen,4 however, connects the Welsh form *gwyllt* with the

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1 Stokes has collected and discussed some of these references in *Goidelica,* 2nd ed., London, 1872, p. 60.
3 For the use of geilt we may compare the Caspert Concadin, ch. 1, in the three texts recorded in Eng. and L. U. see Windisch, *Fr. Texte,* p. 145.

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Gothic *wiltbeis,* 'wild,' and points out that the Irish word *geilt* can not be connected with this unless it is borrowed from the Welsh. The Norse form is certainly a loan from the Irish.

An early literary reference to the word occurs in an ancient poem on the ancestry of a certain king of Leinster, which is traced from Emna Cencalach back to Adam. The poem, which is merely a list of names with their epithets, is ascribed by Meyer to the first half of the Seventh Century. In str. 4 we find:

Caur gailt gelt gaith,
Grian nime
Niamdal nair.

In his note to the passage Meyer observes: "Diesen Beinamen vermag *Cõr Amn.* § 197 nicht zu erklären (ni fiadamair cóelig). Ob es einen Kriegeshelden bezeichnen sollte, der das Land wie Sturmwinde verheernte, eigtl. abgestürzt?"1 It may be added that the word *gríb* occurs in the same poem (str. 30). We shall find the words *geilt* and *gríb* associated together later, and it is interesting to meet the association at this early date and in a Leinster milieu. We shall find the word *gríb* applied to the high king Fergal in the story of the battle of Allen.2 The combination *geilt gaith* is not rare. It occurs in the first line of the *Battle of Cuauha* fr. L. U., where it is applied to Cormac, the son of Fedelmid, the son of Cathair Mor: "Cormac *geilda gaith.*"

In Irish literature the word *geilt* is used as a noun and an adjective, and occurs in a number of sagas and other prose works. The fullest account of a person described as *geilt* is found in the *Bretha Suibhne,*3 a saga which in its present form is ascribed to the Twelfth Century, but which relates to the Battle of Moyra, fought in 537 by the high king Domnall mac Aeda against the Ulster prince Congal Chan and his allies from Dal Riada in Scotland. It will be worth while, therefore, to examine this story in some detail in order

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1 K. Meyer, *Über die altirische Dietung* (Berlin), 1913, p. 204.
2 *Breaca Céithog,* XXIV., p. 65.
to ascertain the main traditional traits of persons described as geilt. It should, however, be borne in mind that the Buile Suibhne is essentially in its present form a story designed to entertain us, a humorous masterpiece of the Irish shamachie or professional story-teller, who throughout is concerned to hold his hero up to ridicule, albeit delicately, as Cervantes satirizes his hero in the story of Don Quixote.

At the beginning of the story Suibhne is shown as a brave and vigorous ruler and a great warrior. The narrative opens with a quarrel between Suibhne himself, who is described as a son of Colmán Cúar, king of Dal-Araide, and a certain cleric named Rónán, who, with bell and missal in hand, is vividly portrayed as marking out the site of a church on Suibhne’s territory. Despite his wife’s efforts to restrain him, Suibhne rushes to the spot, forbidding Rónán to proceed further with the work, and flings the holy book into the water, from which it is miraculously rescued unharmed by an otter and returned to Rónán. The saint, however, curses Suibhne. It may be added that Suibhne’s wife seeks to deter her husband from interfering with Rónán by seizing his cloak, and we are told that in consequence of this Suibhne rushes naked into the presence of the saint; but the story has the appearance of having originated in an afterthought as an attempt to explain the nakedness which is always associated with Suibhne in his condition as a geilt, and which is sharply contrasted with the richness and splendour of his early apparel.

During the altercation of Suibhne with St Rónán, messengers arrive from the high king Domnall, son of Aodh, asking his aid against Congal Ciaen, son of Sennán, king of the Picts of Ulster. Suibhne repairs at once to the spot, and takes a leading part in the conflict. St Rónán likewise plays a prominent part, for he seeks to make peace between the two kings, and though he does not succeed, we are told that he is held each day for a guarantee between them that no one shall be slain except during the period of authorised fighting. Suibhne, we are told, violates this. During the course of the battle, as the echo of the shouts of the hosts rises to Heaven, Suibhne looks up to the skies, and a sensation of horror comes over him, and a longing to leave the scene and seek a new home. The similarity to the spiritual voice heard by Merlin, and to the spiritual experiences which drove St Columba to leave Ireland, is very striking.

From this time onwards Suibhne’s life is that of a restless fugitive, without home, land, wealth, or companionship. He seeks solitude above all things. His great dread is lest he shall be caught and constrained to live among his fellows. He lives largely in the tree tops like a bird. But it is to be noted that his exile from both his kingdom and his home is voluntary. His poems are full of lamentation over the hardness of his lot in being restricted to a vegetable and berry diet. Yet he is represented as a great flier and very swift in all his movements. He could easily have overtaken animals and birds had he wished to hunt them and so supplement his diet. He is, in fact, practising voluntary mortification of the flesh, like St John the Baptist. The chief difference is that Suibhne’s vocation seems to be penitential, represented by the saga-teller as the result of St Rónán’s curse.

Though his general way of life is solitary, Suibhne does not wholly eschew human society. He is represented, both in this and in other sources, as a friend of the Cúldes, notably St Moling, and like them, he is a great poet. His poetry, also like theirs, is almost wholly preoccupied with wild nature. It is the poetry of nature loving and nature knowing recluses, the poetry of anchorites. The actual bulk of it which is

1 He is generally identified with St Ronan, the saint after whom the town of St Ronan in Finistere is named. He is described as ‘a solitary of the Seventh Century, who would appear to have come from Ireland to Armorica.’ See Guignard, Celtic Pioneers of Christianity (Engl. trans., by Collins, Dublin, 1923). p. 137: cf. R. Christi- anity in Celtic Lands (Engl. trans., by M. Joint, London, 1922). p. 174; footnote 5. A fuller account of the life of St Ronan and its sources is given by W. A. Phillips, History of the Church of Ireland (Oxford, 1913), p. 229 ff.; but if the saint of our story has been rightly identified with him there is a chronological discrepancy: for according to the Life of St Ronan this saint is brought into contact with King Grail, who is believed to have ruled 475-505. This saint belongs to the late Fifth and early Sixth Centuries.

2 For a valuable account of the Cúldes and their Literature, see an article by Robin Flower, ‘Religion and Literature in Ireland in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries,’ in the Report of the Church of Ireland Conference held in Dublin in 1902 (published in Dublin, 1903), p. 86 ff.
assigned to him in the sagas is very large. Suibhne was, in fact, if his tradition is to be trusted, a prolific nature poet. Some poems assigned to him, even in this saga, appear to be ancient.

We may assume, therefore, that this is an original feature of gealt.

On one of his many journeys Suibhne comes to Britain—a circumstance which is generally regarded as accounting for his nick-name—Albanach. Here he meets another recluse living in the woods, and in all respects closely resembling himself, and similarly sought for by his own people. He is manifestly another gealt. The British recluse tells Suibhne that his condition is due to his having been cursed by his own side after a battle, and Suibhne tells him of his own curse by St Ronan. The two spend a year as fugitives in the woods in great seclusion, after which each prophesies the manner of his own death. This circumstance is interesting as stressing Suibhne's prophetic powers which elsewhere in the sagas are little emphasised. The fact that the motif of the prophecy and its fulfilment is obviously a folk-tale would not account for its introduction here unless prophetic powers were traditionally attributed to the gealt.

We need not concern ourselves with the somewhat prolix narrative of Suibhne's wanderings, but one or two curious episodes call for some comment. The first is Suibhne's relations with a woman who can only be described as a female gealt, and whose supernatural bird-like feats closely resemble those of Suibhne himself. The story relates that on one occasion Suibhne is captured and returns to a normal life among his people in Dal Riada. A woman is placed in his company, who is enjoined to make no reference to his existence as a gealt. Her failure to comply with this injunction results in Suibhne's returning to his former con-

dition, and in the apparent conversion of the woman to the same state till her disappearance in the sea. The obvious bearing of the story is that Suibhne's people design to induce him to live among them and forget his former recluse life, and for this purpose they find a woman to be his companion. The humorous possibilities of the strange story have lost nothing in the telling; but behind it we seem to trace an effort on the part of Suibhne's subjects to restore him to the kingship and to obtain an heir—efforts which fail signal.

One of the most curious of Suibhne's experiences is his encounter with the severed heads. Told in the bizarre style of the shannachie the story is as follows:—In ch. 64 of the saga we learn that in answer to a prayer from St Ronan directed against him, Suibhne has a strange vision at midnight on Sleive Mish, 'even trunks, headless and red, and heads without bodies, and five bristling rough grey heads without body or trunk among them, screaming and leaping this way and that about the road.' These heads were talking about him among themselves, and they pursued him, screaming and clutching at him till he escaped from them 'into the filmy clouds of the sky.'

'Then they parted from him, both goat-heads and dog-heads—for it seemed to him that these were all intermingled with the other heads pursuing him. . . . That night he rested there on the top of a tree until morning. He then began lamenting grievously; whereupon he said: "Wretched indeed is it with me to-night after the hang and the heads on Sleive Eanaid, and yet it is right that I should be as I am because of the many to whom I myself have done harm."'

It is interesting to note that Suibhne, like Merlin, ascribes his vision to his own previous slayings. The heads would seem to be those previously severed by himself, or whose death he himself had caused, and if this is so, we may perhaps

1 O'Keefe, Beith Suibhne, p. xxvi.
2 This name is assigned to him in one of Molloy's poems. See Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts, Vol. II. (Dublin, 1860), p. 22.
4 One would like to know the date and origin of the story. It is not easy to avoid a suspicion of an antiquarian equation with the Norse word geisir, 'a will o' the wisp.'
assume the ‘Dog-heads’ to have reference to the many people, especially Culdees, whom we find in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries bearing the name Cu. In later life, however, he becomes an intimate friend of such people, and especially of St Moling, whom he often visits and in the vicinity of whose church he finally makes his home, partly induced thereto by his strong craving for milk. Finally he meets his death as he has himself prophesied, at a spear-point, wounded by one of Moling’s servants as he lies drinking milk from a small quantity left for him in the mire by the man’s wife. He manages to make his way to the church, and is buried by the saint in consecrated ground. We are specifically told that he is greatly lamented by Moling’s little community. The saint has celebrated his friendship for Suibhne in several of his poems. His own death is said to have taken place in 697.

The actual identity of Suibhne is somewhat problematical. He can hardly be Suibhne Menn who is mentioned in the Annals of Ulster as king, and who is said to have died nine years before the Battle of Moyra, and I have not been able to identify him in the Ulster genealogies given by Dobbs in the Zeit. f. Celt. Phy. Vols. XII, XIV. According to the Annals of Ulster, Suibhne Menn was killed by Congal Coech, son of Sculman in 627. The Battle of Moyra was fought, according to their testimony, not by Suibhne Menn, but by his immediate successor, Domnall mac Aeda.

It is doubtless owing to his high rank that the gealas of Suibhne has left so strong a mark on Irish tradition, and his story has been worked up into one of the most elaborate of Irish sagas. The shannachie has given full rein to his humour in his account of a type for which he could have no sympathy because he had no unbiased information. The result is a rich choicené of daring flights and brilliant figures, and striking contrasts—a triumph of the shannachie’s art and a wealthy store-house of nature poetry. It is a worthy rival of the Aistling Meic Connaicne, whose genesis is probably not dissimilar.

Before leaving the subject of Suibhne’s date and milieu, let us turn to the poetry which is found in such wealth embedded in his saga. The poetry is almost exclusively concerned with wild nature, though expressed in a form which is essentially personal. We learn from the Battle Suibhne that there were a great many men in Ireland who, like Suibhne, lived ascetic lives as hermits and recluse, and who were similarly geilt. This no doubt accounts in part for the large body of such poetry which we possess, though it is variously ascribed to the heathen sages and the early Christian poets—a fact which I shall try to account for later. This nature poetry has certain well-defined characteristics. These have been fully treated by Professor Jackson elsewhere, and I need not enlarge on them here. It may be mentioned, however, that the outstanding characteristics are simplicity and sincerity, and a delightful freshness and directness—qualities which Dr Flower ascribes to the anchorite movement in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries. Poetry of this class is not confined to Ireland, however. We have a rich store of such poetry from Wales, though on the whole, perhaps, of a less personal character; and we are not without hints that it was current also in Scotland. Undoubtedly in Ireland we owe the recording of it to the anchorites among whom it was evidently widely cultivated, as we see, not only from that of Suibhne and Moling, but also from that ascribed to the anchorite Marbain, the brother of King Guaire of Connacht.

Now, O’Keeffe has pointed out that the poetry ascribed to Suibhne in the saga which bears his name shows a striking resemblance to the poems ascribed to St Moling, the same phrase occurring in some cases in both. By an interesting

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1 It is a notable fact that wine or any form of intoxicating drink plays no part in Suibhne’s menu. He is passionately addicted to milk when he can get it. The same feature appears in an even more striking form in the Aistling Meic Connaicne.


coincidence two poems ascribed to Suibhne and Moling are also found side by side in the Codex of St Paul in Carinthia.\footnote{1} I shall return to these poems later. It may be mentioned here, however, that this MS. is variously assigned to the Eighth and Ninth Centuries, though some of the poems are believed to be earlier. Strachan regarded the poem assigned to St Moling as not later than about 700. It is not impossible, therefore, that both the poem assigned to Suibhne and that assigned to Moling may really have been composed by these authors.\footnote{2} In a note referring to one of Moling's poems contained in the Brussels MS. it is suggested that it was Suibhne who sang it, though it was Moling who put it in the old book, i.e., the book of Murchadh, son of Brian.\footnote{3} The suggestion is of great interest and importance for the history of such poetry, and this also will be discussed later. Here it will be enough to point to the bearing of this evidence on the question of Suibhne's date.

Besides the Buile Suibhne we also have two other sagas relating to the Battle of Moyra, the three forming a small cycle which is closely related to the accounts of the same event contained in the Annals. These sagas are the Battle of Moyra and the Banquet of Dun na nGedh. In two important manuscripts all three texts are found together, which seems to show that their essential unity was recognised by the scribe. One of these two manuscripts also contains the saga of the Adventures of the Two Idiot Saints, which, as we hope to show, is also closely related in subject matter to the other three stories. As the account of Suibhne's madness in the Battle of Moyra corresponds so closely with that of the Buile Suibhne that it can hardly be independent of it, and as the text of the former is not very readily accessible, I quote somewhat fully from O'Donovan's translation in order to give a clear impression of the diction in which the accounts of Suibhne's gedact have come down to us.

1 With respect to Suibhne, the son of Colman Cuar, son of Cobhthach, king of Dal Araidhe. . . . Fits of giddiness (faenella fualain) came over him at (the sight of) the horrors. . . . Huge, flickering, horrible aerial phantoms rose up, so that they were in cured, commingled crowds tormenting him; and in dense, rustling, clamorous, left-turning horsehorses, without ceasing; and in dismal, regular, aerial storm-shrieking, hovering, fiend-like hosts constantly in motion, shrieking and howling as they hovered over them\footnote{4} in every direction to cow and dismay cowards and soft youths, but to invigorate and mightily rouse champions and warriors;\footnote{5} so that from the uproar of the battle, the frantic pranks of the demons, and the clashing of arms, the sound of the heavy blows, reverberating on the points of heroic spears and keen edges of swords, and the warrior banners of broad shields, the noble hero Suibhne was filled and intoxicated with tremer, horror, panic, dismay, flicklessness, unsteadiness, fear, sightlessness (d' fir-gedact), giddiness, terror, and imbecility. . . . His feet trembled . . . his heart shrank within him with the panic of dismay; his speech became faltering from the giddiness of imbecility (meriact in miltairad). . . .

He might be compared on this occasion to a salmon in a weir, or to a bird after being caught in a strait prison or a crib. But the person to whom these horrid phantasms and dire symptoms of fright and feeling presented themselves, had never before been a coward or a lunatic void of valour; but he was thus confounded because he had been cursed by St Ronan, and denounced by the great saints of Erin. . . .

When he was seized with this frantic fit, he made a supplie,
very light leap, and where he alighted was on the fine boss of the shield of the hero next him; and he made a second leap and perched on the vertex of the crest of the helmet of the same hero, who, however, did not feel him, though the chair on which he rested was an uneasy one. Wherefore he came to an imbecile, irrational determination, namely, to turn his back on mankind, and to herd with deer, run along with the showers, and flee with the birds, and to feast in wildernesses. Accordingly he made a third active very light leap, and perched on the top of the sacred tree which grew on the smooth surface of the plain, in which tree the inferior people and the debilitated of the men of Erin were seated, looking on at the battle. These screamed at him from every direction as they saw him, to press and drive him into the battle again; and he in consequence made three furious bounces to shun the battle, but it happened that he went back into the same field of conflict, through the giddiness and imbecility of his hallucination; but it was not the earth he reached, but alighted on the shoulders of men and the tops of their helmets.

In this manner the attention and vigilance of all in general were fixed on Suibhne. . . . His giddiness and hallucination of imbecility became greater in consequence of all having thus recognised him, and he continued in this terrible confusion until a hard, quick shower of hailstones—an omen of slaughter to the men of Erin—began to fall, and with this shower he passed away like every bird of prey. . . . And it was by lunacy (conid re geltact) and imbecility he determined his counsels from that out as long as he lived.

It will be seen that the account of Suibhne’s geltact in this passage corresponds closely in many respects with that of the Buile Suibhe. There are, however, some important differences. It is clear in the passage just quoted that much of the diction in which the geltact is described is intended by the author in a figurative sense, whereas the author of the Buile Suibhne has not interpreted the language of his source figuratively, but literally, thus introducing an extensive supernatural element which was doubtless no part of the original story. In the passage just quoted also it is clear that the author is giving rein to his humour. The figurative diction relating to Suibhne’s flight as a bird, and his departure from the battle, have set the imagination to work, and the hero is humorously depicted as poring on the helmet of his neighbour, and on a tree which was regarded as safe from the missiles of battle.

The important facts stand out in clear agreement between the two stories, however, that Suibhne fled from the battle of Moyra from horror at the slaughter, though he was not a coward, as his past record testifies; that the horrors of the battle were in some way intensified by the presence, real or fancied, of supernatural sounds in the air overhead during the conflict; that the people were reluctant to let him escape, so that his flight had to be very swift, and perhaps furtive; and that from that time onwards Suibhne decided to live as a recluse from mankind, alone with wild nature—the birds, the deer, and the showers which fell from Heaven. The deliberate nature of his choice is here emphasised and should not be overlooked. The imbecility and irrationality of the determination are manifestly the aspect of Suibhne’s action as it strikes the narrator at a late date, and is a part of his subjective treatment of Suibhne’s story; but he is careful to make clear to us that his action is not an involuntary one, such as we are accustomed to regard as the result of true lunacy, but a deliberately determined act, although conceived in haste, as the situation necessitated.

Curiously enough the phenomenon of geltact is said to have occurred in connection with one other famous battle which took place early in the following century. This is the Battle of Allen which was fought between Fergal, son of Maelduin, high king of Ireland, and Cathal mao Finguine, king of Leinster. The battle took place at Allen in Kildare in 722, and the high king was slain with nearly all his followers. The story is related at length in the saga known as The Battle
of Allen, where, after the account of the battle, the text adds the words:

'Hic totus numerus de regibus occiderunt, et alii novem volatiles.'

quoting a poem in support of his statement.

Evidently the bird-like character of the geilt was the feature which made most impression on the author of this story. The story itself occurs in the Yellow Book of Lecan; but the statement that several men became volatiles or geilt is found also in the annals. Thus in the Three Fragments of Annals, edited and translated by O' Donovan, p. 41, we read that nine of them became geilt.—

'oc naoi ngelti dith do dol fer geiltact.'

The Annals of Tigernach also make reference, after enumerating the slain in this battle, to

'Alii IX volatiles I. geilt.'

and adds immediately after these words:

'Cu Brestan mac Conghusa eocint.'

Cu's poem is quoted, after which we read:

'Nuadh ha Lomthulie eocint:'

and Nuadhua's poem is quoted as follows:

'Of the destruction of Almain's day, contending for the king of Magh Bregh, a red-mouthed, sharp-beaked raven uttered a psæan round Fergal's head.

'The noble victory of Almain, not feeble—I entreat respite from every element—together with seven thousand—a vast assembly—(and) Fergal the great, son of Maeildin.

'There perished a hundred gracious lords, with a hundred contentious . . . together with seven furious, flying gelia, and seven thousand men-at-arms.'

1 Edited and translated by Whitley Stokes in Revue Celtique, XXIV., p. 41 ff.
2 Loc. cit., p. 56.
3 This seems to be the number indicated (see below); but O'Donovan translates ‘nine thousand and nine of them ran mad.’

GEILT

In the Irish text the last two lines run as follows:

'im seacht ngelta con mine,
im secht mile for n-armach.'

In the Chronicon Scotorum, s.a. 718, we read in the account of the same battle:

'This is the total number of kings who fell (and there also perished); 160 of the attendants of Fergal, and many others, and nine volatiles i. geulta.'

The editor (Hennessy) adds a foot-note to this passage in which he says:

'The word geulta, i.e., “lunatics,” or “maniacs,” is added as a gloss.'

The late (Fifteenth Century) story of the Battle of Ventry also refers to this same phenomenon of geilt. The saga relates the invasion of Ireland by way of Ventry Harbour by one Daire Donn, who is described as the king of the world, accompanied by the king of France and a number of allies to avenge the insult done to the king of France by Finn mac Cumail, who has carried off his wife and daughter. In the course of the battle Oscar advances to attack the king of France, wherupon we are told of the latter:

'His beauty and comeliness went from him, and his valour and his prowess left him, and he thought there was no shelter on earth for him except if he went into the air or into the firmament, and he looked up into the clouds and thought that there was shelter for him between them for him. And there came lightness of mind and of nature upon him, and he gave his body a stretching from the ground, so that he went with the wind and with madness before the eyes of the hosts of the world, and did not stop in his mad flight till he came to Glenn Bolcaín in the east of that territory. And wondrous great cries were raised by the hosts of the world in wailing him, and by the Fianna of Erin in exultation.'

1 The poem is also quoted in the text of the Battle of Allen, where the number of geilt is given as IX.
2 Rolla Series, p. 122.
The reference to Glenn Bolein is interesting, since it will be remembered that it is this glen which was frequented by Suibhne and 'many other gealta.' In a note to the passage from the Three Fragments of Annals quoted above, O'Donovan tells us that 'It is still believed in many parts of Ireland that all the lunatics of Ireland would make their way, if unrestrained, to a valley in the county of Kerry, called Glenn na nGealt, and remain there feeding on the herbs and watercresses of the valley until they should recover their former sanity.'\(^1\) O'Donovan's information is undoubtedly antiquarian in character, and derived from sagas such as those which we have been considering. It is clear, however, that the association of the glen in question with the *gealta* pre-dates the composition of the Saga of the B. of Ventry.

It is to be suspected that stories relating to *gealta* are not confined to passages in which the word itself occurs. There is a story contained in the version of the *Senchas Mor* in Ms. H.3. 18 which seems to me to contain a reference to a person of this kind. The story has been edited and translated by Kuno Meyer under the title of *Finn and the Man in the Tree,\(^2\)* and is believed by him to date from the late Eighth or early Ninth Century.\(^3\) It relates to the pursuit by Finn of his servant Derg Corra, who has aroused his jealousy. Finn chivalrously allows the man three days' grace in which to make good his escape if he can, and then sets out in pursuit:

The story then proceeds as follows:

> 'Then Derg Corra went into exile and took up his abode in a wood and used to go about on shanks of deer\(^4\) (si verum est) for his lightness. One day as Finn was in the wood seeking him he saw a man in the top of a tree, a blackbird on his right shoulder and in his left hand a white vessel of bronze, filled with water, in which was a skittish trout, and a stag at the foot of the tree. And this was the practice of the man, cracking nuts; and he would give half the kernel of the nut to the blackbird that was on his right shoulder while he would himself eat the other half; and he would take an apple out of the bronze vessel that was in his left hand, divide it into two, throw one half to the stag that was at the foot of the tree, and then eat the other half himself. And on it he would drink a sip of the bronze vessel that was in his hand, so that he and the trout and the stag and the blackbird drank together. Then his followers asked Finn who he was in the tree was, for they did not recognise him on account of the hood of disguise which he wore. Then Finn put his thumb into his mouth. When he took it out again, his *imbas* enlightens him and he chanted an incantation and said . . . "Tis Derg Corra son of Us Daigre," said he, "that is in the tree."

The description has obviously much in common with those of the *gealta* which we have already considered. The man Derg Corra is fleeing from an encounter of a hostile nature. He has taken refuge, like Suibhne in the trees. Like Suibhne also he is disguised so as to be difficult of recognition. Like him he is living alone with wild nature, eating only nuts and fruit, and sharing his life with wild creatures. It will also be noticed that the figurative language characteristic of descriptions of *gealta* is very marked in the statement that Derg Corra went about on shanks of deer for swiftness. We shall see presently that the comparison with deer, which is here substituted for the flight of a bird, is found also elsewhere in accounts of such people.

It will be seen that our fullest accounts of the Irish *gealta* come from texts which are believed to date from the twelfth century in their present form. We refer especially to the *Buile Suibhne* and the *Battle of Moyra.* On the other hand these stories and the *Battle of Allen* refer to the seventh and eighth centuries, and are referred also to the *Annals of Tigernach,* the *Annals of Ulster,* the *Three Fragments of Annals,* and the *Chronicon Scotorum.* The *Annals of Tigernach*...
nach and the *Annals of Ulster* are believed to be derived in part from a chronicle composed in the eighth century. This is important for the history of the *geilt*. Moreover, our accounts of people described as *geilt*, and incidental references to such people, are by no means confined to prose sagas of the late period, but occur frequently in poetry which is believed to date from much earlier times.

In a poem relating to a quarrel between Finn and his son Oisin which is believed to date from the late eighth or early ninth century, Finn is called a *geilt* by his son in the abusive dialogue which takes place between them. The passage is as follows:

Find: Níon ... rathús é rigluach geilt for fedaib i ndíthrub,
in isin dorír toilge tóib gnáithí óclais for rind cróib.
Oisin: In geilt ... for rith sunde tlaír ndíon óclais, is fer lath,
in frith file for suidiu is ó báis for sendiunú.

which Meyer translates as follows:

Finn: I have not . . . from a royal host a *maniac* upon trees in a wilderness; in the battle . . . young men are wont to be upon the point of a branch.

Oisin: The *maniac* who is running here westward is not a young man, it is a grey-head; the . . . which is upon such a one, 'tis that which is upon the old man.

It will be seen that the word *geilt* is here translated by Meyer as 'maniac.'

The word *geilt* is twice used in an ancient poem believed to date from the Ninth or Tenth Century, and preserved in the MS. collection of the R.I.A. (S. 148, 2/36, p. 436). It appears from the text of the poem that Finn mac Uaimh is taken prisoner by Cormac, who agrees to liberate him for a ransom of two of every wild animal in Ireland which are to be brought to Tara. Cailte mac Ronan undertakes the task and accomplishes it, and in the poem he relates his success to St Patrick. The poem, it is to be suspected, is in fact Cailte's fulfilment of his mission—he brings the animals in verse. According to a variant prose version contained in the Y.B.I.L., which seems to authenticate the antiquity of the story, the animals are not required as a ransom for Finn by Cormac, but are required by Grainne, Cormac's daughter, during the courtship of Finn. It is interesting to note the occurrence of the name Ronan in the poem in view of its association with Finn and the references to *geilt*. The first three verses of the poem are as follows:

Téigheann ann do shúr na hfiadh,
Dus an bhfuaiseolaíonn mo thriath;
Da éisín go Tarraigh taoile
Tucais liom coma Chormaí.
Tucasa leam in geilt garga,
Is in gribh ingneach imard
Is dá fhíach Fheada an dá bheann,
Dí lachain Locha Saléann.
Dá shinnach a Sliabh Cuillinn,

etc.

Which O'Curry translates:

I then went forth to search the land,
To see if I could redeem my chief,
And soon returned to noble Tara
With the ransom that Cormac required.

I brought with me the fierce *geilt*
And the tall *gribh* with talons,
And the two ravens of Fid-dá-Beann,
And the two ducks of Loch Saléann.

Two foxes from Sliabh Cuillinn,

etc.

The poem then proceeds to enumerate a long catalogue of apparently normal birds and animals (many names of which are, however, not yet interpreted); but towards the close of

1 Cfr. MacNeill, *Sinn.*, VII, p. 79 ff., where it is suggested that this chronicle was composed c. 712.
2 *Flinders Petrie*, p. 22 f.
the poem we find another reference to geilt—this time a pair:

Di gheilt ginnne Ghleanna Smóil.
Di bhaoibh Atha Mogha móir,
Dá onoichta Íath a Loch Con,
Di chait a thuaimh Chruachan.
Two Geilt Glinnes from Glenn-a-Smóil,
Two Badhba from Ath Mogha,
Two fleet otters from Loch Con,
Two cats out of the cave of Cruachan.

(O'Curry).

It will be noted as remarkable, then, that in this poem relating to Finn, we find the geilt, the otter, and the name Ronan once more in close association, as we have already found them in the portion of Suibhne's story which relates to his quarrel with St Ronan.

A more recent edition of a variant version of the poem has been published by E. MacNeill in the Duanaire Finn I. (Dublin, 1904), p. 20 f.

Ro tháifraigis dár na bhrath' uaim trath eige ar na marach
an inneise dhamhse de' créid d'fhaidegoiladh ann oide
Dia ttuigthe i gheilt gharg' isin ghrith ingneach inmar
is fichea feagha Dhuinn Da Bhenn' dha lachain
ó Loch Goibhiond.

If thou fetch here the fierce wild man, and the taloned soaring griffin, and the ravens of the wood of Dún Da Bhenn, two ducks from Loch Goibhiond.

And later:

Is annsin rom-fagaib in geilt in tan roba d' éis mó neirt
Ar lar rátha Fionn no gur gabhar a gCruim-ghlinn.
Where the wild man left me, when I was at the end of my strength, was in the middle of the rath of the Fion of Fionn, but I captured him in Cruilin.²

(MacNeill’s Translation).

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² Ib., p. 116.
that a considerable body of early poetry relating to the subject is connected with the Finn Cycle, while the reference to St Ronan does not appear to occur in any early version.

Our Irish evidence for the geilt, then, may be said to concentrate on three landmarks in Irish history—on the period of Finn maes Umaiil and Cormac; on the early Seventh Century and Suibhne, at which time, if we may trust the late tradition, there were many other geilts in Ireland; and on the early Eighth Century. In the first phase Finn himself seems to be referred to as geilt. In the second Suibhne, of royal stock, is turned into a geilt, apparently as the result of a curse by a cleric. In the last phase the geilt, still fairly numerous, are nevertheless less prominent, and Ed Laighen is a king of Connaught. After this the geilt disappears from Irish history. If we interpret the records, the Battle of Allen may be said to have given them their death blow, and though traces of the same phenomena can be found in the story of the Battle of Clontarf, the word itself is not used, and the machinery appears to be traditional.

Before passing to a consideration of the historical milieu in which the traditions of the geilt assumed their present form, let us pause to enquire how far the phenomenon was known outside Ireland. The tradition of Suibhne’s visit to Britain, and his epithet Albaunach suggest that we may expect to find the same class of tradition on this side of the Irish Sea. It will be remembered that Suibhne came to Britain for spiritual intercourse. Great stress is laid on his interview with a certain Welsh recluse in all respects like himself. But this Welsh recluse, whom we may safely call a geilt, closely resembles Merlin in British tradition. Now, the story of Merlin also clearly points to him as a geilt. He is actually called (g)wyllt, and in a poem which represents him as speaking from the grave, he tells us that he has had a message from the (g)wylyon of the mountain, which is undoubtedly a reference to geilt, while the female “Hwymleian” who stands in such curious relationship to him, recalls the women who is associated with Suibhne. Now, it can, I think, be shown that there is also another famous geilt of high rank and prestige, a great sage, and a member of a famous prophetic family. His name, Morvran, occurs at the opening of the medieval story of Taliesin, and though the story in its present form is late, it is clear from references in early Welsh poetry that the persons and incidents to which it has reference, and more especially those relating to the family to which Morvran belongs, are derived from genuine early tradition.

The story relates that a certain Morvran is the eldest son of Tegid Voel and a witch, Caridwen. The name Tegid is a derivative of the Latin name Tacitus, and the epithet Voel means ‘Bald.’ We may suspect that the nickname has a reference to the tonsure, given to him because he retained the form of tonsure favoured by the early Church as distinct from the coronal form introduced in the Sixth Century. Tegid is said to live in Lake Bala, and it would seem not unlikely that he is a Romanised Briton and a recluse of the Culdee type, living apart from his family.

Nothing more appears to be known of Tegid himself; but a number of scattered references to his son, Morvran, suggest that he is a sage. ‘Morvran’ may also be a nickname. It seems to mean ‘Sea crow.’ In the story of Taliesin nothing is said of him beyond the bare mention of his existence, but references to him elsewhere make it clear that stories relating to him were current in early times. According to the Dream of Rhonabwy he is one of Arthur’s Councillors. From Kilbuck and Olwen we learn that he was present at the Battle of Camlan, which according to the Annales Cambriae was fought in 537. In Kilbuck and Olwen it is stated that no-one struck him with their weapons in the battle because of his hideous appearance. They took him to be some kind of devil, and avoided him. He is said to have been

1 *Hymn, Four Ancient Books of Wales, II., p. 237. For a very interesting passage in Kilbuck and Olwen, in which geilt appears to figure in connection with Gwym ap Nydd (St Finn), see The Mabinogion ed. and trans. H. and L. C. 11, p. 231.

2 A discussion of the versions of the Merlin traditions is given in Chadwick, Growth of Literature, 1, p. 112 ff., 91 et.
covered with hairs like those of a stag. In the Triads of Arthur and his warriors he is mentioned as one of the three 'obstructors of slaughter of the Island of Prydein.' According to the Myrionian Archaeology, they never returned from combat except on their litters, when they were unable to move finger or tongue.\(^3\) The dictionaries explain the word *ergymyd* in this passage, as Lotz points out,\(^3\) by 'bench,' 'litter,' lit.: 'three 'battle benches,' or 'battle litters' of the Isle of Prydein.' Another Triad also assigns to him the same rôle\(^5\) as that assigned to him in *Kithuwych and Olwen.*\(^5\) Unfortunately, the obscure and scattered nature of these references does not permit us to make any definite statement about Morvran; but his position as councillor, if this can be pressed, his rough and hairy appearance, inspiring terror in his opponents; his mute and stupefied condition in the battle; and his dislike of war suggest that he belongs to the same class of people as those with whom we have been dealing. It is therefore interesting that 'Morvran the Skilful' is the name of Merlin's father.\(^6\) Is any connection between these two names possible? We have no early MS. evidence for Merlin himself, the earliest being that of the Twelfth Century; but he is traditionally referred to the Sixth Century.

The curious phenomenon known as *geill* is known also from early Norse literature. The fullest description occurs in the work written about the middle of the Twelfth Century, called the *Speculum Regale,* or 'King's Mirror.' The book purports to record a series of instructions delivered by a father to his son on various matters, and among other subjects it gives an account of Iceland, Greenland, and Ireland. The Irish section consists partly of interesting matter of specific value, such as the account of the Cudees. The author ob-

serves, for example, that 'No other island of its size contains an equally large number of holy men.' It has been truly said that the matter of the *Speculum* consists for the most part of *mirabilia* which are drawn directly from Celtic sources.\(^1\) The great majority of these are closely associated with the legends of the saints. It is therefore particularly interesting that the passage relating to *geill,* which is directly derived from Ireland, should occur in such a context. The passage is so important that I quote it in full:--

"There is also one thing which will seem wonderful about men who are called *geill.* It happens that when two hosts meet and are arranged in battle array, and when the battle cry is raised loudly on both sides, that cowardly men run wild, and lose their wits from the dread and fear which seize them. And then they run into a wood away from other men, and live there like beasts, and shun the meeting of men like wild beasts. And it is said of these men that when they have lived in the woods in that condition for twenty years then feathers grow on their bodies as on birds, whereby their bodies are protected against frost or cold, but the feathers are not so large that they may fly like birds. Yet their swiftness is said to be so great that other men cannot approach them, and greyhounds just as little as men. For these people run along the trees almost as swiftly as monkeys or squirrels."

It is interesting to note that in the Norse version the extravagance has not gone so far as in the *Buile Suibhne,* since it is definitely stated that these people are not actually able to fly.

We also have another passage from Old Norse literature which has all the appearance of a direct borrowing from Irish. The passage occurs in the great storehouse of gnomic and prophetic lore known as the *Hwaudal,* which is found in the *Codex Regius,* the great MS. collection of Old Norse poetry. The passage occurs in str. 129, in the prophetic

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1 See Skene, *P.W.E.,* I, pp. 476, str. exil.; 476, str. ii *geill,* i.e., *outpald,* 'skillful,' 'ingenious.' See the Vocabulary to Strachan *Introduction to Early Welsh.*

section of the poem known as the Loddfisningsal, which purports to be spoken by a thur or inspired sage Loddfiðr, from the sage's seat or throne. Here among a list of precepts delivered by the sage the following occurs:

Upp fite skaliattu frorrsto—
Gjalir gilkér verthu guma synir—sithfr thitt um
heilli hahir.

which has been translated:

'Look not up in battle—For the sons of men become
mad with terror—Lest spells be cast upon you.'

The phrase here translated, 'mad with terror,' means literally
'like people who are geilt,' and this seems to be the meaning
which it bears in the sagas also. Thus in Eyrbygja Saga,
ch. 18, an Irishman called Nagli is said to become geilt in
a battle, and run to the wilds. The incident relates to the year
800 or thereabouts. Again, in an account of a battle of the
Lapps against the eponymous founder of Norway, the former
are said to become geilt when they see the weapons drawn,
and immediately to take flight.¹ In Gísla Saga, chs. 36 and
142, men are said to 'almost go geilt' from surprise and terror.
In Vatnsdæla Saga, ch. 26, when the hero cuts off the head
of a 'kerling' called Ljót, she observes that she had intended
to bewitch the land, and they would have all run mad (orðfhust)
and become geilt if they had not taken her by surprise and
captured her. Finally, we may refer to a passage in St Olaf's
Saga (Flatjójarbók II), p. 25, in which a sea-troll chants
so loudly that many of the sea-folk who are in the vicinity
become geilt. It may be added that there are some interesting
Biblical references to the same word.

By the Ninth Century, therefore, the geilt were transmited to the Norse as people who had become bewitched in some way owing to their having looked up to Heaven during a battle. By the time the sagas took shape the phenomenon has come to be regarded as capable of being brought about by a piece of vulgar witchcraft. By the Twelfth


Century the bird-like transformation is complete. It will be seen that the development is much the same as in Irish.

In Wales, despite the extreme difficulty of the chronology,
and enough remains to suggest that in the earliest traditions
gellact is the result of a message received from Heaven—not
a vision, as in Norse, but a voice, as in Irish, accusing the
gell of the sin of bloodshed; while in the medieval form the
bird and beast imagery is fully developed. In all, however,
the association with battle is preserved, and in Welsh, as in
Irish, the association with court life is clear.

We may now turn to examine more fully the story of the
Battle of Allen which we have seen to be concerned with
geilt, and to have certain elements in common with the Battle
of Moyra. This story, although short, is curiously scrappy
and inconsequent. It opens with a muster of Fergal,
son of Maelduin, the high king, and his march southwards
to demand the Boromean tribute from the Leinstermen,
who at this time are under Fergal's brother-in-law, Cathal
mae Finguine, king of Munster. Cathal and Fergal have
been at war with one another, but a peace has been made
between them. Cathal is absent when Fergal and his host
appear in the neighbourhood of the Hill of Allen in Leinster,
and the Leinstermen, despite the truce, determine to fight
and withhold the tribute.

At the opening of the saga the importance of a certain
Dunnbó is stressed, for we are told that Fergal's men refuse
to follow him to battle unless Dunnbó goes with them. It is
clear that Dunnbó is a gifted poet and story teller. The word
grīðr is used of him. His prestige is further emphasized
by the fact that St Columba gives a guarantee to his mother,
who is a widow, that he shall be returned to her safe after
the battle. The motif would be more understandable if
Dunnbó were to be regarded as a cleric, and as having accompa-
panied the host on the church's guarantee that he shall not
be called upon to fight. Columcille, it may be noted, is on
Fergal's side throughout the story, while St Brigit favours
the Leinstermen. Moreover, Columcille shows himself true
to his traditional rôle as the friend of poets. Columcille’s help, however, does not avail Fergal, for Fergal’s forces doom themselves at the outset by camping on the edge of a ‘cell’ or anchorite’s chapel, and spoiling its thatch, and stealing the only cow of the inmate, who is described as a clam.

Finally they spoor the clam himself through his mantle. The clam enters Fergal’s tent and lays his curse on them all save on a certain Fir Roiss, Cu-Bretan, son of Aengus or Congus, who pities him. Finally the clam prophesies their defeat in the ensuing battle in consequence of their deed. The situation has elements which recall the death of Suibhne—the humble church, the recluse, the cow, the spear-wound through the mantle, the appearance and speech of the recluse in the assembly afterwards.

We must read the next incident in the light of Fergal’s sacrifice also, for when Fergal asks Dunnóbó to entertain his host on the night before the battle—again his piety is stressed—Dunnóbó vows that he has no music on his lips that night, though he promises that he will make music for them on the next night, whatever the circumstances. It is clear that he is guided by a prophetic vision of the result of Fergal’s deed, and the music that he intends to sing is Fergal’s keen. He suggests that in the meantime a certain Ua-Maiglínne shall entertain them, ‘for he is the rig-druth of Ireland.’ Un-Maiglínne seeks to enhearten them by reciting great tales of the prowess and triumphs of the Leinstrermen; but he does not succeed in inspiring them with confidence, and in the battle on the following day Fergal’s army is destroyed, despite all the efforts of Columcille, and Dunnóbó himself is slain. We are told that St Brigit can see

during the battle in the air above the Leinstemen fighting against them—a curious touch which recalls the accounts of the Battle of Moyra, and the vision which sends men geilt. A verse quoted in the saga, however, suggests that St Brigit has here taken the place of a heathen supernatural being:

'The red-mouthed, javelin-armed Badb uttered
A paean round Fergal’s head.'

We have seen that a number of geilt, varying between seven and nine, are said to have been slain in this battle. One is tempted to ask whether the geilt, whose numbers are evidently small, are not the same as the eleven kings enumerated in the text of the saga as among the slain, and to regard the change of numbers as merely scribal? In a brief but obscure passage which follows we are told that Aed Laichen, a king of Connaught, in seeking to make his escape from the battle, is lifted by his sons on the point of their spears. If I am right in identifying the geilt slain in this battle with the kings of the northern O’Neill, we may perhaps interpret this passage in the light of the obscure stanza in the poem referring to Finn cited above, where, in a dialogue between Finn and his son, there is an obscure reference to ‘young men in battle on the point of a branch’ (doubtless a figurative reference to a spear-shaft), and to an old man, a ‘geilt’ ‘running westward.’ The poem and the reference to Aed Laichen seem to bear some relationship to one another. We may refer to the passage in which Suibhne is described as dancing on the spear-shafts in the Battle of Moyra. It would seem, therefore, that Aed Laichen, the king of Connaught, is regarded as going geilt in the battle.

Moreover, a reference to the habits of a geilt seems to underlie another obscure passage already referred to, which follows immediately upon, and seems to be connected with, the flight of Aed Laichen. Here we are told that Fergal’s son, Aed Allan, also fled from the battle, and took refuge

1 We may compare also the account of the Battle of Clontarf, and the early Norse poem, Darmahartlaf, which is closely related to it.
in the dwelling-place of the church of a pious foreigner, called Prudens. It is not clear whether the cleric and his companion, Mo-Díchen (son of Amargin) or the visitors were disguised as clerics, whether it was they, or, as one version has it, an angel who rode on the roof-beam of the house; but in view of the preceding passage, and of the *gelact* of this act, we may suppose it to have been originally attributed to one of the royal strangers belonging to Fergal's party.

With the rout of the high king and the destruction of his army and the reference to the *gelact* of Aed we come to the end of the first part of the saga, though the narrator is careful to add at this point as a kind of postscript that Cú-Bretan, son of Oengus, king of Fir Rois, was saved from the destruction which befell Fergal's side owing to the part which he had played in regard to the *clán*, or rather in consequence of the verses which he had spoken on this matter. The second half of the saga is concerned almost exclusively with the fate of the severed heads of Dunn-bó and Fergal, as well as that of Ua-Maiglinne. The two former, as we have seen, were severed during the battle, while that of Ua-Maiglinne the *rígh-druth* was done in cold blood after his capture, as an immediate consequence of a shout (*gélím druth*) which he gave at the command of the Leinstermen. It is asserted that this shout remained on the air for three days and nights. We may compare the laugh of Da-déra with the remark on the reference to the skull of Clofson, referred to above. Is it possible that these heads, severed as the result of the *clán*'s curse, correspond in some way to the heads which appeared in the vision to Suibhne, to whom the *clán* in many respects corresponds?

Next we have the remarkable story of the head of Dunn-bó. During the feast of the Leinstermen that night, a certain Baethgalach, a warrior of Munster, goes to the battlefield at the wish of Murchad, to seek a head from among the slain of Fergal's army. We may recall the *geis* of Finn 'never to attend a feast unless dead heads were present.' As Baethgalach is searching the field, a voice is heard from Heaven, bidding Fergal's poets sing for him as they had been wont to do during his life, and from all the poets comes sweet music and song, but the sweetest comes from Dunn-bó in the rushes. Baethgalach approaches it, but the head declares that it is pledged to make music on this night for Fergal, not for Murchad, but consents nevertheless to be carried into Murchad's presence, provided Baethgalach pledges himself to replace it on his body. When it is brought into the presence of the feasters it is placed on a pillar, and the Leinstermen taunt it, contrasting its present plight with its former skill in song. But Baethgalach adjures it for Christ's sake to make music for them, whereupon the head raises so sorrowful a keen for his dead master that the feasters are glad to relinquish it, and Baethgalach carries it back to its body as he has promised. According to one text we are even told that the head adheres to the body, thus fulfilling Columcille's promise that he shall return alive after the battle. The incident is interesting as a further instance of Columcille's protection of the *filid*, while the anxiety of Dunn-bó that his head and body should not be separated would in any case be in accordance with the Christian bias of the story in its present form. In this act of Baethgalach's, therefore, as well as in the part which he plays in enabling Dunn-bó to fulfil his pledge to Fergal, Baethgalach plays the part of a Christian warrior, and it is noteworthy here, as in what follows, that the attitude of the saga-teller is sympathetic to the men of Munster and hostile to those of Leinster. Had not the latter killed many *gelte*? — And this, even though the Leinstermen are allies of the Munstermen in the battle. The story of the fate of Ua-Maiglinne and Dunn-bó concludes in one text with a triad of the three wonders of the battle, namely, Dunn-bó returning home alive in fulfilment of Columcille's word, and Ua-Maiglinne's shout remaining three days and nights on the air, and the victory of 9000 over 21,000. O'Donovan compares the three wonders of the Battle of Moyra, namely, the defeat of Conghal Claen, the *gelact* of Suibhne, and Cemfætlaed's loss of his 'brain of forgetfulness.'
Lastly, we have the episode of Fergal’s own head. This, we are told, is taken by a party of Leinstermen to Munster, to Cathal mac Finguine, who is angry at Fergal’s destruction during the truce that is between them, and doubtless also, we may well suspect, because they are closely connected by ties of marriage, Cathal being married to Fergal’s sister. It may indeed be suspected that the dispatch of Fergal’s head to Cathal is an act of rebellion on the part of the Leinstermen against Cathal, and this is borne out by Cathal’s treatment of the head, for instead of insulting it, as the Leinstermen had done, he has it washed and honourably treated. The head shows its appreciation by opening its eyes and giving thanks to God. Eventually Cathal returns the head to its own people, and himself attends Fergal’s State funeral, and sets Fergal’s grandson on the throne. His son, it will be remembered, had been killed in the battle. In a punitive expedition fought by Cathal against the Leinstermen the latter are defeated.

In reviewing the saga as a whole, one of the features which strikes us most forcibly is that it is clearly related from the standpoint of one who is earnestly concerned to uphold the prestige of the Ulidseas and St Columba. The story in its present form appears to have been adapted to controversial purposes, analogous to that of the Battle of Moyra. We have seen that it bears some relationship to the latter story in many details, such as the three wonders associated with both battles, one of which in each case relates to severed heads. Most important of all is the association of getla with both battles. It may be added here that in both stories a getthl in seeking to escape from the battle flees westwards, while Munster is the district regarded as friendly to the side to which the getla adhere. The Buide Sluithaine has been worked up with enhancement of the ludicrous by a late redactor, but it is to be suspected that both stories were chosen, and that the actual outline of events assumed their present form in the outburst of literary activity following upon Columcille’s championship of the filid at the Assembly of Drum Cet in 575, or in some later revival of the same feud. The treatment of the poets is evidently the chief preoccupation of the saga-teller of the Battle of Allen. He stresses Columcille’s fulfilment of his pledge for Dunn-bó’s safety above all else. It is interesting that the Leinstermen refuse to follow Fergal unless Dunn-bó goes too, and that Cu-Bretan, a cleric, is also in his following, whereas we shall see later that Cathal mac Finguine claims that no clerics shall be forced to fight in his train, and according to the Cithin Ammanu clerics were exempt from battle. One is tempted to suspect, therefore, that it is in view of his violation of the rights of clerics and filid to be exempt from battle that Fergal meets his doom.

Some light is thrown on the story of the Battle of Allen by an examination of the Aislinge meic Conglinne, which relates to the same period and largely to the same milieu. The hero of the story is a scholar of Armagh, one Anier mac Conglinne, who is mentioned among a number of his companions, some of whom bear well-known names. Mac Conglinne, tired of study, packs his books in a satchel and decides to make a journey to the west. With his teacher’s blessing, and apparently with his approval, he sets out for Munster, where he is very contemptuously treated by the monks of Cork. Meanwhile he learns that the king, who is no other than Cathal mac Finguine, is afflicted with a demon of gluttony in his throat which is eating so ravenously that it has become a scourge to the kingdom. Mac Conglinne obtains permission to relate an aislinge or ‘vision’ which he has seen to the king, and in this aislinge he parodies the entire body of the imthocha, or ‘Voyages,’ the aislinge and baile, or ‘visions,’ translating the entire machinery and personnel into terms of food. At the luscious inventories and menus which make up the scenes and motifs of the aislinge the fiend issues from Cathal’s mouth and is destroyed by fire. Mac Conglinne, the poor scholar who has before been despised by all, is now held in the highest esteem, and is awarded the abbot’s cloak. Behind all this it is clear that Mac Conglinne is in reality satirising the literary traditions of baile or aislinge most dear
to Cathal, whose wife is a daughter of Maelduin, so prominent in heathen traditions.

Such in brief is the summary of the story. A closer reading of the text makes it clear that variant versions have been pieced together without much attempt at consistency, and duplicates are also found within the text itself. The story is evidently a popular one which had been current for some considerable time before the versions which were written down in the Twelfth Century, about the same time as the Buile Subhne. The literary characteristics of both these stories are alike in their present form, and it is clear that the narrator has regarded himself as free at this late date to heap the utmost ridicule on his heroes. Nevertheless the motifs of the sedl, the imithecht, the aislinge and the baile pre-suppose the utilisation of earlier tradition, while the author throws his subject back to the early Eighth Century. Moreover, there is reason to believe that poems relating to the same subject as this particular aislinge were already in existence at an early date, as I shall presently show. It is worth while, therefore, to look more closely for a moment at the underlying implications of the tradition.

In the first place we note that the scholar Mac Conglaine belongs to an honourable community of scholars at Armagh, and that when he leaves his teacher to go westwards to Munster he is under no shadow. It is only when he is in the milieu of the monks of Cork that he becomes a mark of contempt. This contempt is quite to the shamachie’s taste, and he makes the most of it; but the fact remains that at the conclusion it is the poor wandering scholar who triumphs over all his traducers. The monks of Cork are nowhere beside him. They cannot cure the king, though Mac Conglaine can and does. And how does he do it? By the old traditional method, lately become so unfashionable, by his mantic vision, which he has learnt to utilise for the royal good.

It would seem probable that an old traditional story has been used for purposes of religious propaganda. We seem to be in the milieu of a religious controversy, in which the story of Mac Conglaine has been used as a broadsheet, composed from the point of the wandering scholars in opposition to the monastic orders. It would seem that the demon of gluttony which possessed Cathal was no other than the monks of Cork themselves, from whom he is rescued by a wandering cleric with a satchel of books on his back. But the cleric, despite his books, is well versed in heathen tradition, and by no means averse to using it, albeit satirically. We shall see presently that there are good reasons for regarding the wandering scholars and anhoriotes of the early Irish Church as valuable repositories of file lore.

Let us look for a moment at the origin of Cathal’s illness. We are told that he fell in love with Ligach, the daughter of Maelduin, king of Ailech, without having seen her, and that she used to send him apples and kernels (nuts?) ‘for his love and affection.’ But Fergal, who was at that time contending with Cathal for the high kingship, summoned a scholar (scolaire) and bribed him to enchant the apples so that when Cathal ate them, little creatures formed inside him which developed into the demon of gluttony. It will be seen that the theme of the maiden who tempts the prince with enchanted apples is identical with that of the story of Comgall. Cathal, in fact, is represented in this aspect of the story as the victim of heathen enchantment brought about by the family of Maelduin. It is possible that in the earlier version of the story the demon which grew inside Cathal was not that of monasticism, but that of heathenism, or at least reaction towards heathenism. As the story stands, however, he figures as the victim of violent contrary influences, and doubtless as the centre of violent controversy—the victim of the heathen aspirations of the family of the high kings under Maelduin; the supporter of a rapacious religious community in the monks of Cork; and the convert of a wandering scholar from

1 Ailech, or Oilech, in Donegal, was the seat of one of the families from which the high kings were drawn.
the community of Armagh, who is equally proficient in Latin learning and heathen poetical tradition.

Who, then, is Mac Conglinne, and what class of cleric is this strange inmate of Armagh, who is represented at the opening of the story as leaving his community and his teacher, and rushing westwards to Munster with all imaginary speed, his books on his back? Why, for instance, does he visit Cathal and not Fergal? Who are his fellow-scholars at Armagh, and what type of clerics are they?

Most of them are well known elsewhere in Irish literature. One of the most famous is Marban, who is doubtless the half-brother of Guaire Aidne, King of Connaught, who died in 663 or 666. Another famous scholar of the list is Congan Mac Dá Chéirda, who is also represented as a poet, and his name, I have no doubt, has reference to his proficiency in both native oral tradition and Latin book learning. In one story he is represented as present at the Court of King Guaire as a Munster fili, together with Bishop Mo-Ron-cc, who is here represented, doubtless humorously and satirically, as an dinnit. In the story of Liadain and Curithir we are told the names of the father and grandfather of Mac Dá Chéirda, and he is said to belong to the Déisi. Here also he is described as ard fili na Herenn dinnit na Herenn. Whatever the word dinnit may mean, it is clear that excellence in poetry is attributed to him, no less than in magic, for it is said of him in Liadain and Curithir that ‘he would go dry-shod over sea and land alike.’ This, it will be noticed, is a similar extravagant claim to that made on behalf of the geilt, who is said to fly through the air and walk along the tree tops.

1 See K. Meyer, Atuine Meic Conchaine, p. 181.
3 According to Colgan, Acta Sanctorum, Hibern. (Vita S. Molingii), Vol. I., p. 149, notes 7, 8, he was called Mac Dá Chéirda, ‘Son of Two Armes’; but as the name occurs in an extant manuscript, it is impossible to state whether the word dinnit signifies excellence in poetry, dinnit munus prædictum. My explanation is not incompatible with this since the old traditional learning was regarded as the product of inspiration, which is itself treated in the later records as a form of madness.
4 See Kenny, loc. cit.
5 The same word is used of Ua Malghinne in the Battle of Allen.

and both have their origin in early poetical figurative diction literally interpreted by the later shannachie. Mac Dá Chêrda is also one of the two ‘Idiot Saints’ of whom a very interesting story is told. Finally, we may return to the story of Liadain and Curithir, where we are told that Mac Dá Chêrda is sent by a poet (dein) Curithir, son of a certain Otter (Doborchu), from Connaught, with a message to Liadain of Munster, to whom he, Conman, appears to have unimpeded access, though she appears to be living in a community with five other women. The context suggests that Liadain is one of a community, such as were common in the early days of the Irish Church, and that Conman visits her as a churchman. Now we have seen that the ‘Otter’ is associated with the grib and the geilt in early poems relating to the Battle of Allen and to the Finn Cycle, and that Fergal is himself here referred to as a grib. Since the person of Mac Dá Chêrda makes it clear that Fergal and Curithir are contemporaries, I suggest that the latter is the Otter classed with the grib and the geilt in the poems, and that in late tradition he has become the otter who returned St. Ronan’s book to him, after it had been flung into the water by Suibhne. It is interesting, therefore, to find him figuring as the friend of Mac Dá Chêrda, who, as we have seen, is both a scholar and a poet. Liadain herself is also a poetess according to the ancient traditional form. We have already seen reason to think that in late tradition the name of St. Ronan has been substituted for that of Ronan, the father of Caille, Finn’s poet. We have therefore a well-established tradition that Curithir, the ‘Otter’ of Connaught, himself a poet, was associated in the earliest traditions with both oral traditional poetry and the newer Latin learning, and himself the friend of clerics. We are reminded of the friendship between the poet Suibhne and the anchorite and scholar St. Moling.

1 For the MS. sources of the Adventures of the Two Idiot Saints, see Kenny, op. cit., p. 421, note 167. The story is stated by Kenny to be still meditated; but a very interesting abridged account of the original text has been published by Todd in the Liber Hiberniarum (Dublin, 1855), p. 88 ff. For the explanation of the term ‘dein’ see above.
Another interesting scholar of Armagh is Céitín mac Rústaing. In one MS. (L. Br.) commentary on the Féile Óengusso a certain Máo Rústaing is said to have been born at Rosca Eol, and it is added that no woman can look at the grave without laughter. The same facts are mentioned among the wonders of Ireland in the Irish Nennius (Ed. Todd, p. 291), and a similar story is told in the early Norse Speculum Regale referred to above about the skull of an Irish druí called Cleifán. The passage confirms the suggestion which I have made above that the Speculum is directly concerned with the Culdee movement in Ireland, and seems to be a traditional collection of stories in which the Irish ecclesiastics, and more especially the devotees of the anchorite movement of the Eighth and Ninth Centuries, are held up to ridicule as "figures of fun." It is commonly held that the word dinnot, applied, as we have seen, to Máo Dé Chorda and other contemporary ecclesiastics, has reference to their humorous gifts.

The Cailleach of Beara,¹ who appears in the list of the members of the community of Armagh, has suffered still rougher treatment at the hands of later tradition. Yet her name, or epithet, Dón(n)fiách, and the poem in which she relates her past experiences, no less than the prose note which precedes it in MS. H. 3, 183, seem to point to a religious community with a woman at the head, such as is known to have been not rare in the early Irish Church.² And here the reference to St Cuimín in the prose note suggests that the floruit of this community was the second half of the Seventh and the first half of the Eighth Century. The community would, therefore, be contemporary with that of Liadain and her community of five anchoresses, and doubtless analogous to it.³

In all probability this list of Armagh scholars is traditional, and was originally serious enough—Dub Dé Thúath,

¹ Her true name appears to be Dígéil.
² See e.g. Meisner, op. cit., pp. 171, 172.
³ On this subject, see Meisner, op. cit., p. 142 ff.
is an interesting insertion in the story (p. 52) which suggests a possible explanation. The passage as a whole is far from clear, but one thing is definitely stated, namely, that some poor cleric offered hospitality which he could ill afford to Cathal, declaring at the same time that his great poverty and privations are due to his having been forced to fight as a soldier. The man is evidently living as a recluse and an anchorite at the time when Cathal comes upon him. In consequence of this encounter Cathal is represented as swearing an oath 'by Emly Ivarr' that henceforth no cleric shall fight with him, and the narrator adds: 'Up to that time the clerics of Ireland were wont to go a-soldiering.' The truth of the comment seems to be borne out by our stories of the Battles of Moyra and of Allen. Moreover, Cathal's oath, and the comment which follows have an ecclesiastical ring, and may be due to written ecclesiastical tradition, for according to Hennessey, Emly-Ivarr, now Emly, in the County of Tipperary, was anciently a bishop's see. If there is any truth in the tradition it would amply account for Cathal's popularity with the clerics, while some such immunity for the filid in Munster would account for the flight of the gelta to Glen Bolcan, especially in troublous times, and for their unwillingness to be caught. This would be especially natural in a person like Subhne, a poet who had also been a great warrior, but who prefers to live with the anchorite Moling instead of reigning in his kingdom.

What is the relationship of these facts to history? In the Annals of Ulster, we read s.a. 737: 'The Law of St Patrick held Ireland,' and s.a. 766: 'Lex Patricii,' while in 783 we read further: 'The promulgation of the Law of Patrick in Cusachn' by Dub-dá-leithi and by Tipraite, son of Tadg. As Kenney observes, the Law of Patrick is nowhere clearly explained; but Keating describes the Law of Patrick as one of the four laws of Ireland, its provision being 'not to kill clerics.' The clergy seem also to be exempted from actual fighting by the Cen Annmaen. In any case there seems to be no doubt that this rule was re-enacted in 801 by Fothad mac Canan, who seems to lay down that all inmates of churches, lay monks, as well as clerics, should be exempted, not only from fighting, but from attendance or service of any kind on military hostings. It is clear, therefore, that during the Eighth Century at any rate the point was under discussion, and if we may judge from the number of references the point was one of vital interest, though undoubtedly a subject of controversy. The tradition of the Aistlinge meic Coglinne is, therefore, doubtless quite trustworthy in representing Cathal as taking part in the matter, and that of the Battle of Allen as representing Dunn-bó as reluctant to go with the host, and as in sullen mood when constrained to do so. If this is the case, and if Cathal really did take a prominent part on behalf of the clerics in the matter, it would easily account for the 'wild rushing' and 'headlong westward flight' of the gelta, since these were also clearly seeking to avoid battle. The same considerations also suggest that the composition of both the Battle of Allen and that of the Aistlinge meic Coglinne belong in their original form to the first half of the Eighth Century, or the period to which the Book of Druim Snechta is generally assigned. This great collection, in view of its special concern with heathen subjects, and more especially the literature of vision and poetic inspiration, is thought to be the collection of a filid. If I am right in assigning the original formation of the sagas which we have been studying to the same period, it would seem probable that they were composed as a contribution to the controversy of the time which was raging round the rival claims of filid and cleric as repositories of ancient tradition, and as deserving to be exempted from battle.

We have seen that the traditions of gelta are associated

1 Kenney, op. cit., p. 141.
2 Ibid., p. 238, footnote 4.
3 Ibid., p. 473, footnote 4.
4 See Patric Oengus, pp. vi., vii., x.; Pat. Oeng., pp. 4-6, 10-1.
with three distinct stories—that of Finn mac Uamh, and doubtless the battle of Cruacha; that of Suibhne, and the Battle of Moyra; that of Fergal, and the Battle of Allen. In all these cases a collection of severed heads plays a prominent and somewhat obscure part. The custom of preserving severed heads was, of course, traditional, and was a well-established custom, we are told, in ancient Gaul; but this can not be considered to explain their prominence in connection with the geld, whose close association with Christians and clerics is everywhere insisted on. The same connection between the severed head and the geld is further emphasised by the juxtaposition of the reference to the skull of Clefian, himself apparently a cleric, with that of the geld in the Norse Speculum Regale. Moreover, in the majority of instances the severed heads are those of poets. Curious features which do not readily explain themselves are the persistence of Ua Maiglinne’s shout on the air for three days and nights; the continuance of Dunn-bo’s power to sing after death. We may refer further to the power of Clefian’s skull to elicit laughter, and that of Mauc Rustaing to make women laugh if they approached his grave. Other instances might be added. I suggest that this is the characteristically figurative technique of the Irish poet to express the claim of the fáil that their poetry lives on long after the lips which uttered it have been closed in death. But why should they be prominent in Suibhne’s vision, and in the triad of the Battle of Moyra? 1

It is probably in the light of the evidence offered by the diotion in such stories that we must interpret another obscure story of an injured head at the Battle of Moyra, namely, that of a certain Connfaelad, whose ‘brain of forgetfulness’ is said to have been extracted from him after his head had been cloven in the Battle of Moyra. 2 Now, according to his chief biographer in modern times, 1 Connfaelad ‘was the breaking of the barriers of tradition and prejudice that separated the two cultures, and the admission of the fáil and all their lore to the franchise of the Latin alphabet.’ Connfaelad died in 679. It is interesting to note that reference is made to both Connfaelad and Suibhne in juxtaposition in the Preface to the Book of Achill, a law tract attributed to Cormac, which is always found annexed to a Law Treatise ascribed to Connfaelad the Learned (Sapiens). In the preface to the Book of Achill its authorship is attributed to Connfaelad ‘in consequence of his brain of forgetfulness having been extracted from his head after having been cloven in the Battle of Moyra.’ 3 And the preface continues:

‘The three victories of that battle were: the defeat of Conghal Claen, in his falsehood, by Domnall, in his truthfulness; and Suibhne the maniac to be a maniac; and it is not of Conghal Claen, in his falsehood, by Domnall, in his truthfulness; and Suibhne the maniac to be a maniac; and it is not Suibhne’s becoming a maniac that is (considered) a victory, but all the stories and all the poems which he left after him in Erin; and it was not a victory that his brain of forgetfulness was extracted from Connfaelad’s head, but what he left of noble book work after him in Erin. He had been carried to be cured to the house of (St) Brielin, of Tuaim Drecenn, 4 and there were schools in the town, a school of the Classics, and a school of Fenechas (laws), and a school of Filidhecht (Philosophy, poetry, etc.); and everything that he used to hear of what the three schools spoke every day he used to have of clear memory every night; and he put a clear thread of poetry

1 See two papers on him by E. MacNeill, Studies, XI. (1922), pp. 18, 435 ff.
2 See O’Curry, Manuscripts Materials, etc., p. xxvii.
3 This has been identified with the place now called Togmorea on the borders of the counties of Fermanagh and Cavan. There is no record of a school or monastery here, however (MacNeill). Bréccian of Tuaim Drecenn was honoured in later times as a saint, which makes it almost certain that he was an ecclesiastic. (MacNeill), Studies, XI. (1922), p. 37.)
to them; and he wrote them on stones and on tables, and
he put them into a vellum book. 1

It would be rash to suggest that Suibhne himself was
perhaps responsible for the blow to Cennfaelad’s head, though
his own vision of severed heads after the battle and his asso-
ciation with Cennfaelad makes the suggestion tempting.
However that may be, the reference to ‘the defeat of Congal
Claan in his falsehood by Domnall in his truthfulness’ to-
gether with that of Suibhne, friend of Moling, but mortal
enemy of St Ronan with his book, and with that of Cen-
faelad the great scholar and pioneer of the written word
points again to a religious controversy which reached its
climax at the time of the Battle of Moyra, and bequeath-
a rich crop of legends to after ages. The reference to Cen-
faelad’s brain is, I have no doubt, a figurative way of saying
that after he had been healed in the monastery of a wound
in the head, he was educated in the same house, and became
a great exponent of written learning, thereby earning the
name ‘sapiens.’ The story further suggests that up to this
time he had been equally great in the field of oral learn-
ing. It would seem that Cennfaelad bridges the two extremes
of oral and book learning represented in the story of the Battle
of Moyra by Suibhne and St Ronan. The importance of
Suibhne’s contribution to the former is recognised by the Book
of Aehill, for it speaks of the wealth of poetry and stories
which he left behind.

It has been pointed out that Cennfaelad belongs to the
family of the high kings. He was himself eligible for the
high kingship, and his part in the Battle of Moyra shows that
he took his responsibilities seriously. Now we know that a
great gulf separated the oral traditional learning, as repre-
sented by the filid on the one hand, and the newer Latin
learning. Cennfaelad’s real achievement, therefore, was one,
not so much of intellectual learning as of statesmanship—
the constructive idea of co-operating with the filid, rather
than of competing with them. He succeeded in persuading

1 Translated by O’Curry’s M.S. Materials, p. 50 f.

them of the value of the new learning for their own purposes,
and of recording the lore of which they themselves were the
repositories.

The end desired by Cennfaelad was not immediately
achieved; but we can watch it approaching. It was some
quarter of a century later that Senchan Torpeist caused the
Táin Bó Cuailnge to be written down. The Aidinge Mac
Conlinne suggests that the feud between the oral and the
written learning was still smouldering in the first half of the
Eighth Century. This is precisely the period to which the
composition of the Book of Druim Snechta is assigned—almost
certainly the répertoire of a file. We have already seen
that an early tradition exists according to which Suibhne
sang the poems which St Moling wrote down. And Norse
tradition of the same period gives especial prominence to the
geilt and other types of oral poets in close association with
the anchorites and Culdees.

Now, according to Dr Flower, the school of nature poetry
represented by the poems ascribed to St Moling, to Marban, to
Suibhne, and others, is to be identified with the scribes and
anchorites of the early Irish Church, who are commonly known as
Culdees, the period of whose greatest importance was the Eighth
and Ninth Centuries. There can be no doubt of their close asso-
ciation with poetry of this type; and their way of life, simple,
frugal, and lived in close touch with nature amid the loveliest
and mildest parts of Ireland, would make them especially
sensitive to the beauties of the countryside, while their simple
and secluded life would give them that clarity of vision and
directness and sincerity of personal utterance for which this
poetry is remarkable. On the other hand, poetry of this
kind has a long association with Munster in Irish tradition,
and much of it is undoubtedly closely bound up with heathen
tradition.

Now there can be no doubt that not only in his poetry,
but also in his way of life Suibhne has a great deal in common
with the anchorites of the early Church. He resembles
them in his excessive asceticism, in his recluse habits, and
simple abnegation of all property and all rights, in his spiritual
concentration, and in his extreme mobility. He is a friend
of anchorites, though his own calling seems to be penitential
rather than contemplative. He is a member of the Christian
Church, despite St Roman's curse, and he becomes, even
during his lifetime, a member of a group of anchorites. When
he dies he is buried in consecrated ground.

On the other hand, there can be no doubt that
Suibhne and the other gella also share many of the
characteristics of the earlier filid. We may point to
their feather dress, reminiscent of the iugen, or feather
cloak, of the file, and to their mobile character, which
with their feather dress, is probably responsible for the
term 'volatiles' contemptuously applied to the gella.
Like the heathen sage, Eocht Salach, Suibhne's original home
is stated to have been in Buas,¹ while his diet is practically
identical with that of the infant Amargin, Eocht's fostering,
and with the contents of Caridwenn's cauldron. It is interesting
to note that among the places visited by Suibhne in his
search for solitude are Irish Boffin, where the youthful sage,
Coco was sent for purification by means of cow's milk; Sliabh
Mish, where the youthful sage Amargin was taken by his
sister to be hidden from his enemy, Athirne; and above all,
Glen Boleain, bearing the significant meaning, 'Glen of the
Drop,' i.e., undoubtedly the drop of poetic inspiration, espe-

cially heathen inspiration.

But the feature which Suibhne shares most completely
with the filid and the old heathen world is the gift of poetry.
This is the feature of Suibhne which first made him famous,
and which is chiefly stressed in the earliest records. More-
over, his is exactly the kind of poetry which we should expect
to find as survivals of the Druidical tradition—a religion
with neither churches nor buildings, which was largely de-
pendent on oral poetry, and associated with deep woods
and outdoor life. There can be no doubt that Dr Flower
is right in believing that the scribes and anchorites were

¹ See Thurnam, Irlands Heimatsagen, p. 515, footnote 4.

largely responsible for the preservation of such poetry. But
one is tempted to believe that the perfection and finish with
which it springs to life, the very mirror and quintessence of
distilled beauty in nature and in spirit, are the result of a long
tradition of dedicated work, carried on in circumstances
free from strain, rather than the sudden outburst of expression
of a new ideal. The absence of fanaticism is its most striking
feature.

On the whole the gella seem to represent an intermediate
stage between the old heathen world and the Irish Church.
They are not actually outside the pale of the Church; they
are its 'back numbers.' They represent those who do not
conform, who do not come under an authorised discipline,
probably the reformed discipline of St Tallaght. Suibhne's
vision in the Battle of Moyra is strikingly reminiscent of that of
Merlin, who receives a message of responsibility for those
slain in battle. He bears an even closer relationship to St
Columba, the similarity of whose call to that of Suibhne is
very striking, and it is probable that the nick-name gellt
has not been applied to the saint merely because the traditions
regarding him have been handed down to us through dignified
and responsible ecclesiastical channels. As the founder of
a great church he has never become an object of ridicule to
his followers. Unlike Suibhne, however, St Columba valued
books, while Suibhne threw them away. We may compare
the Welsh scholar, Yscolan, who, like Suibhne, throws his
book into the water. Such stories would seem to point to the
class of 'religious' in the early Church, who were not
necessarily attached to ecclesiastical communities, with their
love of learning, but who preferred a life of solitude in 'desert'
places.¹ We have seen that Suibhne has much in common
with the filid whose cause St Columba himself espoused at
the Convention of Druim Cet. Does the story of Suibhne
reflect the last struggle between the heirs of fili decht and the
encroachment of the Roman Church as represented by the
anchorite reform? It has been pointed out that the monas-

¹ For an interesting account of these, see Shan, Celtic Scotia, Vol. II, ch. vi.
teries of St Tallaght and Findglass, which seem to have been the centres of this reform, were known as the "Two Eyes of Ireland." The name is particularly suitable if, as Flower suggests, they were mainly responsible for a congress of anchorites and scribes held in 780 under the president, bearing the significant name or nickname of Duiblitir, who was abbot of Findglass, and if, as seems very probable, they were mainly responsible for the training of the scribes connected with the anchorite movement. It is, perhaps, too "Two Eyes of Ireland" that we owe the beginnings of the recording of Irish native literature. Dr Flower is doubtless right in the important part which he assigns to the anchorites and scribes. Is it permissible to suggest that the "Two "eyes" of Ireland" may also have been mainly responsible for the substitution of written for oral literature, of "eyes" for "ears"?

In conclusion, let us return for a moment to the little collection of poems in the St Paul Codex. We have seen that Nos. III. and IV. are ascribed to Suibhne and Moling. No. V. is a panegyric on a certain Aodh. It is not known who this Aodh, of the St Paul Codex was, but the juxtaposition of this poem to those of Suibhne and Moling, together with the internal evidence of the poem itself, suggests that he is to be identified with Aedh Uairidh Nach, who ruled 603-611. The poem is believed to be contemporary, and is shown on internal evidence to be earlier than the Ninth Century. There is, therefore, nothing improbable in this identification. If it were correct, the last three poems of the collection might naturally be supposed to have reference to the Cudsee period, and the references to Aedh as a patron of poetry are important. The first poem in the collection is described by the editors as "some kind of charm or incantation"; but its contents are clearly reminiscent of a vision resembling that of Mac Conglaine, and it offers early testimony to such visions, probably to the vision of Mac Conglaine himself. The poem is too obscure to enable us to say how far it is serious, or whether, like the later sagas, it is a satirical work. The remaining poem on the monk and his cat is certainly playful. But how, may well ask, did it come to be written and preserved? Is it not in its turn a gentle satire on the monastic scholar by one who had little respect for the new learning? Is not the little collection in the St Paul Codex an anthology of topical poetry of the type which would be in circulation during the period of the Anchorite reform, the broadsheet literature of the ecclesiastical movements and controversies of the Seventh and Eighth Centuries? The references to Aedh's patronage of poetry would assume a special significance if this is so, especially in view of the fact that another Aedh, father of that Dommall who fought the Battle of Moyra, had proposed the total abolition of the flied at the Assembly of Druim Cet.

There can be no doubt that the feeling against the flied which is constantly reflected in the sagas, and which came to a head in the Assembly of Druim Cet, was widespread and of long standing. It seems to have been dealt with diplomatically by Oenmaeald, and probably gradually subsided after the council of anchorites and scribes under Duiblitir. But there can be no doubt that the controversy forms the background and colours the group of sagas and poems which we have been studying, and was the immediate cause of their preservation, as of that of much other Irish literature. It is probable that we are largely indebted to this controversy for the fact that so much of the most ancient traditional poetry and prose literature has been preserved in Ireland.

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NORA K. CHADWICK.

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1 See Flower, loc. cit.
2 Note especially the specific "vision" of milk, corn, and bacon.