

III.

THE GAELS IN ICELAND. BY W. A. CRAIGIE, M.A., F.S.A. Scot.

It is the fashion of the day to trace Celtic influence in every quarter where there is the faintest probability of the claim being allowed. To establish the possible presence of Celtic blood in the race, or in the individual, is apparently regarded as settling the question, though it has yet to be shown why the Celtic element should persist and prevail over other and stronger characteristics. We are familiar with the Celtic claim on English literature; and it is, no doubt, only because Icelandic is so little studied in this country that we hear less about Celtic demands on it. Professor Bugge has endeavoured to prove that much of the old Northern mythology is based on Christian and classical legends, a knowledge of which the Norsemen are supposed to have acquired from the Irish Celts. Others have hinted that even the saga-literature of Iceland is directly due to a Celtic element in the population, in proof of which they point to the existence of similar literary forms in Irish. It is by way of testing the latter theory that I have brought together the following facts, which will show how slender a foundation the idea rests upon, unless we are true believers in the all-prevailing force of the Celtic element, however slight it may be to start with.

At the time when Iceland first became known to the Norsemen, many of them were in close connection with the Gaels of Ireland and Scotland. From about 800 A.D. many Norse vikings had frequented the Irish and Scottish coasts, and even settled among the Gaelic population. To some extent they became mingled with the natives, but for the most part their position was hostile and insecure. It was natural, therefore, when news of the finding of Iceland spread to the Western lands, that many of these Norse settlers preferred to leave their Gaelic surroundings, and seek a safer and more congenial home among their fellow-countrymen in the newly discovered island. The wonderful mass of information preserved in the *Landnámabók*, or record of the early settlers of Iceland, enables us to judge how far these men had come

under Celtic influences, and to what extent their Norse blood was mingled with Gaelic. The sagas of famous Icelanders (*Íslendinga sögur*) also supply a number of interesting details, and from these sources we may form a pretty correct idea of the real nature of the Celtic element in Iceland.

Before any Norseman set foot in the country, Irish Culdees had found their way to Iceland by way of the Færöes, seeking for that solitude in which they considered they could best serve their God. This we learn not only from the Irish monk Dicuil, but from express statements in *Landnáma-bók*, and in Ari's *Íslendinga-bók*, an authority of the greatest weight. The passages in these two works are as follows:—

“At that time” (when Ingólfr went to settle in Iceland) “there were Christians here, whom the Northmen call *Papar*, but they afterwards went away, because they would not stay here beside heathens, and they left behind them Irish books and bells and croziers: from this it might be understood that they were Irish” (*Íslendinga-bók*, c. i.). “But before Iceland was settled from Norway, there were folk there whom the Northmen call *Papar*. They were Christians, and it is thought that they must have been from west the sea, because there were found behind them Irish books, bells, and croziers, and other things besides, which might prove that they were Westmen. These were found east in *Papey* and *Papyli*, and it is mentioned in English books that at that time there was voyaging between the countries” (*Landnáma-bók*, Prol.).

It is clear from these passages that if any dealings took place between the Culdees and the Northmen, they were of the very slightest kind. Besides *Papey* and *Papyli* named above, we shall find mention of the *Papar* in connection with *Kirkju-bæ*, in the South of Iceland, but there is no indication that they continued to live there, as has sometimes been supposed. For the real presence of Celts among the Norse settlers we must turn to the elaborate lists in *Landnáma*, and it will be simplest to follow the arrangement of that work. This will lead us right round the coast of Iceland, beginning at the south, and going sun-wise.

First, however, it may be noticed that one of the discoverers of Iceland, Flóki Vilgerðarson, had among his crew a Hebridean (*suðreysskr maðr*) named Faxi. “When they sailed west round Reykjaness, and

the firth opened up before them, so that they saw Snæfellsness, Faxi said, 'This must be a large country that we have found; there are great rivers here.' That is since called Faxa-óss."

It is also possible that Náttfari, thrall to Garðar, who was the second man to visit Iceland, may have been a Celt, but there is no proof of it. Garðarr, indeed, was of Swedish origin, and his thralls may rather have belonged to some Baltic race. Náttfari settled in the North of Iceland.

How Gaelic thralls were apt to behave is illustrated by the fate of Hjörleif, one of the early settlers. His name was originally Leifr,¹ the son of Hróðmar: he belonged to Fjalir in Norway, and went a-viking in the west. "He plundered in Ireland, and found a great earth-house there. He went into it, and it was dark, until light shone from a sword that a man was holding. Leifr killed that man, and took the sword (= *hjör*) and much treasure from him: after that he was called Hjör-leifr. Hjörleifr plundered widely in Ireland, and got much treasure there. There he took ten thralls, whose names were these: Dufpakr and Geirröðr, Skjaldbjörn, Halldórr and Drafdritr; the others are not named." It is important to notice here that only one of the thralls has a Gaelic name—*Dubhthach*. This is a common feature in connection with Celtic thralls, and suggests that the Norsemen seldom took the trouble to learn the real names of their slaves, and gave them Norse ones instead.

In the following year (874) Hjörleifr and his foster-brother Ingólfr sailed to Iceland. The latter landed at Ingólfs-höfði, the south-east corner of the island; the former was driven west along the coast, and ran short of water. "Then the Irish thralls took the plan of kneading together meal and butter, and said that it allayed thirst. They named it *minpak*, but when it was prepared there came much rain, which they caught in their canvas. When the *minpak* began to grow musty, they threw it overboard, and it drove ashore at the place now called Minpaks-eyrr." The word is evidently derived from Irish *min*, meal or flour, though the nature of the termination is doubtful.

The company landed at Hjörleifs-höfði, in the extreme South of Ice-

¹ In this article I have retained the inflexive *r* only when the name is in the nominative, dropping it in the other cases, as in Icelandic.

land, and remained there for the winter. In the spring Hjörleifr wished to sow: he had only one ox, so he made the thralls drag the plough. Dufþakr then persuaded his fellows to kill the ox, and say that a bear had done it, so that they might attack Hjörleifr while he searched for the bear. The plot succeeded; the thralls killed Hjörleifr and his comrades, ten in all, and then carried off the women and property to the islands which they saw in the south-west.

Vifill and Karli, the thralls of Ingólf, discovered what had taken place. Ingólfr guessed where the rebels had gone to, came upon them in the islands, and killed some, while others sprang over the cliffs. Dufþakr gave his name to Dufþaks-skor, and the islands were called Vestmanna-eyjar, "because they were Westmen."

It is quite likely that Ingólf's thralls may also have been Celts. When he took possession of the south-west corner of Iceland, Karli said, "We did ill to go past good districts, and settle on this out-ness." So Karli ran away, along with a bond-maid, and was afterwards found by Ingólf at Ölfus-vatn. Vifill received his freedom, and lived long at Vífils-stead or Vífils-tofts, as a man of some repute.

"King Harald the Fairhaired brought under himself all the Hebrides, so far west that no king of Norway has ever ruled further in that direction except King Magnus Barelegs. But when he went east again, vikings and Scots and Irish came down upon the islands, and ravaged and plundered far and wide. When King Harald heard of this, he sent west Ketil flatnef, the son of Björn buna, to win back the islands." Ketil did so, but more for his own hand than in King Harald's interests. His son, Helgi bjóla, went to Iceland from the Hebrides, and took possession of Kjalarness on the West coast. It is very probable that this surname of 'bjóla' or 'bjólan' is the Irish *Béollán*. A Scottish king of that name, belonging to the 9th century, is mentioned in *Ldn.*, ii. 11, and the use of Gaelic names as appendages to Norse ones appears in other cases, e.g., Óláfr feilan (= *Faelan*), Haraldr gilli (= *Gillecríst*), Þorgeirr meldun (= *Mældúinn*), Þorkell þjalfi (= *Toir-dhealbhaich*). Helgi's surname appears in another instance, that of Hróald bjóla who settled in the East Firths (*Ldn.*, iv. 1), but no Celtic connection can be made out for him.

Björn buna, the father of Ketil flatnef, had another son named Hrapp. His son, Örlygr, was fostered by St Patrick, bishop in the Hebrides. (There may be some confusion here: perhaps Patrick was Örlyg's patron saint.) He was desirous to go to Iceland, and asked the bishop to assist his undertaking. The bishop made him take with him the wood for building a church, an iron bell, a plenarium, a gold coin, and consecrated earth to lay under the corner-posts. He also described to him the appearance of the district where he was to settle in Iceland, and bade him build a church there, and dedicate it to St Columba (called Kolumba in some MSS., Kollumkilli in others). All Örlyg's companions (so far as given) bore Norse names, so that the Gaelic element is not likely to have been strong among them. The voyage was stormy, and they lost their reckoning. Then Örlygr called upon Bishop Patrick, and promised to give his name to the place where he should land. In a short time they reached a firth, to which Örlygr gave the name of Patreks-fjörð (in the North-West of Iceland). Next spring Örlygr sailed southwards: on the way the iron bell fell overboard, but was found lying among the sea-weed when they landed at Kjalarness. The church was built at Esju-berg. "Örlygr and his kinsmen believed in Kolumba, although they were not baptised," says one account, but another more correctly refers this to his descendants. Örlygr himself was plainly a Christian, and is reckoned as such in *Ldn.*, v. 15.

Esju-berg is said to have been named after a woman Esja, who left Ireland in the latter days of King Konofögr (= *Conchobhair*), and went to Iceland, but the authority for this is only the unhistoric *Kjalnesinga saga*. The name, however, might be the Irish *Ésa* or *Essa*.

The same saga tells us that Örlyg's church was still standing in later times, and the bell existed in the days of Bishop Árni Þorláksson (1268-1298), although it was then useless with rust. Bishop Árni got the plenarium taken to the episcopal seat at Skálholt, and had its leaves properly secured, "and there are Irish letters on it" (chap. 18).

Going north the coast, we find a settler named Svartkel, a Caithness man, who went from England to Iceland. Another was named Ávangr, Irish by birth, who built a ship out of the timber then

growing in the island. Two brothers, Þormóðr the old and Ketill, the sons of Bresi, also went from Ireland to Iceland, and settled on Akraness. "They were Irish. Kalman was also Irish, from whom Kalman's River is named, and lived first in Kataness." It is evident that men with the names of Þormóð and Ketil must have been as much Norse as Irish, and we shall see later that Kalman was a Hebridean. It is not impossible that either Kalman or some other settler may have carried the name Kataness (*i.e.*, Caithness) from Scotland: the derivation from *kati*, 'a small ship,' given in *Harðar saga*, c. 28, is evidently an invented one.

Jörundr, the Christian, was a son of Ketil Bresason. "He held Christianity well till his dying day, and became a hermit in his old age." Ketill also had a daughter called Eðna (=Ir. *Ethne*). She was married in Ireland to a man named Konal: their son was Ásólftr alskik, who went from Ireland to Iceland, and landed in the East Firths. He was a Christian, and would have no dealings with heathens, not even to take food from them. Along with eleven others, Ásólftr went west along the South coast, until they came to the homestead of Þorgeir at Holt under Eyja-fell, where they pitched their tent. Three of the company took ill and died there; their bones were found long afterwards and taken to the church.

Þorgeir would not receive the strangers into his house, but by his advice Ásólftr built himself a hall (*skáli*) there. This was in the beginning of winter, and the river which flowed by the side of Ásólftr's dwelling became straightway full of fish. Þorgeir declared that they were taking up his fishings, so Ásólftr went further west to another river, subsequently called Írá, "because they were Irish." The fish then disappeared from the former river, and swarmed in this one to such an extent that everyone was amazed. The men of the district then drove Ásólftr and his fellows away: they settled beside another river, and the same thing happened again. The other settlers declared that they were sorcerers, but Þorgeir said that he thought they must be good men. In the spring, Ásólftr made his way to the West coast and settled on Akraness, making his home at Hólm, on what was church-ground (*kyrkju-bólstaðr*) at a later period.

When Ásólfur grew old, he became a hermit; his cell was where the church afterwards stood, and there he died, and was buried at Hólmi. When Halldórr, son of Illugi the Red, lived there, a byre-woman was in the habit of wiping her feet on the mound that covered Ásólf's grave. One time she dreamed that Ásólfur came and rebuked her for wiping her dirty feet on his house, "but we shall be reconciled," said he, "if you tell Halldórr your dream." She did so, but he said that it was of no consequence what women dreamed, and gave no heed to it. When Bishop Hróðólfur¹ left Bæ, where he had lived for nineteen years, he left three monks behind him. One of these dreamed that Ásólfur came to him and said, "Send your man-servant to Halldórr at Hólmi, and buy from him the mound that lies on the byre-path; give him a mark of silver for it." The monk did so; the servant bought the mound, and then dug in it, and found a man's bones there. He took these up, and went home with them. On the following night Halldórr dreamed that Ásólfur came to him and said that he would make both eyes spring out of his head unless he bought back the bones at the same price as he sold them at. Halldórr therefore bought back Ásólf's bones, and had a wooden shrine made for them, which was placed on the altar in the church.

Halldórr sent his son Illugi abroad to procure wood to build a church. On his return, when he had come between Reykjaness and Snæfellsness, the captains would not let him land where he wished. He then threw all the church-wood overboard, and bade it land where Ásólfur would have it. Three nights later the wood came ashore on Kirk-sand, at Hólmi, all except two trees, which stranded at Raufar-ness, in Mýrar. Halldórr had a church built, 30 ells (= 45 feet) in length, and roofed with wood, and consecrated it to Kolumkilli (Kolumba) and God. (*Ldn.*, i. c. 15, 16.)

It is worth noticing, with regard to Ásólf, that his name is Norse, while apparently both his parents have Gaelic names—Eöna and Konall. Nor does any Gaelic name appear among his descendants.

On part of the land belonging to Ketil Bresason there settled one Bekan, whose name seems to be the Irish *Becán*, but the MSS. also give the form Beigan. (*Ldn.*, i. 17.)

¹ Said to have been an Englishman.

In Reykjardal settled Þorgeirr meldún, whose cognomen suggests the Irish *Mældúin*; one MS. gives 'moldán,' and an Earl Moldan or Moddan of Dungals-bæ, in Caithness, is mentioned in *Njáls Saga*, c. 83. (*Ldn.*, i. 19.)

In the West Firths, which are reckoned from Hvalfjörð northward, various settlers are named who were to some extent of Gaelic origin, or had come under Gaelic influences. The first of these is Kalman, the Hebridean already mentioned, who lived in Kalmans-túnga, between Hvítá and Fljótá, and was drowned in the former of these rivers. Kalman's brother was Kýlan (Ir. *Cuileán*), whose son Kári had a dispute with a freedman named Karli Konalsson about an ox. Kári persuaded his thrall to kill Karli, and then put the thrall to death. Kári's son was named Kýlan, who was killed by Þjóðólf, the son of Karli.

Several freedmen of Skalla-Grím, father of the famous Egil, are mentioned as settling in various places, but their names are all Norse,—Gríss, Grímr, Sigmundur.

In Hrauns-fjörð settled Auðunn Stoti, who had married Mýrunna, daughter of an Irish King named Bjaðmak. The latter name is evidently a slight error for Ir. *Bláthmac*; the former may stand for *Muirenn*. Instead of Bjaðmak, some copies give Maddað, which is the Irish *Matud* or *Madudhán*. One autumn Auðunn saw an apple-grey horse come running down from Hjarðar-vatn; it made its way to his stud of horses, and got the better of his stallion. Then Auðunn got hold of the grey horse, yoked it to a sledge for two oxen, and drove home all his hay with it. The horse was easy to deal with while the sun was high, but as the day wore on, it stamped its feet into the hard ground as far as the pastern-tufts, and after sunset it broke all the harness, ran up to the lake, and was never seen again.

Another son of the Ketil flatnef, already mentioned, was Björn, who was driven out of Norway by King Harald. Björn first went to the Hebrides, but would not settle there, nor adopt Christianity like Ketil's other children. For this reason he was called Björn the Easterling, a term which implies a sharp distinction between the eastern and western parts of the Scandinavian world. Björn married Gjaflaug, the daughter of Kjallak, and sister of Björn the Strong. The name Kjallakr at once

suggests the Irish *Ceallach*, but *Eyrbyggja saga* informs us that he was an Earl in Jämtland in Norway. If the name is Gaelic, it must have been adopted by the Norsemen at a very early period; and there is a parallel to this in the case of Kormak, who was also resident in Norway in the time of Harald the Fairhaired.

Björn the Easterling remained two winters in the Hebrides, and then went to Iceland, where he settled beside Hrauns-fjörð. He was the only one of Ketil flatnef's children that was not baptised. His sons were Kjallakr the Old and Óttarr. Helgi the son of Ottar plundered in Scotland, and took captive Niðbjörg, daughter of King Bjólan (= *Beollán*) and of Kaðlin, the daughter of Göngu-Hrólf. Helgi married her, and there were poets among their descendants.

Björn the Strong also had a son, named Kjallak, who went to Iceland. It seems pretty evident that the two Björns and their families were much more Norse than Gaelic, in spite of the recurrence of this apparently Celtic name.

After Eiríkr the Red had discovered Greenland, a certain Herjólfur sailed thither, and fell among the great waves called *Haf-gerðingar*. On board his ship there was a Hebridean Christian, who made the 'Breaker-poem,' of which only the first two lines and the refrain are preserved. These show that the poem was in the metre called *hrynhend*, the rules of which (alliteration and assonance) are strictly observed in the following rendering of the refrain :—

“Mildest judge, that monks upholdest,
Make my path amidst the breakers :
Highest might, in heaven that sittest,
Hand me safe through all my wand'ring.”

Famous among the Christian settlers was a woman, Auðr or Uðr the Wealthy, a daughter of Ketil flatnef, and wife of Óleif the White, who was King in Dublin. Their son was Þorsteinn the Red. When Oleif fell in battle in Ireland, Auðr and Þorsteinn went to the Hebrides, where Þorsteinn married Þuríð, daughter of Eyvind the Eastman. Their son was Óláfr Feilan. Þorsteinn made league with Earl Sigurð the Powerful, and the two won “Caithness and Sutherland, Ross and Moray, and more than half of Scotland.” Þorsteinn was king over all

this, until the Scots caught him in a trap, and he fell in battle. Auðr was then in Caithness; she had a ship built quietly, and sailed to the Orkneys, thence to the Færöes, and so to Iceland.

One of Auð's freedmen was Erpr, son of Earl Meldún (= *Mældúinn*) in Scotland. His mother was Myrgjöl (= *Muirghel*), daughter of an Irish king, Gljómal. Both mother and son had been taken as captives by Sigurð, Þorstein's confederate, and Myrgjöl was bondmaid to Sigurð's wife, whom she served with great fidelity. Auðr then bought her at a high price, and promised to give her her freedom if she served Þuríð, the wife of Þorstein, as faithfully as she had done her former mistress. Both Myrgjöl and Erpr went to Iceland with Auð.

Auðr settled in the Broadfirth dales, and lived at Hvamm. "She had her place of prayer at Cross-knolls (*Kross-hólar*): there she had crosses set up, for she was baptised, and a true believer. Her kinsmen afterwards had great faith in these knolls, and a cairn was raised there when sacrifices came to be made. They believed that they died into the knolls, and Þórðr gellir was led into them before he rose to renown, as is told in his saga." Unfortunately the saga of Þórð is lost.

Auðr gave land to several of her freedmen. Erpr settled there, but only one of his children has a Gaelic name—Dufnall (= Ir. *Domhnall*). The other freedmen have Norse names—Vífill, Hundi, and Sökkólfr. Hundi is specially described as a Scot.

Óláfr feilan, the son of Þorstein, was brought up by Auð, and married Aldís or Ásdís 'of Barrey,' whose father Konall was grandson of Ölver, a great viking. The name Konall probably implies some Gaelic connection, but little is known of the family, and Barrey is not necessarily Barra in the Hebrides, any more than in the case of Orm Barreyar-skáld.

Geirmundr hell-skin, son of a king in Norway, went a-viking in the West, and afterwards betook himself to Iceland, where he settled in the North-West. He had eighty freedmen, most of whom would, no doubt, be of Western origin. Among his thralls there are named Kjarran or Kjaran (Ir. *Ciarán*), Björn, and Atli; the latter had twelve or fourteen thralls under him, and was afterwards set free by Geirmund.

Hallstein, who settled in Þorska-fjörð, had also plundered in Scotland,

and took thralls with him to Iceland; these he employed in making salt.

Ketill gufa was another colonist who had been in Western viking, and brought with him "Irish thralls from Ireland": their names were Þormóðr, Flóki, Kóri, Svartr, and two Skorris. During their second winter in Iceland, the elder Skorri and Flóki ran away with two women and much treasure: they escaped for a time, but were finally found, and killed. Flókadal and Skorradal were named after them. During the fourth winter his other thralls ran away by night, burned a yeoman and all his family in their house, loaded the horses with all the valuables they could find, and made off. The yeoman's son came home that morning, procured help, and gave chase to them. The thralls fled in various directions, some of them taking to the water. The places where they were killed were called Kóra-nes, Svarts-skær, Skorrey, and Þormóðs-skær.

Án rauðfeldr was at enmity with Harald Fairhair, and left Norway. He went viking in the West, and plundered in Ireland, and there he married Grelöð, daughter of Earl Bjartmar. He settled in the North-West of Iceland, and gave land to one of his thralls, Dúfan (Ir. *Dubhán*), whence the place-name Dúfans-dal. A freedman of Án's was called Hjallkarr, which is a Norse name.

On the northern coast of Iceland the Gaelic element is much less marked than on the west. The famous Ingimundr, whose story is told in *Vatnsdæla Saga*, had a comrade named Sæmund the Hebridean (*enn suðreyfski*), who also settled in Iceland, but there is no indication that he was anything but Norse. Two thralls are mentioned who went exploring by their master's orders; the one was named Hrærekr or Roðrekr, the other Raunguðr, and none of these names is decisive for a Gaelic origin. Neither is that of Þórir dúfunef, a freedman of Yxna-þóri, the brother of Naddodd, who first found Iceland.

A certain Þórðr, in Skagafirth, was married to Friðgerð, daughter of another Friðgerð, whose father was Kjarvalr, an Irish king. Þórðr had nineteen children, but there could hardly be much Celtic blood in them.

In Mjóva-dal there settled a Hebridean (*Suðreyingr*) named Bárðr; another, named Kampa-Grímr, occupied Kaldakinn.

A famous man of Gautland, in Sweden, named Björn, had a son named Eyvindr, who engaged in viking in the West like his father. In Ireland he married Raförta, daughter of King Kjarval, and settled down there: he was known as Eyvindr the Eastman. He and Raförta had a son named Helgi, whom they gave to some one in the Hebrides to bring up. Two years later they went to see the boy, and could scarcely recognise him, he was so lean, through being starved. They took him away with them, and called him Helgi the Lean. He was brought up in Ireland, and married a daughter of Ketil flatnef.

Helgi went to Iceland with his wife and children, and settled in Eyjafjörð. He was rather mixed in his religious beliefs: he believed in Christ, and named his homestead after Him (Kristnes), but he called upon Thor for seafaring and hardy deeds, and all that he thought of most importance.

The Eastern district is even poorer in Celtic traditions than the Northern. An unusual proceeding was that of Þorstein legg, who went from the Hebrides to the East Firths, lived there three years, and then returned to the Hebrides (iv. 8).

Ketill the Foolish was a grandson of Ketil flatnef, and went to Iceland from the Hebrides. He settled at Kirkju-bæ, where the Papar had lived before, and where no heathen man might dwell. After Ketil's death, a certain Hildir tried to shift his homestead to Kirkju-bæ, although he was a heathen, but when he came near to the fence of the homefield he died suddenly (iv. 11).

Two brothers, Vilbaldr and Áskell hnokkan, are mentioned in *Ldn.*, iv. 11, as the sons of Dofnak, but in v. 8, Áskell is called the son of Dúfþak, son of Dúfnjál (Ir. *Domhnall*), son of King Kjarval in Ireland. Vilbaldr went from Ireland to Iceland in a ship which he called Kúði, whence the river-name Kúða-fljót. Vilbaldr's son was named Bjólan (Ir. *Beollán*), and his daughter Bjöllök (Ir. *Beloc*).

In the South of Iceland a few settlers are recorded as having come from the Gaelic lands. Among these was Baugr, grandson of Kjallaþ, whose father was the Irish King Kjarvalr. Two brothers are also mentioned, Hildir and Hallgeirr; they had a freedman named Duffþak, who gave his name to Duffþaks-hölt. He was a wizard, and could

change his shape, but so also could his neighbour Stórolfr in Hvol, with whom he had a dispute about some pasture. One evening near sunset a second-sighted man saw a bear go from Hvol, and a bull from Dufpaks-holt. They fought together, and the bear had the best of it. In the morning the earth was all torn up where they had met, and both the men were injured, and lay in bed.

Raðormr and Jólgeirr were two brothers who came from west the sea to Iceland, and settled in the South. Raðorm's foster-brother, Þorkell Þjálf, also came to Iceland and settled beside them. Although his cognomen is given as 'bjálfi' in one MS., it is quite likely that 'Þjálf' is correct, answering to the Irish name *Toirdhealbhaich*. The Irish King Muirheartach mac Toirdhealbhagh, born in 1050 A.D., is called Þjálfason in *Heimskringla* and *Hulda* (but Condialfason in *Ágrip*).

Áskell hnokkan, the brother of Vilbald, has been referred to above: he was another who settled on the South coast. In the South-West we find mention of a freedman named Böðvar, from whom various troubles arose, but his race is not given. A thrall named Haki and a bondmaid named Bót belonged to Ketilbjörn, who came from Naumudal in Norway: their nationality is not specified. Another freedman is mentioned in the South-West, named Steinrauðr, the son of Melpatrek, a distinguished man in Ireland.

From Agðir, in Norway, came Þorgrímur Grímólfsson, whose mother was Kormlöð (Irish, *Gormfhlaith*), daughter of King Kjarval. With him we come round again to the point where we started,—the settlement of Ingolf in the South-West corner of Iceland.

The author of *Landnáma-bók* was not uninterested in the question of Celtic influence on the early settlers, though more from a religious than a racial point of view. The work closes with a short paragraph on the Christian element among the colonists, which is as follows:—"Learned men say that some of the first settlers who colonised Iceland were baptised, mostly those who came from west the sea; as such are named Helgi the Lean, Örlygr the Old, Helgi bjóla, Jörundr the Christian, Auðr the Wealthy, Ketill the Foolish, and others besides, who came from west the sea, and some of them kept Christianity well till their dying day, but it did not go far in their families, for the sons of some of them

raised temples and sacrificed, and the land was entirely heathen for nearly a hundred years."

This disappearance of Christianity is not more remarkable than the almost complete rejection of Gaelic names among the descendants of the first settlers. Even in the cases where the colonist himself bears a Gaelic name, it scarcely ever continues in the subsequent generations. From both of these facts it is evident that the Norse element was by far the most powerful, and that any Celtic traces were rapidly absorbed by it. This is not surprising if we remember that pure Gaels could only have existed among the thralls and bondmaids, the former being apparently more numerous than the latter. The real colonists from the West had at least as much Norse as Celtic blood in their veins, and their sympathies seem to have been entirely Norse. The latest edition of *Landnámabók* (Reykjavík, 1891) gives an index of the chief settlers, 314 in number. It is remarkable how few of these (only 5) have Gaelic names: they are Ávangr (?), Bekan, Kalman, Kjallakr, and Kýlan. To these may be added Áskell hnokkan (?), Helgi bjóla, Óláfr feilan, Þorgeirr meldun, and Þorkell þjálfí (?) as having Gaelic surnames. This leaves another 26 *landnámsmenn* who have some connection, often very slight, with the Hebrides or Ireland: all of these have pure Norse names, even when born in Scotland or Ireland.

The thralls and freedmen cause more uncertainty, as it is not always clear whether they are to be taken as of Gaelic birth. Only four of them have Gaelic names—two Dúfpaks, Kjaran, and Dúfan. There are 27 others who may plausibly be connected with the West, though their names are Norse, and a number are merely referred to without their names being given. We hear of not a few being killed, and the general attitude towards them is one of conscious superiority, so that it can hardly be supposed they had much influence on the thought or life of their Northern masters. The Celtic genius may be a very abiding thing, but when we find that in Iceland it left no obvious traces on religion, language, or personal names, we have not sufficient grounds for assuming its presence in other spheres of mental activity. It is clear that the old Norsemen were interested in legend, history, and genealogy before they could have been influenced in these matters by the Gaels,

and there is no reason why the Icelanders should not have written their sagas, even if their Scandinavian blood had suffered no admixture of Celtic.

There still remain a few points which may be noticed as having some bearing on the subject. Besides those already given, there are five Gaelic names in the sagas and *Landnáma*, which presuppose some connection with the West, though in all likelihood a very slight one. These are Dúfguss, Gilli, Kaðall, Kormákr, and Njáll. Dúfguss (al. Dugfúss) the Wealthy of Dúfgussdal is mentioned in *Bjarnar saga*, and a person of the same name appears in the Sturlunga time (13th century). The Gaelic origin of the name is not certain, however, as an Irish *Dubhgus* does not seem to occur. A Hebridean named Gilli occurs in the saga of Gull-þóri, and another, surnamed 'the Russian' or 'the Rich,' appears in *Laxdæla*. A Kaðall is mentioned in *Landnáma*, and a Kaðall Bjálfason in *Njála*, but neither of these is directly connected with Ireland. Kormákr the poet, the hero of *Kormáks saga*, was the grandson of another Kormák, a leading man in Norway in the time of Harald Fairhair. Njáll is the name of several persons in *Landnáma*, the most famous of them being the son of Þorgeir, otherwise called Burnt-Njáll; but for none of them can a Gaelic descent be made out. Distinctly Gaelic is also the name Melkólfr, borne by two thralls who appear in *Njála* and *Reykðæla saga*. Melkólfr is for Melkolmr (a form used in the *Orkneyinga saga*) = Irish *Mael-colum*.

Besides these names, there are some incidents relating to Gaels which possess considerable interest. The most famous of these is the story of how Höskuldr of Laxárdal, in the West of Iceland, bought the Irish Princess Melkorka (*Laxdæla saga*, c. 12). By her he had a son, whom he named Ólaf, after Ólaf feilan, his mother's brother. Melkorka had pretended to be dumb, and her deception was only discovered when she was overheard talking to the boy.

When Ólafr grew up, his mother urged him to go abroad to visit his grandfather Mýrkjartan, the Irish king. Ólafr agreed to this, and Melkorka gave him tokens which her father would recognise. "I have also taught you to speak Irish," she said, "so that it will not matter to you where you happen to land in Ireland." Ólafr finally made his way to Mýrkjartan, and not only established his identity, but was certified

to speak excellent Irish. In this he was more proficient than the Norseman who tried to speak Irish to a later Mýrkjartan, a story which is told in *Biskupa Sögur*, i. 227. "Gisl Illugason went to Ireland with King Magnus, and was the fore-man of the hostages whom King Magnus sent to Mýrkjartan, the Irish King in Connaught. There was along with them a Norseman, who said he knew Irish well, and offered to salute the king, which Gisl permitted him to do. Then he said to the king, '*male diarik*,' which in our tongue is, 'Cursed be thou, O King.' One of the king's men answered: 'Sire,' he said, 'this must be the thrall of all the Norsemen.' The king answered, '*olgeira ragall*'; that is, in our tongue, 'Unknown is a dark road.'" The Norseman's Irish is not at all clear, but the anecdote is interesting.

It must have been a misapprehension of this story about Ólaf that led Theophilus O'Flannigan to assert, on the authority of Thorkelin, that Irish was still the language of some families in Iceland. Even in ancient days very few Icelanders seem to have known anything of it. In *Vatnsdæla saga*, however, there is a story of one Bárð, who was appealed to by his companions to drive off a storm which had been sent upon them by magic. He bade them join hands and form a ring. Then he went round them 'withershins' three times, and spoke Irish, bidding them answer 'já.' Then he waved a kerchief towards the hill, and the storm passed off. In this case there was probably no one present who could judge the correctness of the Irish.

To return to Ólaf: he had a son whom he named Kjartan, after his mother's father, Mýrkjartan. This shortening of the name reminds us how Sighvatr the poet christened the son of King Ólaf by the name of Magnus, after Karlamagnus, the greatest man he had ever heard of. The Icelanders apparently made a mistake in the ending of the name, which can hardly be other than the Irish *Muircheartach*. The same form is found in *Heimskringla*, where the king can be identified, but the MS. known as *Fagrskinna* more correctly gives 'Myrkjartag.' The name of Kjartan was also given to two of Ólaf's grandsons, and occurs in another family at Fróðá in Snæfellsness.

The old Norse work *Speculum Regale*, in describing the marvels of Ireland, has the following passage:—

“There is also one thing that will seem wonderful about those men who are called *gelt*. This is the cause that men become *gelt*, that where a host comes together, and is divided into two companies, and each of them shout their war-cry vehemently, it may befall cowardly and youthful men, who have not been in war before, that they lose their wits with the terror and fear that they feel there, and then run into the forests away from other men, and live there like wild beasts. It is told of these people that they live in the forests twenty years in this fashion; then feathers grow on their bodies as on birds, with which their bodies can be protected from frost and cold, but none of those large feathers with which they might fly like birds. Their swiftness is said to be so great that other men cannot get near them, nor greyhounds any more than men, because these folk can go aloft in the trees nearly as quick as apes or squirrels.”

This frenzy is also mentioned in Irish writings, and Spenser speaks of “a ghastly *gelt* whose wits are reaved” (*Faery Queen*, iv. 7, 21). The word was evidently picked up by the Norsemen, as by Spenser, for they had the phrase ‘*verða at gjalti*,’ which cannot have anything to do with *göltr*, ‘a boar,’ though it is placed under this in the Oxford dictionary. Two instances of the phenomenon occur in *Eyrbyggja saga*, both of a very curious nature. In the year 981 a ship came to Snæfellsness, half of which was owned by Hebrideans; one of these was named Nagli, a Scot by birth. Nagli took up his quarters for the winter with Þórarinn the Black at Mávahlíð, and was present when the fighting took place between the parties of Þórarinn and Þorbjörn. At the sight of their brandished weapons he became frantic and ran up to the hills. As Þórarinn and his men rode homewards, they saw Nagli running on towards a headland. There he found two thralls, who were driving sheep. He told these of the conflict, and said that he was certain that Þórarinn and his men were all slain. Þórarinn and the others now began to gallop towards them, wishing to secure Nagli and prevent him from springing into the sea, but both he and thralls imagined that they were being pursued by the enemy, and ran on towards the point of the cape. Nagli became exhausted and was caught by Þórarinn, but the thralls ran right over the cliff and were killed.

The other incident is connected with the death of Arnkel Þórólfsson. He had set off by night, along with three thralls, to bring home the hay from one of his farms. His enemies discovered this, gathered their men, and came upon him in the early morning, after one of the thralls had gone home with the first load of hay. When Arnkell saw his foes approaching, he bade the two thralls run home and waken his men, trusting to be able to defend himself until they should arrive. The thralls set off at once: one of them, named Ófeigr, was swifter than the other, and was so scared that he went out of his wits, ran up to the hill and threw himself into a waterfall, where he perished. The other ran home, found his fellow there taking in the hay, and calmly set to work to help him. When the two had finished their task, they went into the house, and were questioned as to where Arnkell was. Then the thrall seemed to waken up out of sleep, and said, "That is true: he will be fighting with Snorri up at Örlygs-stead." The men sprang out of bed, dressed themselves, and hurried off to the place, but only to find Arnkel lying dead there.

From these particulars one may form a clear idea of the actual extent to which a Gaelic population was combined with the Norse one in Iceland. There is no evidence to show that the Celts had any greater influence there than settlers of other nationalities have upon the British colonies. A few generations would suffice to absorb them in the general mass of the people: their own language, customs, and traditions would quite disappear, and the strain of foreign blood become almost unrecognisable. It is dangerous, therefore, to begin to trace analogies in legend or literature, and to attribute these to a common origin so intangible as that of racial genius. It is tempting to find a Celtic strain in the poetry of Kormák, whose name at once suggests that he may have sprung from the Irish race, but there is quite as much 'Celtic' feeling in Egil's lament for his sons; and Egill, at least, was not a Celt, nor have we any proof that Kormák was. On these points, however, there may be room for discussion: the facts are as stated above, and must be carefully weighed before we begin to theorise on the results of the presence of the Gaels in Iceland.