The Northmen of Limerick.

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During the early years of the ninth century the Northmen made intermittent raids on Ireland’s seaboard. Booty was the primary motive of these raids. Monasteries, for the most part, were the objects of attack. At the time they were among the most prosperous establishments in the country, because of their hard work, thrift and agricultural activities. Moreover, they were centres of learning and craftsmanship: as such they attracted large numbers of students, and became the nuclei of more thickly populated areas. Consequently, the monasteries themselves and the surrounding districts afforded the maximum of every kind of booty to the prospective freebooter. The Norse pirates were quick to perceive this, and they preyed them systematically for close on two centuries with evident profit.

At the beginning, coastal districts and those adjacent to navigable rivers were chiefly affected. In 821 Étar (Howth peninsula) was raided and a large number of women taken captive. Bec Bire (Begy Island) and Dairinis, in Wexford harbour, were sacked in the same year. Three years later, Mag Bile (Movielle) and Scelec Mhichil were pillaged: Etgal, the Abbot of Scelec, was taken prisoner by the Norse and allowed to die of starvation. Other centres were likewise visited, including Bennchur (823); Lusca (Lusk) and Ciannachta (827); Ard Macha, Muiscnamh (Muchnoe) and Ui Meith Macha (Co. Monaghan) (832); Lis Mór Mochuta and Cell Molaise (Co. Waterford) in 833. These hit-and-run raids which carried the buccaneers as far inland as Armagh, the Curragh of Kildare, and Ossory, cost the country dear: lives were lost, art and Ms. treasures were looted, churches and monasteries burned, the development of the various schools of learning retarded, and the stability of monastic life interrupted. This was a serious situation; yet it failed to provoke a suitable response from the High King. Even the sack of Armagh in 832 did not sting him into action. In fact, Niall Caille, his successor, was the first High King to come in contact with the newcomers. He defeated them at Daire Calgaigh at the very beginning of his career.

1. The bands of buccaneers that set out from the shores of Scandinavia and Denmark towards the end of the 8th century are generically called Northmen (North Germans). At first they indulged in sporadic raids; emboldened, however, by success, they later established permanent settlements along the seaboards of many countries. (See Kendrick, History of the Vikings, 1930, Introduction). The terminology of Irish chroniclers and writers does not enable one to point to the provenance of the various waves of Northmen that came to Ireland. The older Annals (e.g., AU.) refer to them as Ginnte (Ginnti, Ginhte, Gente, etc.) in their earlier entries; later, however, they call them, indiscriminately, Ginnte, Gaill, Lochnonnaigh and Dánaír. All the sources agree on one main distinction, viz., that between the Dugbhghennití (Dubahhail, Dubhlochonnaigh), and the Finghennití (Finnghail, Finnochonnaigh). Authors generally identify the former as Danes (Dánaír), and the latter as Norwegians. In Ireland, the clash between the Dugbhghennití and the Finghennití took place in 861 (CS., 851; AU., s.a.850; AFM., s.a.849; CGG., p.18). AL, Keating and CCG, refer to Súaitrig. For Keating súaitreach (súaitreach nó buanna ar gach toigh, FFE., vol. iii, 174) was synonymous with buanna ‘a billeted soldier.’ In Cogadha Gaedaibh re Gallaise (p. 84) súaitreach had a similar meaning. In AL súaitreach seemingly has a much wider significance. It is put on a level with geinte, and galíc. Geinte is used up to 1692; then galíc is introduced together with geinte; lastly, two sections of Northmen are indicated by the words galíc and suaitrig: innmarba na Suaitrech 7 innmarba na ngall a lúnain, “fol. 183a. Here súaitreach evidently means something more than a billeted Norse soldier. For another article entitled, “The Northmen of Limerick,” see J.R.S.A.I., 1889, p.227 ff.

2. They had already visited Ireland in 795. Loscadh Reochrainne ó Geinntibh, AU, s.a. 794 (=795). Geinte in hErind, AI, 13ve.
In 834 a Norse fleet appeared on the Shannon and proceeded to plunder the territories of Corco Baiscinn, Tradraige and Uí Conaill Gabra. In Uí Conaill Gabra they were met by the local king, Dunadach, son of Scanlán, and defeated with comparatively heavy losses. The engagement, according to the Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh, took place at Shanid, and Dunadach was supported by Niall, son of Cennfaolad, king of Uí Cairpre Eba. This was a signal victory for a petty king, but it only served to stave off the enemy for the moment. The next year brought another fleet to the Shannon. Mungret was burnt together with a number of churches in Ormond. Later, Inis Ceitra, Tir dá Glass, Lothra and the churches of Lough Derg were pillaged.

837 marked the beginning of a large-scale offensive on the part of the Northmen. Unusually large fleets were sent to the more important harbours of the east and south coasts. Sixty ships sailed up the Boyne estuary; another sixty entered the Liffey. Later, a fleet appeared on the Shannon. A detachment from it was routed at Carn Feradaigh. The Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh represents the foreigners as coming in ‘sea-cast floods’ at this particular period. Ciarraige (N. Kerry) was overrun and the countryside devastated as far inland as Cell Ita and Cúl Emni. Oifinn, however, was defeated and slain when he led the Northmen of Limerick (lower Shannon) and Connaught against Roscrea (FFE, Vol. iii, 236).

In the course of a foray, the Shannon fleet captured the exiled Abbot of Armagh at a place called Cluain Comarda in 845. That this place was in Munster is certain. Its exact location, however, has hitherto been a matter of speculation. Dr. Reeves equated it with the church at Colman’s Well (Clounacoragh), Co. Limerick: Dr. Begley supported this opinion. Fr. Hogan, however, favoured Clooncoora, in the territory of Corco Baiscinn, County Clare. He argued: “the fleet of Limerick, ‘longes Lumnig’, could reach him there more easily than at Colman’s Well, which is 27 miles away from the Shannon.” Evidently Fr. Hogan was convinced that Forannán, the Abbot of Armagh, was taken by the fleet rather than to the fleet of Luimnech. He very logically, therefore, sought out a district more in accordance with that opinion than Colman’s Well. In Clooncoora, County Clare, he found an ideal one. It is only two and a half miles distant from the Shannon, and roughly

3. Uí Conaill Gabra was one of the two constituent parts of the Eoganachta kingdom of Uí Fidgente in the modern county of Limerick: Uí Cairpre Eba was the other. Uí C. G. is roughly represented by the modern baronies of Upper and Lower Connello, Shanid and Glenquin: Uí C. E. by Kery, Coshma, part of Coshlea, etc.

4. Cath for Gennti re nDunadhach mac Scannlain, righ h. Fidgenni, du iotorcratar illii. AU. s.a.834 (=834). See CS., 834; AFM. s.a.833; CGG., p.8. AU. have no record of this battle, but they give Dunadach’s obit as follows: Mors Dunadach meic Scandlán rig Gabra, fol. 14va. Dunadach died king of Uí Conaill Gabra. As the kingship of Uí Fidgente, however, alternated between the dynasts of Uí C. G. and Uí Cairpre Eba, it so happened that he was also king of Uí Fidgente. He is so styled by AU., AFM., and CS. CF. AFM. s.a.833, where Dunadach is called both king of Uí Conaill and Uí Fidgente. Dunadach died A.D. 835 according to AU. : he was evidently succeeded by Niall as king of Uí Fidgente (d. 846).

5. Lascadh Mungairde 7 a raile ceall dír Mumhan, CS., 835. Cf. AU. s.a.834 (=835); AFM. s.a.834; CGG., p.8fl. FFE., vol. iii. p. 164; also p. 158.

6. AFM. s.a.836; CEG., p.18.

7. AFM. s.a.836.

8. CGG., pp. 14, 225. Cell Ita was the monastery of St. Ita in the district once known as Cluain Credall, now called Killeedy, Co. Limerick.

9. LL., 309; CGG., 225.


five from the great monastic centre of Inis Cathaig (Scattery Island). On the road from Kilrush to Tullabrack, one meets a bridge at Ballykett. Turning to the left, and following the stream westward, one meets a hillock capped with tombstones and vaults. The graveyard is called Breaghva, and is situated in the district of Clooncoora. On the eminence now covered with monuments there probably once stood a little church (cell)—an offshoot of Inis Cathaig perhaps. No trace of a church now exists; but if a minor monastic settlement occupied this site, it would have constituted an ideal asylum for the exiled abbot. Here he could have enjoyed the benefits of peaceful seclusion, and frequent converse with the monks of Inis Cathaig.

Notwithstanding the fact that Clooncoora (Co. Clare)—if it was ever a monastic centre—was easier of approach from the Shannon than Colman's Well (Co. Limerick), it would seem that the latter place has a stronger case. Its link with St. Patrick, and consequently with Armagh, is more apparent; its history and importance outshines that of Clooncoora (Co. Clare); and, finally, its situation is consonant with the details of Forannán's capture.

At the outset, the evidence of the Annals of Inisfallen may be eliminated; these Annals mention the arrest of the abbot, but furnish no criteria with regard to the locality beyond its name. The Cronicon Scotorum favours Clooncoora (Co. Clare); for it states that Forannán was taken with his entourage and relics in ships to Luimneach. The Annals of Ulster have: Forindan abbas Aird Machae du ergabhail du Gennitibh i Cloen Comardai cona mndaibh 7 cona muintir, 7 a brith do longaibh Luimnigh. Hennessy renders the last phrase as follows: "and carried off by the ships of Luimnech." The following is an alternative, and I think, an equally good translation: and carried off to the ships of Luimnech. The text of the Four Masters favours this interpretation; it runs thus: Forannán, primhaidh Arda Macha do ergabhail do Ghallaibh i CCluain Chomharda co no mhionnaibh 7 co na mhuintir 7 a mbreth le do ladi longaibh go Luimneach. This Dr. O'Donovan translates as follows: "Forannan, Primate of Ard-Macha, was taken prisoner by the foreigners, at Cluain-Comharda, with his relics and people, and they were carried by them to their ships at (to) Luimneach." In conclusion, it may be of interest to note Mageoghagan's translation (1627) of the Annals of Clonmacnoise: "Forannan, abbot of Ardmach, was taken captive by the Danes at Cloncowardy, together with all his family, relics, & books, and were lead from thence to their ships in Lymbrick."

It has been objected that Colman's Well was too far inland to be within striking distance of the Shannon fleet; but the objection does not hold, because the Norse had already penetrated as far as Armagh, the Curragh of Kildare and Ossoy. Moreover, the Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh links up the capture of Forannán with the activities of the Shannon fleet in the territory of

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14. Forandarn, ab Aird Macha, du ergabhail ó Gennitibh a CCluain Comardai, cona mndaibh ocus cona muintir et a mbreth a longaibh go Luimnech.—845.
15. —Cf. AU. s.a.844. 'Do' in Old Irish meant 'to.' It also expressed the agent: "du Gennitibh" in the above text of AU. is an example. Go (O. Ir. co) has come to be generally used to express 'to' in Modern Irish, except in cases like dom, duit, etc. Do, expressing the instrument (=with') is found in Old, Middle and Mod. Irish; but in this function it is invariably a disguised form of de (di).
16. AFM. s.a. 843.
17. AC., s.a., 842.
the Martine Muman: "And the fleet of Luimnach plundered the Mairtini of Munster, and carried off Forannan, successor to Patrick, from Cluain Comarda to Luimnach, and they broke the shrine of Patrick."(18) Here, the association with Martine Muman points clearly to Clooncoragh, or Colman's Well (in east Limerick) which is situated a few miles to the S.W. of Bruree, and still nearer to Knockstowny, a well-known landmark in the Martine territory.(19)

This Cluain Comarda of County Limerick is often mentioned in the Cambro-Norman period. It is cited in Myler Fitz Henry's Inquisition as Cluencomartha.(20) In the Papal Taxation of 1306, it is listed as Clooncorth, in the deanery of Killallock.(21) In 1503, it was known as the parochial church of Cloyncomartha. As late as 1846, Clooncoragh was still used as an alternative name for Colmanswell.(22) Thus this church of Clooncoragh, situated in Uí Fidgente territory and adjacent to Martine Muman, can trace its history from the modern to the mediaeval period, retaining in the various forms of its name a striking similarity with that found in the Annals.

The year 848 shows a marked change in the relations between the Irish and Norse leaders. The Irish kings, and more especially Maelsechalainn and Olchobar, were aroused no doubt by the increasing power of their enemies and the desecration of important centres like Armagh and Emly.(23) At last, they began to take the Norse menace more seriously. Maelsechalainn defeated them at Forach in the county Meath, and Olchobar at Scath Nechtain, in the county of Kildare.(24) Lorcan, son of Ceallach, King of Leinster, supported Olchobar in this battle. Eral Tomrar, together with "twelve of the nobles of the Lochlannaigh" were slain.(25) At the head of the Eoganachta of Cashel, Olchobar accounted for another five hundred at the battle of Dún Maoile Tuile.(26) Afterwards, he marched on Corcaigh (Cork) with the intention of breaking up the encampment of the Northmen and driving them from the port. About this time, too, the Uí Fidgente brushed with the Norse and killed three hundred and sixty.(27) Until the beginning of the tenth century Limerick (Uí Fidgente and Déise lands) had no more raids of importance. The Northmen, however, still lingered on the Shannon; for, according to the Four Masters, the Connaughtmen made a successful attack on them in 887.

The end of a period of comparative peace was heralded by the arrival in Waterford (914) of a hostile fleet.(28) This received substantial reinforcements in the following year.(29) Thus Waterford became, for a time, the centre from which waves of Norse emanated to plunder and waste both Munster and Lein-

20. BBL., pp. 26, 28.
22. See the National Gazeteer of Great Britain and Ireland, p. 630.
23. CS., 847; AFM. s.a., 845.
24. AU., 847 (=848); AFM. s.a., 846; AL., fol. 14 vc. CS., 848.
26. AU., 847 (=848); AFM. s.a., 846; CS., 848.
28. AU., 913 (=914); AFM. s.a.912; AC., s.a. 910.
29. AU., 914 (=915); AFM., 913.
ster. (30) The Waterford muster was still further augmented in 917, when Ragnall landed with a fresh fleet. (31) This gave a new impetus to their activities; and the surrounding districts were subjected to still further assaults. Domnall, son of Donnchad, rigdomna of Cashel, was killed, and the lands of the Muscraige and the Uí Cairpre Eba (E. Limerick) wasted. (32)

In the course of time, the Norse split up into three parties, which set up their respective headquarters at Corcach, Inis na hEdnighi (Iny, Co. Kerry?), and Glas Linn (?). From these points they systematically spoiled the province of Munster. Opposition on the Irish side was not entirely lacking; local leaders frequently put up a good fight when they got word of an imminent attack and had time to prepare. The Eoganacht and Ciarraghe gained a number of isolated victories, but these were not sufficient to stem the onward rush of the numerous, disciplined and well-armed Norse forces. (33) Among the Irish petty kings killed in these skirmishes were Anle, son of Cathal, king of Uaithe Fidhbhaigh (Owney, Co. Limerick); Loingseach, son of Sétá, king of Uaithe Tire (Owney, Co. Tipp.), and Gebennach, son of Aed, king of Uí Conaill Gabra. (34) According to the Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallabh, Gebennach’s head was carried away in triumph to the Norse ships. Hence the quatrain:

Great is the pity, O God of heaven!
That the people of Tomar should have it;
Behold the head of Gabra’s king is taken from you;
Illustrious gem of the western world! (35)

The Uí Conaill Gabra, however, soon got an opportunity of avenging their king. Together with the Fir Maige Féine, they met the Northmen at Ráth Mór, where they defeated them and killed seven hundred. (36) Flannabra, descendant of Dunadach, king of Uí Conaill Gabra, was among the Munster princes that destroyed the Norse base at Dún Main, and brought about the “extraordinary and indescribable slaughter of the foreigners.” (37)

Niall Gliúndubh, who became High King in 916, was well aware of the Norse menace to Munster. Their new concentrations and systematic pillage of the province forced him to come to its aid. At the head of an imposing muster of Northern and Southern Uí Néill, he moved southward to Mag Femin and pitched his tent at Tobar Gletach. A long battle was fought between the forces of the High King and those of the Norse; but, though it lasted from between Tierce and midday until Vespertime, only one hundred were killed—most of them from the Norse side. (38) Norse reinforcements were hurriedly brought up to the scene of battle; the last, under Ragnall, was so formidable that the Irish retreated to their camp. This led to a temporary stalemate. For the

30. AU., 915 (=916); AFM. s.a. 913, 914, 915; CS., s.a. 914.
31. AU., 916 (=917); CGG., p. 20.
32. See CGG., p. 20.
33. AU., 916 ( =917); AFM. s.a. 915.
34. AFM. s.a. 914 ( =916); AI, fol. 16rc; CGG., p. 30.
35. CGG., p. 30.
36. AI, fol. 16rc. There is a Rathmore in the parish of Mannisterna, Co. Lim., but from the context, the Ráth Mór of N. Cork is more likely. Cf. Power, Criechad an Chaoláill, pp. 45, 50, 67.
37. CGG., p. 32.
38. AU., 916 (=917); AFM. s.a. 915. The F. Masters give the number killed as 1,100. CS. s.a. 916.
space of twenty days both sides played for position. In the meantime, Niall—in the hope of creating a diversion—prevailed on the king of Leinster to encircle the Norse army. The Norse, however, became aware of the move, and anticipated it by surreptitiously sending out a strong force to intercept the Leinster army; an encounter took place at Cenn Fuait (near Leixlip) in which the relieving army was routed. On receiving news of the defeat, Niall lost hope of an immediate victory, and returned home, leaving Munster more securely than ever in the hands of the enemy. Two years later, he tried to crush the power of the Dublin garrison, but was again unsuccessful. He was killed at the battle of Cell Moshamóg (N. of the Liffey, near Island Bridge). By this victory, the Northmen made good their position in Dublin and inaugurated a long period of unequalled power in the country.\(^{39}\)

Not long afterwards, a large fleet under the command of Tomar (Tom- rair) sailed up the Shannon, and established a longport, or strong settlement, at Inis Sibton.\(^{40}\) From this focal point they proceeded to sack the territories round about. A party pushed up the Shannon and plundered the monastic settlements on both sides.\(^{41}\) Colla, son of Barid, made himself busy on Loch Ribh. He it was that killed Echtiern, son of Flannad, king of Bregmaine.\(^{42}\)

The Norse encampment at Limerick does not seem to have received the approval of the Dublin garrison; for the Annals draw attention to the hosting of the latter to Limerick, where they were met and defeated by Tomar mac Elge.\(^{43}\)

About this time, the Waterford group—or at least part of it—moved up as far as Loch Gur (near Bruff).\(^{44}\) The Limerick garrison took offence at this; so did the neighbouring Irish. This led to an alliance, and the following year the intruders were routed at the battle of Cell Mochellóc (Kilmallock).\(^{45}\) The Northmen of Limerick were still busy along the whole length of the Shannon. Moving up to Loch Oirbsen (Lough Corrib), they sacked all the islands of the Lough. They did not get away unseathed, however; in fact they suffered great slaughter at the hands of the Connaughtmen.\(^{46}\)

In 930 the Limerick group turned their attention inland towards Ossory. The Annals of Ulster, Clonmacnoise and the Four Masters state that they chose the celebrated plain of Mag Raigne. The Annals of Inisfallen give Loch Bétrach as the place of their encampment.\(^{47}\) Furthermore, these Annals

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39. AU., 918 (=919); AFM., sa. 917; CS. s.a. 918; AI., fol. 16 rc.; CGG., pp. 34/5.
40. AU., 921 (=922); AFM. s.a. 920; AI., fol. 16va,b; CGG., pp. 38, 267.
42. CS., 923. AC. s.a. 920. Was this Barid (Barith), the Norse leader that raidied Mide and Connaught; later plundered Leinster and Munster; took part in the battle between Find- geinti and Dubgeinti; raidied Connaught, and settled on Lough Ree? See AU., 881; CS., 881; AFM., 878; Three Fragments of Irish Annals, pp. 173, 197; CGG., pp. 24, 26.
43. AU., 923 (=924).
44. AI., 16vc.
45. Ar ngall Púirt Láirghe ec Cill Mochellóc la fhiru Muman 7 la Gullu Luimnich. AI., fol. 18vc.
46. AU., 928 (=929); CS., 929; AFM. s.a. 927; AC. s.a. 925.
47. Longphort la Gull Luimnich oc Loch Bétrach i nOsraige, 7 Dere Fenna in Osraige do thogall dolb. fol. 16vc. Fr. Hogan placed D. Fenna at Ferns. Co. Wexford. From AI., however, it is clear that it was in Ossory. Dr. O Donovan placed it at Dunmore, Co. Kilkenny. Cf. O. Goedel, 342; AFM., vol. II, 622.
ascribe to them the destruction of Derc Ferri. Unless we postulate two different attacks or a joint attack by the Limerick and Dublin Norse, this is in accordance with the evidence of the Annals of Ulster and the Four Masters. The Annals of Ulster state that "Godfrith, grandson of Imar, with the Foreigners of Ath Cliath, demolished Derc Ferri, a thing that had not been heard of from ancient times."(48) The Four Masters agree, and add that one thousand were killed.(49) The Cronicon Scotorum simply records the "siege and demolition of Derc Ferri, where a thousand men perished," thereby giving us to understand that it is alluding to the action of the Dublin Norse mentioned by the Four Masters.(50)

Again (931), the Gaill, or Foreigners of Limerick, turned towards Loch Ribh (Lough Ree).(51) Amlaibh Ceannaireach raided the Uí Maine territory of S. Roscommon (933). He met with opposition, but overcame it in the battle of Dubhtrí, where a number of the local freemen (saerclanda) were slain.(52) Roscommon was still further ravaged on the following year; presumably by the same Norse leader, Amlaibh Ceannaireach. The raiders penetrated as far north as Mag Luirg, and as far south as Badhbna.(53) Amlaibh evidently continued his campaign of plunder until he reached Loch Erne. Under the year 934, the Four Masters give the following account of his activities: "Amlaibh Cencneirech, with the foreigners, came across Breifne from Loch Erne to Loch Ribh. On the night of Great Christmas they reached the Shannon; and they remained seven months there; and Mag Ai was spoiled and plundered by them."(54)

A few years later, we find the Gaill of Limerick still indulging in their favourite pastime under another leader, namely, Aralt, son of Sitric. The Shannon, as usual, is their base and Connaught their objective. This time, however, they are less successful, for they were challenged by the Cenraige of Aíde, and Aralt, their leader killed.(55) The Annals of Clonmacnoise refer to this clash as the battle of Ratheyney.(56) Very probably it took place near Ard Rathin (Ardrahan, Co. Galway).

About the middle of the tenth century, changes, hitherto imperceptible, were taking place in the neighbourhood of the Limerick encampment. The men of the Déise Tuaiscirt (Dál Chais) were being moulded into a formidable force by their king, Mathgamain, and his brother, Brian. Thanks to the inter-

48. AU. 929 (=930).
49. AFM. s.a. 928.
50. CS. 929. The Limerick Norse evidently tarried too long in Ossory; for, according to the Four Masters, Gofraith, grandson of Imar, came down from Dublin to drive Imar, grandson of Imar, from Mag Raige. See AFM. s.a. 929.
51. Under the year 931, CS. records the death of Colla, son of Barid, and gives him the title of rí Luimnigh: AFM. also call him tighearna Luimnigh (923).
52. AFM. s.a. 931. Dubhtrí, also D. Átha Luain, in the barony of Athlone and county of Roscommon.
53. AFM. s.a. 932 (=934). AC. s.a. 939. M. Luirg is now known as the plain of Boyne, and S. Badhbna as Slievebaune: both in Co. Roscommon.
54. AFM. s.a. 934 (=936). Cf. AC. s.a. 933. Amlaibh, son of Gofraith, came from Dublin the following year, destroyed Amhlaoibh Cenncairech's ships, and took himself and his forces with him. Cf. AFM. s.a. 935.
55. CS. 939. AI. fol. 17ra. FFE., vol. iii. 136. AFM.: Aralt hua híomhair i. mae Sitrioca, tighearna Gall Luimnigh, do mharbhadh i cConnachtai bh le Cenraighibh Aidhne, 935.
56 AC. s.a. 933.
nal feuds of the Eoganachta, Mathgamain found himself in a position not only
to challenge the power of the Northmen, but to claim the throne of Munster!
Mustered his troops, he marched to Cashel and proceeded to act as King of
Munster. Imar, who had recently come to Inis Sibton with a large fleet
(CGG., 48), took up the challenge, and prepared to meet his new rival. The
Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh maintains that he was supported by Maelmuadh,
king of Uí Eachach Muman, and Donubhán, king of Óg Fidgente, together with
other Irish chiefs. The claim, however, is not supported by the Annals; and,
very likely, was put forward in order to add further lustre to Mathgamain's
victory.

At all events, Imar and Mathgamain met at Sulchóit (Solohead), and a
strenuous battle was fought in which the Norse forces were routed with great
slaughter. 57 They were pursued to their stronghold at Limerick, and the
fighting men wiped out before they had time to rally. In the words of the
Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh, Mathgamain's men followed them "into the fort
and slaughtered them in the streets and houses. These were killed by them
there, viz. : Carran Laighnech, Stabhall son of Sigmall, and Etila Tretel, and
Ruamand, and Sumarlid, and Manus of Luinnchech, and Tulbarb, and Inuit,
and twenty hundred, and the fort was sacked by them after that. They carried
off their jewels and their best property, and their beautiful foreign saddles;
and their gold and their silver; their beautifully woven cloth of all colours and
of all kinds . . . . The fort and the good town they reduced to a cloud of smoke
and to red fire afterwards. The whole of the captives were collected on the
hills of Saingel. Every one of them that was fit for war was killed and every
one that was fit for a slave was enslaved." 58 The victory of Sulchóit set a
seal on the fate of the Limerick Norse. While they were by no means com-
pletely crushed—they even took the field against Mathgamain himself later
on—their military superiority was smashed. Mathgamain, their adversary, on
the other hand, gained immense prestige by his spectacular victory.

The lessons of Sulchóit and Saingel did not check the career of Imar.
A few years afterwards he put Beolan Litil and his son to death. 59 He and
the Limerick garrison later drew down on themselves the anger of Mathga-
main. The Four Masters simply state that the Goill were expelled from Inis
Ubhdaíne. The Annals of Inisfallen, however, have a rather lengthy entry
relevant to the expulsion. It runs as follows:—"The house of Dubchrón,
descendant of Longgachán, was set on fire and seventy people perished therein,
and the Sualtrig were expelled from Munster. And three laws were made
(three penalties decided upon?) by the nobles of Munster, namely, Mathga-
main and Foélán and the son of Bran (=Maelmuadh), etc., i.e., the expulsion of
the Sualtrig, and the expulsion of the Gaill from Limerick, and the burning of
the fortress." 60 In other words, the Norsemen burned the house of Dub-
chrón and slew seventy people; as a result the leaders of the Déis Tuaiciscir,

57. AU, 966 (=967). A.F.M. s.a. 965. F.F.E., vol. iii. 234. AI : Muidm for Gullu Luinnich
re Mathgamain meic Cennetich oc Sulchuaít 7 luscud Luinnich do ria meold laí arna barach,
fol. 17vc.
58. P. 78.
59. Beolan Litil 7 a macc do marbad la Imar Luinnich, AI, fol. 17vc. Cf. CGG., 94.
60. Luscud (lit. the burning) tige Dubchrón hui Longgachán i torchar Jxx. 7 indarba
suaittrech a Muman 7 na trí cane do denam a comarle dég doine Muman i. Mathgamain 7
Foélán 7 mac Bran 7ri. i. innarba na suaittrech 7 innarba na nGall a Luinnichech 7 in dún
(his) do luscud. Fol. 17vc/18ra. Cf. note 1 supra. Cán= law, penalty, rule, etc. Cf. Cán
Adamnán, C. Pátraic, C. Domanig; cóain an phheacaíd, etc.
the Eoghanachta and Déis Muman decided to expel them and burn their fortress.

Three years later, the Annals of Inisfallen record the expulsion of Imar, and the seizure of Inis Aubtan (King’s Island). Nevertheless, the Northmen were still active; for they slew Maelsechlainn, son of Flanabra, king of Úi Conaill Gabra, the following year.

In 976 Mathgamain, king of Munster, was put to death at the instigation of Maelmuadh, son of Bran, king of Úi Eachach Muman, and with the connivance of Donnubhán, son of Cathal, king of Úi Fidgente. Brian his brother, however, continued the campaign against the Norse with unabated zeal. His first recorded feat of arms, as leader, was against them. He led his forces to Inis Cathaigh, where he captured and slew Imar and two of his sons. After the raid on Inis Cathaigh Donnubhán of Úi Fidgente gave asylum to Aralt, Imar’s other son. Brian, however, lost no time in crushing this alliance. According to the Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh, “He went afterwards on a foray into Úi Fidgente, and they (his forces) took cattle innumerable; and they plundered Cathair Cuan, and they killed its people; and they killed Donnabhan, son of Cathal .... king of Úi Fidgente; and they killed Aralt, son of Imar, king of the foreigners, and they made a prodigious slaughter of the foreigners.” After this defeat, the Limerick Norse ceased to be a military or political force of any consequence in Munster. Settling down to a stable life, they concentrated on commerce, turned Christian and gave bishops to the newly-formed see of Limerick.

61. Imar do thelud dar murl 7 Inis Aubtan do gabail iterum, fol. 18rb.
63. AFM. s.a. 975 (=977). AL, fol. 18rc. CS., 975. AT. (RC., vol. xvii, 339). For an account of Imar and his sons see CGG., p. 271ff.
64. P. 102. The following is the Four Masters account: Cath raoineadh ria mBriain mac Ceinnéittigh for Gallaibh Luimnigh, 7 for Donnabhan mac Cathail tigherna Ua Fidhghellithe, don torcratar Goill Luimnigh, 7 in ro-leadh an-ar-s.a. 976. The Cathair Cuan of CGG. is evidently the same as that (Cathircuaun) mentioned with Druff, Tullabracky, etc., in CDL, vol. i, p. 21.