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Prophecies and Seers

The Prophecies of Saint Columba

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Adomnán of Iona

Wentworth Huyshe (1905)

Credits

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About:

Columba (Colum Cille, c. 521–597) was an Irish monk of royal family who in 563 left Ireland with twelve companions and founded the monastery of Iona, a small island off the west coast of Scotland, from which Christianity spread among the Picts and the Scots.

About a hundred years after his death, Adomnán, ninth abbot of Iona and a distant kinsman of the saint, wrote the Life of Columba in Latin, gathering what he had heard from the older monks and what was written down in the monastery.

The work has three books: the prophetic revelations, the miracles and the visions of angels. Here is the first, with the two prefaces.

In it Columba announces the arrival of visitors, the end of kings, the outcome of battles fought far away, the death of people in another land and the fate of those who come to him; Adomnán usually says from whom he heard each story.

It is one of the oldest biographies of northern Europe and the main record of sixth-century Scotland and Ireland. The English text is the translation by Wentworth Huyshe (London, 1905), without the translator's notes.

Source: https://archive.org/details/lifeofsaintcolum00adam

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FIRST PREFACE

✦

1 Wishing to fall in with the urgent demands of the Brethren, and being about to write, with Christ's help, the life of our Blessed Patron, I shall have a care, firstly, to warn those who may read it, that they should give credit to the facts therein recorded, and attend to the matter rather than to the words, which, as I think, seem uncultured and rude. And let them remember that the Kingdom of God consists not in exuberance of eloquence, but in the abundant blossoming forth of faith; and let them not, because of some obscure names of men or tribes or places in the barbarous Irish tongue (which, as I think, sounds harsh compared with various languages of foreign nations), despise a record of deeds, useful to us, and done not without God's help.

2 Further, we have thought to warn the reader of this also: that many other things concerning this man of blessed memory, even things worthy of remembrance, have been omitted by us for the sake of brevity; and in order to avoid wearying our readers a few only out of many have been recorded here. And this, as I think, every one who reads these will perhaps note, that of the great deeds of the same blessed man, fame has disseminated amongst the peoples those which are the least important, as compared with these few which we are now arranging to set briefly down.

3 Hence, after this first little Preface, I shall, in the opening of my second one, begin, with God's help, to give an account of our prelate's name.

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SECOND PREFACE

✦

1 He was a man of venerable life and of blessed memory, father and founder of monasteries, having the same name as Jonas, the prophet, for, though differing in sound of the three different languages, it means one and the same thing; what in Hebrew is pronounced Iona, in Greek is uttered Peristera and in the Latin tongue is called Columba.

1.2 Such and so great a name was not given, it is believed, to the man of God without a Divine providence. For also according to the faith of the Gospels the Holy Ghost is shown to have descended on the Only Begotten of the Eternal Father in the form of that little bird which is called columba (dove): hence for the most part in the sacred Books the dove is meant mystically to signify the Holy Spirit.

2 Accordingly the Saviour also in His Gospel instructed His disciples that they should preserve the simplicity of the dove abiding in a pure heart; for the dove is a simple and innocent bird. Meet, therefore, was it that the simple and innocent man, who by his dove-like ways made in himself a dwelling-place for the Holy Spirit, should be called by that name, a name to which not unfitly corresponds that which is written in the Proverbs: “Better is a good name than much riches.”

3 Not undeservedly, therefore, was this our prelate, by God's gift, adorned and endowed with this proper name from the days of his childhood, but even many years before the day of his birth he was like a child of promise so named in wonderful and prophetic way, as revealed to a certain soldier of Christ by revelation of the Holy Ghost.

3.2 For a certain British pilgrim, a holy man, a disciple of the holy bishop Patrick, Mochta by name, thus prophesied concerning our Patron, as has been told us on the testimony of experienced men of old.

3.3 "In the last ages of the world", he says, "a son is to be born whose name, Columba, shall be spread abroad, known through all the provinces of the Isles of the ocean, and he shall shed lustre upon the last ages of the world.

4 The little fields of our two small monasteries shall be separated by the space of one little hedge; a man very dear to God and of great merit in His sight."

5 Describing, therefore, the life and character of this our Columba, I shall, in the first place, narrowly compress it in a short discourse, and at the same time set before the reader's eyes his holy conversation.

5.2 But I will also briefly set forth some of his miracles, to be, as it were, eagerly foretasted by those who read; these, however, will be more fully detailed, divided into three books.

5.3 And of these the first will contain Prophetic Revelations; the second Divine Miracles performed by him; the third will contain Angelic Apparitions and certain Manifestations of heavenly brightness upon the man of God.

6 Let no one, therefore, consider me as either lying about this so renowned a man, or as writing things doubtful or uncertain; but be it known that I shall tell those things which have been handed down in the consistent record of our elders and of faithful experienced men, and that I shall write without any ambiguity; and this either from what we have been able to

find was committed to writing before our time, or from what we, diligently inquiring, have learned by hearing from certain experienced and faithful ancients who told them to us without any misgiving.

7 Saint Columba, then, was born of noble parentage; his father was Fedilmith, son of Fergus, and his mother was Aethne by name, whose father may be called in Latin, Filius Navis (son of Nave), but in the Irish tongue, Mac Nave.

8 In the second year after the battle of Culedrebina (Cooldrevny) and in the forty-second of his age, wishing to make a pilgrimage for Christ from Ireland to Britain, he sailed forth.

8.2 And he, who, even from boyhood had been devoted to the school of Christ and to the study of wisdom, preserving by the gift of God integrity of body and purity of soul, showed that although placed upon earth he was fitted for a heavenly life.

8.3 For he was angelic of aspect, clean in speech, holy in deed, of excellent disposition, great in counsel, for thirty-four years trained as an Island-soldier (of Christ). He could not pass the space even of a single hour without applying himself either to prayer, or reading, or writing, or also to some manual labour.

9 By day and by night he was so occupied, without any intermission, in unwearied exercises of fasts and vigils that the burden of any one of these particular labours might seem to be beyond human endurance. And, amid all, dear to all, ever showing a pleasant, holy countenance, he was gladdened in his inmost heart by the joy of the Holy Spirit.

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I — A SHORT ACCOUNT OF HIS MIRACULOUS POWERS

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1 And so, according to our promise given above, there are to be briefly set forth in this book, in the first place, such proofs of his miraculous powers as this venerable man gave.

1.2 For in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the virtue of his prayers, he cured men suffering from the attacks of various diseases; and he alone, God helping, drove out from this our Island (Iona) which now has the Primacy, malignant and innumerable hosts of demons, warring against him, seen by bodily eyes and beginning to bring deadly diseases upon his Monastic Society.

1.3 By Christ's help he repressed the furious rage of wild beasts partly by striking them dead, partly by boldly repelling them.

2 The swellings of the waves, also, rising sometimes mountains high in a great storm, were soon quieted and brought low at his prayer, and his ship in which at that time he happened to be sailing was brought to the wished-for haven in a perfect calm.

2.2 When staying for some days in the country of the Picts, on returning thence he hoisted his sail against a contrary wind to confound the Druids, and so his ship, scudding over the sea, made as quick a voyage as if he had had a favourable breeze. And on other occasions winds that were contrary for sailors were turned into favourable ones at his prayer.

3 In that same region above mentioned, he took a white stone from a river and blessed it for the working of certain cures, and this stone on being dropped into water, contrary to nature, floated on the surface like an apple. This divine miracle was done in the presence of King Brude and his household. And, what is a still greater miracle, in the same province also he raised the dead son of a certain countryman, a believer, and restored him, living and unhurt, to his father and mother.

4 At another time, the same blessed man, then a young deacon residing in Ireland with Finbarr, a holy bishop, when the wine necessary for the Holy Mysteries (the Mass) failed, turned plain water into true wine by the power of prayer.

5 But, further, a great light of heavenly brilliancy was sometimes seen by some of the brethren to be shed upon him on different and separate occasions, both in the darkness of night and in daylight. He merited also delightful, most sweet and luminous visits of holy angels.

6 By the revelation of the Holy Ghost he often saw the souls of certain righteous men borne by angels to the highest heavens; but many a time also and very often he saw other souls of reprobates borne by demons to hell.

7 Many a time did he foretell the future deserts of many while yet living in mortal flesh; the joys of some, the woes of others. In the dreadful crash of battle he also obtained this from God by the virtue of his prayers: that some kings should be vanquished, and other rulers should come off victors.

7.2 And not only whilst he was in this present life, but also after his passing out of the flesh was this kind of favour vouchsafed to him, as to some victorious and most brave champion, by God Who does honour to all the saints.

8 Of such honour as this, conferred from above by the Almighty upon the honourable man, we will just give one example which was manifested in favour of Oswald, the Saxon king, the day before he fought with Cation (Cadwallon), the most valiant king of the Britons.

8.2 For when the same King Oswald had pitched his camp in readiness for battle, one day, while asleep on a pillow in his tent, he sees St. Columba in a vision gleaming with angelic beauty, and his lofty figure seemed to touch the clouds with the crown of his head.

9 And this blessed man, revealing his own name to the king standing in the midst of the camp, covered the same camp, except one small distant spot, with his shining garment, and uttered these encouraging words, the same, namely, which the Lord spake to Jesue Ben Nun [Joshua the son of Nun] before the passage of the Jordan, after the death of Moses, saying: “Be of a good courage; lo! I will be with thee”, etc.

9.2 St. Columba, therefore, speaking these words to the king in the vision, adds: “Go forth from the camp to battle this very night, for this time the Lord has granted to me that thine enemies shall be put to flight, and thy foe, Cation, delivered into thine hands, and that after the battle thou shalt come back victor, and that thou shalt reign happily.”

10 The king, waking up after these words, narrates this vision to his assembled council; and all encouraged by it, the whole people promise to believe and to receive baptism after their return from the battle: for up to that

time all that Saxon land [Northumbria] had been wrapt in the darkness of heathendom and ignorance, except King Oswald himself, with twelve men, who were baptized with him what time he was in exile among the Irish.

10.2 What more need I say? On that very same night King Oswald, as he had been directed in the vision, goes forth from the camp to battle against many thousands, with an army much smaller, and obtains from the Lord, as it had been promised him, a happy and easy victory; and, having slain King Cation, returning victor from the battle, he was afterwards established by God as the imperator (overlord, Bretwalda) of all Britain.

11 My predecessor, our Abbot Failbeus, related this narrative to me, Adamnan, nothing doubting, and he declared that he had heard it from the mouth of King Oswald himself as he related this same vision to Seghine, the Abbot.

12 But this also seems a fact not to be passed by: that by certain hymns in the Irish tongue in praise of the same blessed man and the commemoration of his name, certain persons, though they were wicked men of lewd conversation and bloodthirsty, in the very night in which they had been singing the same hymns, were freed from the hands of their enemies who had surrounded the house of the same singers; and they escaped unhurt between the flames and the swords and the spears; and strange to tell, a few of those who, as though making light of those memorials of the holy man, would not sing the hymns, were the only ones who perished in that attack of their enemies. Not two or three witnesses, according to law, of this miracle, but even a hundred, and more than that, could be brought forward.

13 And not in one place or at one time only is this same thing proved to have happened, but even at different times and places in Ireland and Britain, by a like kind of deliverance and for a similar cause, has it been found without doubt to have been done. We have learned these things, nothing doubting, from well-informed men of each district where by a similar miracle the same thing happened.

14 But to return now to the main point: Among those miracles which the same man of the Lord, while dwelling in mortal flesh, wrought by the gift of God, was that from his youthful years he began also to excel in the spirit of prophecy, to foretell things to come, to announce to those who were present things that were happening at a distance; for, though absent in body yet present in spirit, he could perceive things done far away; for according to the word of St.

14.2 Paul, "He who cleaveth unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17). Whence also this same man of the Lord, St. Columba — as he himself did not deny to some few Brethren who sometimes inquired concerning this matter — in some contemplations of Divine grace, beheld even the whole world as though collected in one ray of the sun, laid open to his sight, the capacity of his mind being miraculously enlarged.

15 These things concerning the miraculous powers of the holy man are here narrated in order that the eager reader may, in the things thus briefly written, have, as it were, a foretaste of sweeter feasts to come, and these indeed, the Lord helping, shall be more fully told in the three following books.

16 It seems to me, now, not unfitting that I should relate — though not in their proper order — the prophecies which the blessed man made at various times regarding certain holy and illustrious men.

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2 — CONCERNING ST. FINTAN, ABBOT, SON OF TAILCHAN

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1 St. Fintan, who afterwards, throughout all the churches of the Irish, was held a man of very high repute, keeping from his boyhood, God helping, purity of flesh and of spirit, devoted to studies of Divine wisdom, had it in his heart, while yet in his youthful years, that, leaving Ireland, he would set out and visit our holy Columba.

1.2 Burning with that desire, he goes to a certain old man, a friend of his, a most wise and venerable cleric among his own people, who was called in Irish Columb Crag, so that he might hear from him, as from a wise man, some counsel.

1.3 And when he had laid bare to him his thoughts on the matter, he received from him this answer: "Who can hinder this thy desire, devout and inspired, as I believe, by God, to sail across to St. Columba?"

2 At the same hour there arrive by chance two monks of St. Columba, who, being questioned as to their travels, say: "Rowing over from Britain lately we have come to-day from the Oakwood of Calgach".

2.2 "Is your holy father Columba well?" says Columb Crag. And they sorely weeping with great sorrow: "Well, indeed, is he, our patron, who, not many days agone, departed to Christ." Which hearing, Fintan and Columb and all who were there within, prostrate with their faces to the earth, wept bitterly. Fintan presently inquires, saying: "Whom has he left behind him as successor?"

2.3 "Baithene, his disciple," say they. And all crying out, "It is meet and due," Columb says to Fintan, "What now wilt thou do, Fintan?" Who, answering, says: "If the Lord will permit I will sail forth to Baithene, the holy and wise man, and if he will take me I will have him for Abbot."

3 Then, next, having kissed the above-mentioned Columb and bidding him farewell, he prepares to sail, and, sailing across without any delay whatever, arrives at the Iouan Isle.

3.2 And up to that time his name was not known in these parts; whence it happened that being at first hospitably received as some unknown guest, on another day he sends a messenger to Baithene wishing to have speech with him face to face.

3.3 And he, as he was affable and pleasant to travellers, bids that he be brought to him; who, being at once brought, in the first place, as was right, prostrated himself on the ground on bended knees.

3.4 And commanded by the holy elder he rises, and sitting down he is questioned by Baithene, who was not aware as yet of those things, concerning his nation and province, his name and manner of life, and for what reason he undertook the labour of a sea voyage.

4 And he, thus questioned, tells all things in order, and humbly begs that he may be received. To whom the holy elder, having heard these things from his guest, and at once knowing him to be the man of whom St.

4.2 Columba had prophetically spoken some time before, says, "I ought, indeed, to give my God thanks for thy coming hither, my son, but know thou this undoubtedly, that thou wilt not be monk of ours." Hearing this the guest, very much saddened, says, "Perhaps, unworthy as I am, I do not deserve to become thy monk".

4.3 The elder presently says: “I said not this, as thou sayest, that thou art unworthy; but although I would rather keep thee with me, yet I cannot violate the command of my predecessor, the holy Columba, through whom the Holy Spirit prophesied concerning thee.

5 For on a day, speaking to me alone and apart, with prophetic mouth, among other things thus he said: “O Baithene, thou shouldst hear very attentively these my words; for immediately after my awaited and much desired passing from this world to Christ, a certain Brother from Ireland, who at this time regulates his youthful age by a good life, well versed in sacred studies, Fintan by name, of the tribe Mocumoie, whose father is called Tailchan; he, I say, coming to thee, will humbly beg that thou wilt receive him and wilt number him among the rest of thy monks. But it has not been predestined for him in the foreknowledge of God that he should himself become the monk of any Abbot, but he has long ago been chosen by God as an Abbot of monks and a leader of souls to the heavenly kingdom.

6 Do not thou, therefore, retain this said man with thee in these our islands, lest thou shouldst seem also to go against the will of God: but apprising him of these words, send him back in peace to Ireland that he may erect a monastery in the parts of Leinster near the sea, and there feeding the flock of the sheep of Christ let him lead numberless souls to the Heavenly Country”.

6.2 The younger holy man, hearing these things, shedding tears, gives thanks to Christ saying, “Be it unto me according to the prophetic and wondrous foreknowledge of the holy Columba”. And in those same days,

obeying the words of the Saints and receiving a blessing from Baithene, he sailed across to Ireland in peace.

7 I learned these things, nothing doubting, from a certain religious aged priest, a soldier of Christ, Oisseneus by name, son of Ernan, of the clan Mocu Neth Corb, who related them to me, and he bore witness that he had himself heard the above-mentioned words from the mouth of the same Saint Fintan, son of Tailchan, whose monk he had been.

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3 — A PROPHECY OF ST. COLUMBA CONCERNING ERNENE, SON OF CRASEN

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1 At another time, the blessed man, while staying for some months in the midland part of Ireland, founding by Divine inspiration the monastery which is called in Irish Dair-Mag, was pleased to go to visit the Brethren who were dwelling in the Clonoensian monastery of St. Ceran (Clonmacnoise).

1.2 And when they heard of his arrival, all of them from the little fields about the monastery, together with those who were found congregated within it, following with the greatest alacrity the Abbot Alither, set out with one accord, going outside the enclosure of the monastery to meet St.

1.3 Columba as if he were an angel of the Lord; humbly bowing with faces to the earth at the sight of him, he was kissed by them with all reverence, and singing hymns and praises they conduct him with all honour to the church.

2 And binding together a canopy of poles they had it carried by four men, walking equally apart about the Saint as he went, lest, be it understood, the holy and aged Columba should be jostled by the crowding together of the throngs of Brethren.

2.2 In the same hour a certain servant lad, very downcast in mien and attire, and not as yet pleasing to his elders, hiding himself as much as he could, came behind that he might secretly touch even the fringe of the

cloak with which the blessed man was clad, and, if he could do so, without his knowing or feeling it.

2.3 But nevertheless this was not hid from the Saint, for what he could not with his bodily eyes see done behind him he perceived with the eyes of his soul. Wherefore he stops suddenly, and stretching out his hand behind him takes hold of the boy's neck, and drawing him sets him in front of him.

3 And while all those who are standing around say: "Send him away! send him away! Why dost thou detain this wretched and naughty lad?" the Saint, on the other hand, utters from his pure heart these prophetic words: "Suffer it to be, brethren, suffer it to be, now." But to the much trembling boy he says: "O son, open thy mouth and put out thy tongue."

3.2 Then the boy, thus commanded, opening his mouth, with much trembling put out his tongue, and the Saint, stretching forth his holy hand, earnestly blessing it, thus prophetically speaks, saying: "Although this boy may now seem to you despicable and very worthless, yet let no one despise him for that.

4 For from this hour not only will he not displease you, but he will greatly please you; and he will increase by degrees from day to day in good conduct and the virtues of the soul; wisdom also and prudence shall be increased in him more and more from this day and great will be his progress in this your community; his tongue also shall be gifted by God with wholesome doctrine and eloquence."

5 This was Ernene, son of Crasen, afterwards famous and very much noted among all the Churches of Ireland. And he it was who narrated all these above written words prophesied concerning himself to the Abbot Seghine,

my predecessor; Failbhe, who himself was also there present with Seghine, attentively listening the while, and from his (Failbhe's) account I have myself come to know all that I have stated.

6 But there are many other things which by the revelation of the Holy Ghost the Saint prophesied in those days when he was a guest in the Clonoensian monastery; as, for instance, about that long-standing dissension which arose among the Churches of Ireland concerning the difference of the Feast of Easter and about certain visits made to him by Angels by whom certain places within the enclosures of the same monastery were at that time frequented.

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4 — CONCERNING THE COMING OF ST. CAINNECH, THE ABBOT, WHICH ST. COLUMBA PROPHETICALLY FORETOLD

✦

1 At another time when in the isle of Iona on a day of crashing tempest and terrible rising of the waves when the Saint, sitting in the house and directing the Brethren, said: "Make ready a lodging quickly, and draw forth water for the washing of the feet of guests", a certain Brother among them presently said: "Who, this very windy and most dangerous day, can safely sail across the Sound, though it be narrow?"

1.2 And the Saint hearing this, thus speaks: "To a certain man, holy and chosen, who will come to us before evening, the Almighty has granted a calm, even in the storm." And behold on the same day a ship, for some time expected by the Brethren, in which was Cainnech, arrived, according to the prophecy of the Saint.

1.3 And the Saint with the Brethren came to meet him and he was honourably and hospitably received by him.

2 But those sailors who had been with Cainnech, when asked by the Brethren what sort of voyage they had had, replied just as St. Columba had before predicted, both as to the tempest and the calm, miraculously

kept apart in the same sea and at the same time, God so granting, and they stated that they did not feel the tempest, which however they saw from afar.

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5 — Concerning the danger to the holy bishop Colman Mocusailni, in the sea near the island called Rechru

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1 On another day also Saint Columba, residing in his mother church, suddenly smiling, broke out into these words saying: “Columban son of Beogna, just starting to sail over to us, is now in great danger in the rolling tides of the whirlpool of Brecan, and sitting at the prow, holds up both hands to heaven and also blesses that stormy and threatening sea; and yet the Lord is thus frightening him not that he is to be overwhelmed in the waves by the wreck of the ship in which he is sitting, but rather that he may be roused to pray more earnestly that, God being propitious, he may pass over to us after the danger is over.”

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6 — OF CORMAC

✦

1 At another time also, thus prophesying of Cormac, grandson of Lethan, certainly a holy man, who not less than three times laboriously sought a solitude in the ocean but did not find it, St. Columba prophesying said: "To day, once more desiring to find a solitude, Cormac is beginning to sail out from that region which, situated beyond the river Moy, is called Eirros Domno; yet will he not even this time find what he looks for; and this for no other fault of his than that he has taken with him on the voyage the monk of a certain religious abbot without his permission, a deserter, who ought not rightly to accompany him."

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7 — PROPHECY OF THE BLESSED MAN CONCERNING THE DIN OF BATTLES FOUGHT AT A DISTANCE

✦

[1] Two years having passed after the battle of Cule-Drebene [in 563, therefore], as it has been told to us, at the time when the blessed man first sailed away to leave Ireland; on a certain day — that is, at the same hour in which was fought in Ireland the battle called in Irish of Ondemone, the same man of God then living in Britain, narrated before King Conall, son of Comgill, everything as well about the battle fought as also about those kings to whom the Lord granted victory over their enemies, whose proper names are Ainmores son of Setna and Domhnall and Forcus, two sons of Mac Ere. But, further, the Saint prophesied in like manner concerning the king of the Cruithne who was called Echod Laib, how, being vanquished, he escaped, riding in his chariot.

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8 — OF THE BATTLE OF THE MIATHI

✦

1 At another time, that is after many years had run their course after the above-mentioned battle, when the holy man was in the island of Iona he suddenly says to his minister Diormit, “Ring the bell.” The Brethren, roused by the sound, run quickly to the church, the holy Abbot himself going before.

1.2 And there on bended knees he says to them: “Now let us pray to the Lord earnestly for this people and for King Aidan; for in this hour they are entering battle.” And after a moderate interval, having gone out of the oratory, looking up to heaven, he says: “Now are the barbarians put to flight and, although it be an unhappy one, yet to Aidan is granted the victory.”

1.3 But the blessed man also prophetically announced the number of the slain of Aidan's army as three hundred and three men.

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9 — PROPHECY OF ST. COLUMBA CONCERNING THE SONS OF KING AIDAN

✦

1 At another time, before the aforesaid battle, the Saint questions King Aidan as to his successor in the kingdom. He replying that he does not know which of his three sons is to reign — Arthur, or Eochoid Find, or Domingart — the Saint accordingly prophesies in this manner: “None of these three will be ruler, for they will fall in battle slain by enemies; but now if thou hast any other younger sons, let them come to me, and he of them whom God shall choose for king will suddenly rush to my bosom”.

1.2 And when they were called in, Eochoid Buide, coming to him, according to the Saint's word, lay in his lap. And immediately the Saint kissed and blessed him, and says to his father: “This is thy survivor, and he is to reign king after thee, and his sons shall reign after him.” And thus it was that afterwards, in their season, all things were completely fulfilled.

2 For Arthur and Eochoid Find were slain, in no long interval of time after, in the above-mentioned battle of the Miathi. But Domingart was killed in Saxonia, in the bloodshed of battle: and Eochoid Buide succeeded to the kingdom after his father.

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10 — CONCERNING DOMHNALL, SON OF AEDH

✦

1 Domhnall, son of Aedh, while yet a boy, was brought by his foster-parents to St. Columba in Drum Ceatt, and looking upon him he asks, saying: “Whose son is this whom ye have brought?” and they answered, “This is Domhnall, son of Aedh, who has been brought to thee so that he may return enriched with thy blessing.”

1.2 When the Saint had blessed him, he says forthwith: “This one shall survive after all his brethren, and be a very famous king; nor shall he ever be delivered into his enemies' hands, but by a peaceful death, in old age, and in his own house, in the presence of a crowd of his familiar friends, he shall die upon his bed.”

1.3 And all these things were truly fulfilled, according to the prophecy of the blessed man concerning him.

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11 — CONCERNING SCANDLAN, SON OF COLMAN

✦

1 At the same time and in the same place, the Saint desiring to visit him, goes to Scandlan, son of Colman, who was detained in chains at the seat of King Aedh, and when he had blessed him, comforting him, says: “My son, be not cast down, but rather rejoice and take courage, for King Aedh, in whose stronghold thou art in chains, will go before thee out of this world, and after some time of exile thou art to rule thirty years king among thine own people.

2 And again thou shalt be driven from the kingdom and be an exile for some days, after which, invited back by the people, thou shalt reign for three brief periods.” And all these things were fully accomplished according to the prophecy of the Saint. For after thirty years he was expelled from the kingdom, and was an exile for a certain space of time; but afterwards, invited back again by the people, he reigned, not, as he thought, for three years, but for three months, after which he died forthwith.

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12 — A PROPHECY OF THE BLESSED MAN REGARDING TWO OTHER RULERS, THE TWO GRANDSONS OF MUIREDACH: BAITAN, SON OF MAC ERCE, AND EOCHOID, SON OF DOMHNALL

✦

1 At another time, making a journey through the rough and rocky district which is called Artdamuirchol, and hearing his companions, namely, Laisran, son of Feradach, and Diarmit, his assistant, discourse by the way about the two above-mentioned kings, he addresses to them these words: "O my children, why talk ye thus idly of these men? for both these kings of whom you now discourse have lately perished, beheaded by enemies. On this very day, too, certain sailors coming from Scotia [Ireland] will tell you these same things as to these kings."

1.2 And on the same day, seafaring men from Ireland, coming to the place which is called Muirbolc Paradisi, related to his two aforementioned companions, then sailing in the same ship with the Saint, the accomplished prophecy of the venerable man as to those two kings being slain.

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13 — A PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN CONCERNING AENGUS, SON OF AEDH COMMAN

✦

1 Now this man, exiled from his fatherland with two other brothers, came, an exile, to the Saint, when he was sojourning in Britain; who blessing him and prophesying, utters from his holy breast these words: “This youth, his other brothers being dead, will survive, and is destined to rule for a long time in his fatherland; and his enemies shall fall before him; nor yet shall he ever be betrayed into his enemies' hands; but he shall die a peaceful death, an old man, among his friends.”

1.2 All which things were completely fulfilled according to the Saint's word. This Aengus is he whose surname was Bronbachal.

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14 — A PROPHECY OF THE BLESSED MAN CONCERNING THE SON OF KING DIARMAIT, WHO IN THE SCOTIC TONGUE IS CALLED AEDH SLANE

✦

1 At another time, when the blessed man is staying for some days in Ireland, he thus speaks prophetically to the aforesaid Aedh who came to him: “Thou shouldst have a care, my son, lest by doing a murderous sin thou losest the prerogative, predestined by God for thee, of the monarchy of the kingdom of all Ireland; for if ever thou dost commit it thou shalt not enjoy the whole kingdom of thy father, but a part of it only, among thy own tribe, for a short time.” And these words of the Saint were thus fulfilled according to his prophecy; for after Suibone, son of Colman, had been treacherously killed by him, he did not, it is said, for more than four years and three months, hold that part of the kingdom granted to him.

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15 — THE PROPHECY OF THE BLESSED MAN CONCERNING KING RYDDERCH, SON OF TOTHAIL, WHO REIGNED UPON THE ROCK OF CLUAITH

✦

1 At another time, this same king, as he was a friend of the holy man, sent some secret embassy to him by Lugbe Mocumin, wishing to know whether he was to be slain by his enemies or not.

1.2 But Lugbe, questioned by the Saint as to that same king and kingdom and people, and replying, as though in pity, says, “Why dost thou inquire concerning that unhappy man, who cannot by any means know at what hour he may be killed by his enemies?” The Saint then says, “Never will he be delivered into his enemies' hands, but in his own house will he die upon a feather bed.”

1.3 Which prophecy of the Saint concerning King Rydderch was fully accomplished, for, according to his word, he did die a peaceful death in his own house.

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16 — PROPHECY OF THE SAINT CONCERNING TWO BOYS, ONE OF WHOM DIED AT THE END OF THE WEEK ACCORDING TO THE SAINT'S WORD

✦

1 At another time, two men of the people come to the Saint dwelling in the isle of Iona, one of whom, Meldan by name, asks the Saint concerning his son, who was present, what would be his future. To whom the Saint speaks thus: “Is not to-day the Sabbath [Saturday]? Thy son will die on the Friday, at the end of the coming week: and this day week, that is on the Sabbath, he will be buried here.”

1.2 Then the other peasant, Glasderc by name, none the less inquiring as to the son whom he had with him there, hears this reply of the Saint: “Thy son, Ernane, will see his grandchildren, and be buried, an old man, in this island.” All of which things as to both boys in their time were fulfilled, according to the Saint's word.

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17 — THE PROPHECY OF THE SAINT REGARDING COLCA, SON OF AEDH DRAIGNICHE, AND REGARDING A CERTAIN SECRET SIN OF HIS MOTHER

✦

1 At another time, the Saint questions the aforesaid Colca, staying with him in the island of Iona, concerning his mother, whether she was religious or not. To whom replying, he says: "I have always known my mother to be well conducted and of good report." The Saint then speaks thus prophetically: "Set out quickly, God willing, for Ireland. Question thy mother very earnestly regarding a certain very great secret sin of hers which she will confess to no man."

1.2 And he, hearing these things, obeying, went over to Ireland. Thereupon the mother, closely questioned by him, although in the first instance denying, at length confessed her sin, and doing penance according to the judgment of the Saint, was healed; and she wondered much at what had been revealed to the Saint concerning her.

2 But Colca, having returned to the Saint, stayed with him some days, and asking concerning his own end heard from the Saint this answer: "In thy own country, which thou lovest, thou shalt be Prior of some church for many years, and if perchance at some time thou shalt see thy cellarer making merry at a supper of his friends, and whirling round the jug by the neck, know that in a short time thou shalt die."

2.2 What more need I say? This same prophecy of the blessed man was so fulfilled in all respects as had been foretold concerning that same Colca.

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18 — CONCERNING LAISRAN, THE GARDENER, A HOLY MAN

✦

1 The blessed man ordered a certain monk of his, by name Trena, of the tribe Mac-Ui-Runtir, to go on a certain day as his messenger to Scotia [Ireland].

2 And he, obeying the command of the man of God, quickly prepares for the voyage, and he complains in the Saint's presence that one sailor was wanting. The Saint accordingly answering, utters from his sacred breast these words, saying: "I cannot now find for thee the sailor whom thou sayest is not yet at hand. Go in peace: until thou comest to Hibernia thou shalt have prosperous and favourable winds.

2.2 And thou shalt see a certain man from afar coming to meet thee, who will first of all the others lay hold of the prow of thy ship in Ireland: he shall be the companion of thy journey for some days in Hibernia, and will accompany thee on thy return thence to us; a man chosen of God, who for all the remainder of his time will live piously in this my monastery." What more can I add?

3 Trena, receiving a blessing from the Saint, crossed all the seas with full sails; and behold, as his little vessel was nearing the port, Laisran Mocumoie runs up quicker than the others and catches hold of the prow. The sailors know him for the man of whom the Saint had foretold.

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19 — How the Saint, knowing beforehand, spoke of a great whale

✦

1 On a certain day, when the venerable man was living in the isle of Iona, a certain Brother, Berach by name, proposing to sail to the Ethican island [Tiree], coming to the Saint in the morning asks to be blessed by him.

1.2 And the Saint, looking at him, says: "O son, take very great care today not to attempt to cross over the broad ocean in a direct course for the Ethican land, but, rather, going round about, sail by the smaller islands, for the reason that, terrified by some marvellous monster, thou mayest narrowly escape thence."

1.3 And he having received the Saint's blessing, departed, and, going into the ship, set off as though little heeding the Saint's word.

2 And then, crossing the wider reaches of the Ethican sea, he and the sailors who were there with him look, and behold! a whale of wondrous and immense size, lifting itself up like a mountain, floating on the surface, opened wide its mouth all bristling with teeth. Thereupon, the sail having been lowered, the rowers greatly terrified, turned back, and could hardly escape from the commotion of the waves arising from the movement of the monster; and, remembering the Saint's prophetic word, they marvelled.

3 On the same day also, Baithene, being about to take ship for the aforementioned island, the Saint intimated to him in the morning concerning that same whale, saying: “Last night at midnight a great whale raised itself from the depth of the sea, and it will lift itself to the surface of the ocean today between the Iouan and Ethican islands.”

3.2 And Baithene, answering him, said, “I and that beast are under the power of God.” “Go in peace,” says the Saint, “thy faith in Christ shall defend thee from this danger.”

3.3 Then Baithene, having received the Saint's benediction, sails out from the harbour, and, no narrow stretches of the sea having been passed over, he and his companions behold the whale, and when all were greatly alarmed, he alone, undaunted, with both hands upraised, blesses the waters and the whale.

4 And in the same moment the vast monster plunging beneath the waves, nowhere appeared to them again.

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20 — A PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN CONCERNING A CERTAIN BAITAN, WHO WITH OTHERS SAILED FORTH SEEKING AN OCEAN SOLITUDE

✦

1 At another time a certain Baitan, by family a descendant of Niath Tolorg, when about to seek with others a solitude in the sea, asked to be blessed by the Saint, to whom the Saint, bidding farewell, spoke concerning him this prophetic word: "This man who goes to seek a solitude in the ocean, will not be buried in a solitude, but will be buried in that place where a woman will drive sheep across his grave."

1.2 And so the same Baitan, after long wanderings over stormy waters, not finding the desert, returned home and remained there many years the master of a small monastic house which is called in Scotic [Irish] Lathreginden.

1.3 And dying after a while, it happened at the same time when he was buried in the Oak Grove of Calgach, that on account of a hostile incursion the common people near to the church of that place fled to it with their wives and children.

2 Whence it happened that one day a certain woman was caught who was driving her sheep over the grave of that same man, recently buried. And one of those who saw it, a holy priest, said, "Now is fulfilled the prophecy

of St. Columba, uttered many years ago." And this above-mentioned priest, Mailodran by name, a soldier of Christ, of the clan Mocurin, narrated these things concerning Baitan, and told them to me.

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21 — A PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN AS TO ONE NEMAN, A MOCK PENITENT

✦

1 At another time the Saint comes to the Hinbinan isle, and on the same day orders that some indulgence in food should be allowed even to the penitents. But there was there among the penitents a certain Neman, son of Cathir, who, bidden by the Saint, refused to accept the little indulgence offered.

1.2 Whom the Saint addresses in these words: “O Neman, dost thou not accept some indulgence in food allowed by me and Baithene? There will be a time in which thou wilt furtively eat mare's flesh with robbers in a wood.”

1.3 This same man, therefore, having afterwards returned to the world, was found with robbers in a wood eating such flesh, from a wooden grill, according to the word of the Saint.

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22 — CONCERNING A CERTAIN UNHAPPY MAN'S TERRIBLE SIN

✦

1 At another time the Saint arouses the Brethren in the dead of night, and when they are gathered together in the church says to them: "Now let us pray fervently to the Lord, for in this hour some sin unheard of in the world has been committed, for which the vengeance of the judge is very much to be feared."

1.2 And of this sin he spoke next day to a few who were questioning about it, saying: "After a few months that unhappy fellow will come to the isle of Iona with Lugaid, who knows not about it."

1.3 And so on another day, some months having intervened, the Saint speaks to Diormit, thus commanding him: "Rise quickly; behold Lugaid is drawing near; and tell him to cast out the wretch whom he has with him in the ship on the Malean isle [Mull], lest he tread the turf of this island."

2 And he, obeying the Saint's command, goes to the sea and tells Lugaid as he was approaching all the words of the Saint concerning the unhappy man. On hearing which, that wretch swore that he would never take food with others unless he first saw Saint Columba and spoke to him. And having returned to the Saint, Diormit related to him these words of the wretch.

2.2 And having heard them the Saint goes down to the haven; and to Baithene, who was suggesting that the repentance of the wretch should be received, bringing forward passages of Holy Scripture in evidence, the

Saint accordingly says: “O Baithene, this man has committed fratricide after the manner of Cain.”

2.3 Then the wretch on his bended knees on the shore promised that he would fulfil the rules of penance according to the sentence of the Saint.

3 And the Saint says to him: “If for twelve years thou do penance among the Britons with weeping and tears, and never to thy dying day return to Ireland, perhaps God may forgive thy sin.”

3.2 Saying this the Saint, turning to his own people, says: “This man is a son of perdition, who will not fulfil the penance which he has promised, but will soon return to Scotia [Ireland], and there, in a short time, he will perish, slain by his enemies.”

3.3 All which things so came to pass, according to the Saint's prophecy; for the unhappy man returning in those same days to Ireland, falling into the hands of his enemies, was slain in the region called Lea. He was of the descendants of Turtre.

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23 — OF THE VOWEL-LETTER "I"

✦

1 One day Baithene, coming to the Saint, says: "I have need of one of the Brethren to look over with me and to revise the Psalter which I have written." Having heard which, the Saint thus speaks: "Why dost thou bring this trouble upon us without cause? For in this thy Psalter, of which thou speakest, not one superfluous letter will be found, nor is any wanting except the vowel 'I', which alone is missing." And so the whole Psalter having been read through, it was found on examination to be as the Saint had foretold.

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24 — CONCERNING A BOOK WHICH FELL INTO A JAR OF WATER AS THE SAINT HAD PREDICTED

✦

1 Again one day, sitting at the hearth in the monastery, he sees at some distance Lugbe, of the tribe Mocumin, reading a book; to whom he suddenly says: "Take care, son, take care, for I think that the book which thou readest is about to fall into a vessel full of water." Which soon so happened, for the youth above mentioned, after a short time rising to perform some service in the monastery, and having forgotten the word of the blessed man, the book, which he was holding carelessly under his arm, suddenly fell into a jar full of water.

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25 — CONCERNING THE INK-HORN AWKWARDLY UPSET

✦

1 On another day, about the same time, a shout was raised on the other side of the Strait of the isle of Iona: and the Saint, sitting in his little hut, which rested on a wooden floor, hearing the shout, says: "The man who is shouting beyond the strait is not a man of refined sentiment, for to-day he will upset and spill my ink-horn."

1.2 And Diormit, his attendant, hearing this word, standing for a little while in front of the gate, awaited the arrival of the troublesome guest that he might guard the ink-horn. But for some cause or other he soon went thence; and after he had gone the troublesome guest arrived, and in eager haste to kiss the Saint upset the ink-horn, overturned by the skirt of his garment.

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26 — OF THE ARRIVAL OF A CERTAIN GUEST, WHOM THE SAINT ANNOUNCED BEFOREHAND

✦

1 So again, at another time, on the third day of the week (Tuesday), the Saint thus spoke to the Brethren: “To-morrow, the fourth day, we intend to fast; but nevertheless, by the arrival of a certain troublesome guest, the customary fast will be broken.” Which happened, as it had been foreshown to the Saint; for on the morning of the same fourth day of the week another stranger was shouting across the Strait, Aidan by name, son of Fergno, a most religious man who, as is said, ministered for twelve years to Brendan Mocualti; and he, upon his arrival, occasioned a relaxation of that day's fast according to the Saint's word.

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27 — OF A CERTAIN MAN IN DISTRESS WHO WAS SHOUTING ACROSS THE AFORESAID STRAIT

✦

1 On a certain day also, hearing some one shouting across the Strait, the Saint speaks on this wise: “Much to be pitied is that man who is shouting, who comes to us seeking matters concerning medicines for the body: and it were more fitting for him to-day to do true penance for his sins, for at the end of this week he will die.”

1.2 Which saying, those who were present told to the unhappy man when he arrived. But he, making light of it, took the things which he had asked for and quickly went back; and according to the Saint's prophetic word, he died before the end of the same week.

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28 — A PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN REGARDING A CITY IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE, BURNED BY SULPHUREOUS FIRE THAT FELL FROM HEAVEN

✦

1 Again, at another time, Lugbe, of the clan Mocumin, of whom we have made mention above, coming to the Saint one day after the threshing of the corn, could by no means look upon his face, suffused as it was with a marvellous glow, and he immediately fled in great fear. Whom the Saint, gently clapping his hands, calls back.

1.2 And he returning, and being at once questioned by the Saint why he had fled so quickly, gave this reply: “I fled because I was greatly frightened.” And after some little interval, becoming more confident, he ventures to question the Saint, saying: “Has any awful vision been shown to thee in this hour?”

1.3 And the Saint gave him answer thus: “Such a terrible vengeance has now been wrought in a remote part of the world!” “What vengeance?” says the youth, “and in what country is it done?”

2 The Saint then speaks thus: “A sulphureous flame from heaven has this hour been sent down upon a city of the Roman Empire, situated within the boundaries of Italy; and nearly three thousand men, besides a number

of mothers and children, have perished. And before the present year is ended Gallic sailors, coming hither from the provinces of the Gauls, shall relate these same things to thee."

2.2 Which words, after some months, were proved to have been true. For the same Lugbe, going with the holy man to the Land's Head [Cantyre], questioning the captain and the sailors of a bark that arrived, hears narrated by them all those things concerning the city with its citizens, just as they were foretold by the illustrious man.

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29 — A VISION OF THE BLESSED MAN CONCERNING LAISRAN, SON OF FERADACH

✦

1 One wintry and very cold day the Saint, afflicted by a great sorrow, wept. And his attendant, Diormit, questioning him as to the cause of his sadness, received from him this reply: “Not without reason, child, am I sad in this hour, seeing as I do my monks now wearied with heavy labour, whom Laisran is vexing with the erection of some very great building; a thing which greatly displeases me.”

1.2 Wonderful to say, at that very moment Laisran, dwelling in the monastery of the Oakwood Plain, under some compulsion, and as it were fired by some internal flame, orders the monks to stop working and some food for refreshment to be prepared; and not only to take their ease on that day, but to rest also on other days of severe weather.

2 And the Saint, hearing in spirit these consolatory words spoken by Laisran to the Brethren, ceased to weep; and though himself living in the isle of Iona, related them throughout, rejoicing exceedingly, to the Brethren who were there at the time; and he blessed Laisran, the comforter of the monks.

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30 — CONCERNING FEACHNA THE WISE, HOW HE CAME AS A PENITENT TO ST. COLUMBA, WHO FORE-ANNOUNCED HIM

✦

1 At another time the Saint, sitting on the top of the hill which from afar rises above this our monastery, having turned to his attendant, Diormit, spoke, saying: "I wonder why a certain ship from Scotia [Ireland] is approaching so slowly; and it brings a certain sage, who, having fallen into some guilt, is going through a tearful penance, and will soon arrive."

1.2 Not very long after, the attendant, looking southwards, sees the sail of a ship nearing the haven. And when he pointed it out to the Saint as it was approaching he quickly rises, saying, "Let us go to meet the stranger, whose true penance Christ accepts." But Feachna, descending from the ship, runs up to meet the Saint on his way to the port, with weeping and lamentation.

1.3 Kneeling down on bended knees at his feet, he most bitterly bewails and confesses his sins in the presence of all who were there.

2 Then the Saint, weeping in the same way along with him, says to him: "Arise, son, and be comforted; the sins which thou hast committed are forgiven thee, because, as it is written, "A contrite and humble heart God

doth not despise." And he, rising, was joyfully received by the Saint, and after some days was sent journeying in peace to Baithene, at that time dwelling as prelate in the Plain of Lunge.

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31 — THE PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN CONCERNING HIS MONK, CAILTAN

✦

1 At another time, sending two monks to another monk of his, Cailtan by name, who at that time was Superior in the Cell which to-day is called by the name of his brother Diuni, adjacent to the Lake of the River Aba, the Saint sends by those messengers these words: “Haste ye quickly to Cailtan, and say to him that he come to me without the least delay.”

1.2 And they obeying the Saint's word, going forth, coming to the cell of Diuni intimated to Cailtan the nature of their mission. And he, in the same hour, on no account delaying, followed the messengers of the Saint, a companion of their journey, and quickly came to him dwelling in the Iouan Isle.

1.3 Whom seeing, the Saint, thus speaking, addresses in these words: “O Cailtan, well hast thou done, obediently hastening to me; rest thee awhile.

2 It was for this reason, loving thee as a friend, that I sent to thee, inviting thee that here with me thou mayest finish the course of thy life in true obedience. For before the end of this week thou wilt depart in peace unto the Lord.” Which having heard, he gave thanks to God, and kissed the Saint, weeping, and, his blessing being received from him, goes to the guest house; and falling sick on that same night following, he passed away to Christ the Lord that same week, according to the Saint's word.

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32 — THE FORESIGHT AND PROPHECY OF THE SAINT CONCERNING TWO BROTHERS WHO WERE STRANGERS

✦

1 One Lord's Day there was shouting beyond the often mentioned Strait. Which shout the Saint hearing, he says to the Brethren who were there, "Go quickly, and bring at once the strangers coming to us from a distant land." And they, immediately obeying, crossing the Strait, brought the guests, and the Saint having kissed them, then asks them the object of their journey.

1.2 And they answering say: "We are come that we may dwell with thee even for this year." To whom the Saint gave this reply: "Ye cannot sojourn with me for the space of one year as ye say, unless you first make the monastic vow." Those who were present much wondered that this should be said to guests just arrived that very hour.

2 To which words of the Saint, the elder brother answering says, "Although up to the present hour we never had this purpose in mind, yet we will follow thy counsel, divinely inspired as we believe it to be." What more need be said? At that same moment entering the oratory with the Saint, devoutly and on bended knees they took the monastic vow.

2.2 Then the Saint, turning to the Brethren, says: "These two strangers, offering themselves a living sacrifice to God, and in a short time fulfilling a long space of Christian warfare, will soon, in this very month, pass away to Christ the Lord in peace."

2.3 Hearing which both brothers, giving thanks to God, were conducted to the guest house; and seven days having passed the elder brother began to sicken, and at the end of the same week departed to the Lord.

3 And in like manner the other, after seven other days, fell ill and happily passed away to the Lord at the end of that week. And so, according to the true prophecy of the Saint, within the limit of the same month, both end this present life.

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33 — THE PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN CONCERNING A CERTAIN ARTBRANAN

✦

1 When the blessed man was staying for some days in the Scian Isle [Skye], striking with his staff a little spot of ground of a certain place near the sea, he thus speaks to his companions: "Wonderful to say, O my children, this day in this spot of ground a certain aged heathen, who has kept his natural innocence throughout all his life, will be baptised, and will die, and will be buried." And behold, after the interval of about one hour, a vessel arrived at the same port, in the bows of which a certain decrepit old man was borne, the chief of the Cohort of Geona, and two youths, lifting him out of the ship, set him down before the eyes of the blessed man.

2 And he, having received the Word of God from the Saint through an interpreter, forthwith believing, was baptised by him, and after the ministrations of baptism were completed, as the Saint had prophesied, he thereupon died in the same place, and there his comrades bury him, a cairn being raised over him. And this is to be seen today on the sea shore; and the river of the same place in which he had received baptism is to this very day called by the inhabitants from his name, "Dobur Artbranani."

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34 — CONCERNING THE REMOVAL OF A BOAT BY ORDER OF THE SAINT

✦

1 At another time, travelling beyond the “Backbone of Britain” [Drum Alban, the Grampians], having found among desert fields a certain little village, the Saint, taking up his abode there by the bank of a certain rivulet at its entrance into a lake, on the same night wakes his sleeping companions, half asleep as they were, saying: “Now, now, go, quickly going out, and bring ye hither at once our boat which ye have put in a house on the other side of the stream, and put it in a nearer hut.”

1.2 And they, immediately obeying, did as they were bid. And when they were again at rest the Saint, after a while, quietly nudges Diormit, saying: “Standing now outside the house, look you what is going on in that village where you first put your boat.” And he, obeying the Saint's order, goes out of the house, and, looking, sees the whole village being burnt up by devouring flame.

2 And returning to the Saint, he told him what was going on there. Then the Saint told the Brethren about a certain rival, his enemy, who had burned those houses that same night.

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35 — CONCERNING GALLAN, SON OF FACHTNA, WHO WAS IN THE PROVINCE OF COLGA, SON OF CALLACH

✦

1 Again, one day, the Saint, sitting in his little hut, prophesies to the same Colga who was reading by his side, and says: “Now are demons bearing away to hell an extortioner, one of the chiefs of thy province.” But Colga hearing this, and writing down the time and the hour on a tablet, after some months returning home, found on inquiry from the inhabitants of that region that Gallan, son of Fachtna, had died at that very moment of time in which the blessed man had told him of one who was carried off by demons.

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36 — Prophecy of the Blessed Man concerning Findchan, the Priest, Founder of the Monastery called Artchain, in the Ethican Land

✦

1 At another time, the above-mentioned priest, Findchan, a soldier of Christ, brought with him from Ireland to Britain, wearing the clerical habit, Aedh, surnamed “the Black,” a scion of a royal family, a Cruthinian [Irish Pict] by nation, that he might stay with him in his monastery for some years.

1.2 And this Aedh the Black had indeed been a very bloodthirsty man and a murderer of many; and he had even slain Diormit, son of Cerbal, ordained, by God's will, ruler of all Ireland. This same Aedh, therefore, after some time passed in retirement, having summoned a bishop, was ordained priest, although somewhat irregularly, while with the above-named Findchan.

1.3 The Bishop, however, did not dare to lay hand upon his head unless first Findchan himself, who loved Aedh with mere human affection, would first place his right hand upon his head in approval.

2 And when this ordination was afterwards made known to the holy man, he was deeply grieved: then forthwith he pronounced concerning Findchan himself, and concerning Aedh thus ordained this fearful sentence, saying: “That right hand which, against law and ecclesiastical rite,

Findchan has laid upon the head of the son of perdition shall soon rot, and after great tortures of pain shall go before him into the earth for burial; and he himself shall live for many years after the burial of his hand.

2.2 But Aedh, improperly ordained, will return as a dog to his vomit, and be again a bloody murderer; and at last his throat shall be pierced by a lance and falling from wood into water, he will die by drowning. Such an end of life he who murdered the King of all Scotia [Ireland] has long ago deserved."

3 Which prophecy of the blessed man was in each case fulfilled; for the right hand of the presbyter, Findchan, having rotted through a blow, went before him into the earth, being buried in that island which is called Ommon; but he himself, according to the word of Saint Columba, lived for many years after. But Aedh "the Black," priest only in name, having returned to his former wickednesses, was treacherously pierced by a lance, fell from the prow of a raft into the water of a lake, and perished.

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37 — Of a certain spiritual consolation sent by the holy man to the monks on their way back, weary from toil

✦

1 Among these wonderful manifestations of prophetic spirit it does not seem out of place to commemorate also in our little record a certain spiritual consolation which the monks of St. Columba felt on one occasion from his spirit meeting them by the way.

1.2 For once, as the Brethren after harvest work, returning to the monastery in the evening and arriving at that place which is called in Scotic [Irish] Cuuleilne, which place is said to be midway between the western plain of the island of Iona and our monastery, they seemed each one to feel within himself something wonderful and unusual, which, however, they dared not speak of the one to the other. And so for some days, in the same place and at the same evening hour, they perceived it.

2 But in those days St. Baithene was the superintendent of labours among them, and one day he spoke thus to them saying, "Now, Brothers, if ye unexpectedly experience anything unusual and wonderful in this place, halfway between the harvest field and the monastery, ye ought to declare it, each one of you."

3 Then one of them, a senior, says: "According to thy order I will tell thee what has been shown to me in this place; for in these days past, and even now, I perceive some fragrance of a marvellous odour, as if that of all flow-

ers collected into one; and also a certain burning as of fire, not painful, but as it were soothing; and, besides, a certain unaccustomed and incomparable joy spread abroad in my heart, which of a sudden consoles me in a wonderful way, and so greatly gladdens me that I can remember sadness no more, labour no more. Aye! and the load, albeit heavy, which I am carrying on my back from this place until we come to the monastery, is so much lightened, how I know not, that I do not feel that I am bearing any burden."

4 What more shall I say? So all the harvest workers one by one declare, each one for himself, that they had felt exactly as this one of them who had first spoken, and one and all together on bended knees besought St. Baithene that he would let them know, ignorant as they were, the cause and origin of that wondrous consolation which he himself felt just as the rest perceived it.

4.2 To whom, thereupon, he gave this answer saying: "Ye know that our senior, Columba, mindful of our toil, thinks anxiously about us and grieves that we come to him so late; and by reason that he comes not in body to meet us, his spirit meets our steps, and that it is which so much consoles and makes us glad."

4.3 And hearing these words, still kneeling, with great joy and with hands spread out to heaven, they venerate Christ in the holy and blessed man.

5 But we ought not to be silent as to what has confidently been handed down by some who have put it to the test concerning the voice of the blessed man in chanting the Psalms.

5.2 For the voice of the venerable man, chanting with the Brethren in the church, was lifted up in a wonderful manner and sometimes heard for four furlongs, that is 500 paces; sometimes indeed for eight furlongs, that is a mile.

5.3 Wonderful to relate! yet in the ears of those who were standing with him in the church the pitch of his voice did not exceed the compass of the human voice. But nevertheless at the same hour, those who were standing more than a mile off heard the same voice so clearly that they could distinguish every separate syllable of the verses which he was singing: for his voice sounded alike in the ears of those who heard it near at hand and those who heard it from afar.

6 But this miracle of the voice of the blessed man is not known to have happened continually, but rarely; which, however, without the grace of the Divine Spirit, could by no means have happened at all.

7 But we must not be silent concerning what is said once to have happened as regards this incomparable elevation of his voice near the fortress of King Brude. For while the Saint himself, with a few brethren, was celebrating according to custom the Vesper praises of God outside the King's fortress, certain Magi [Druids] approaching them did all they could to prevent the sound of Divine praise being heard from their mouth among the heathen people.

7.2 On this becoming known, the Saint began to chant the forty-fourth psalm, and in a marvellous manner his voice was at that moment so lifted up into the air, like terrible thunder, that both King and people were affrighted with fear intolerable.

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38 — CONCERNING A CERTAIN RICH MAN WHO WAS CALLED LUGUD CLODUS

✦

1 At another time, when the Saint was staying in Scotia [Ireland] for some days, seeing another cleric sitting in a car, who was gaily driving over the Plain of Breg, after first inquiring about him who he was, he received this reply concerning him from the man's friends: “This is Lugud Clodus, a man rich and honoured among the people.”

1.2 The Saint, thereupon answering, says: “Not so do I see him, but as a wretched and poor fellow. On the day on which he will die he will be retaining at his dwelling, in a walled pound, three stray cattle of his neighbours, and of these he will order one choice cow to be slain for himself, and will ask for some part of its flesh to be cooked and given him, he lying the while in a couch of shame and sin. From which portion, as soon as he takes a bite, he will thereon be immediately choked, and die.”

2 All which things, as is handed down by well-informed persons, were fulfilled according to the Saint's prophetic saying.

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39 — PROPHECY OF THE SAINT CONCERNING NEMAN, SON OF GRUTHRICHE

✦

1 Now, therefore, when the Saint corrected Neman for his evil deeds, thinking lightly of the Saint he mocked him. And replying to him, the blessed man says: “In the Name of the Lord, Neman, I will speak some words of truth concerning thee. Thine enemies shall find thee lying in the same bed with a harlot, and there shalt thou be slain. Demons also will carry off thy soul to the places of punishments.”

1.2 This same Neman being found after some years in a couch of shame, in the district of Cainle, perished, beheaded by his enemies, according to the Saint's word.

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40 — PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN CONCERNING A CERTAIN PRIEST

✦

1 At another time the Saint, when he was staying in the district of the Scots [Irish], mentioned a little above, by chance came on the Lord's Day to a certain little neighbouring monastery which is called in Irish, Trioit.

1.2 The same day, hearing a presbyter celebrating the Holy Mysteries of the Eucharist — one whom the Brethren who lived there had chosen to perform the Solemnities of the Mass because they deemed him to be very religious, he suddenly utters from his mouth this fearful speech: “Clean things and unclean are now found mingled together; that is, the clean mysteries of the Holy Sacrifice are offered by an unclean man, who, meantime, is hiding in his conscience a certain great crime.”

1.3 Those who were present hearing this, stood amazed, greatly terrified. But he of whom these words were said was compelled to confess his fault in the presence of all.

2 And the fellow soldiers of Christ, who stood around in the church and heard the Saint making manifest the secrets of the heart, with great wonder glorified the Divine knowledge that was in him.

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41 — PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN CONCERNING ERC MOCUDRUIDI, A ROBBER, WHO DWELT IN THE ISLAND COLOSO

✦

1 At another time the Saint, dwelling in the isle of Iona, called two of the Brethren to him, whose names were Lugbe and Silnan, and giving them instructions, he said: "Pass over, now, to the Malean Isle [Mull], and in the fields near the sea seek out the robber Erc, who, last night, came alone secretly from the island Coloso [Colonsay], and tries through the day to hide himself under his boat, covering it with hay among the sandhills, so that by night he may sail over to the little island where the sea calves, ours by right, are bred and breed; that, greedy and very thievish as he is, he may fill his boat with them after savagely killing them, and go back to his dwelling." And they hearing these words, obediently go forth and find the robber hidden in the places indicated by the Saint, and as he had directed them they brought him to the Saint.

2 And on seeing him the Saint says to him: "Why dost thou transgress the Divine command and often steal the goods of others? When thou art in want, come to us, and thou shalt receive the necessaries thou dost ask for." And saying these words, he ordered sheep to be killed and to be given to the wretched thief in place of the seals, lest he should return empty to his dwelling.

2.2 And after some time the Saint, foreseeing in spirit that the death of the robber was at hand, sends to Baithene, at that time dwelling as prelate in the Plain of Lunge, to send to that same thief a fat sheep and six pecks of corn as a last gift.

2.3 When these were sent over by Baithene, as the Saint had directed, on that day the wretched robber was found to have been overtaken by sudden death, and the presents sent over were used at his funeral.

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42 — PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN CONCERNING CRONAN, A BARD

✦

1 Another time, when the Saint was sitting one day with the Brothers near Lough Key, at the mouth of the river called in Latin Bos [Boyle], a certain Irish bard came to them, and when after some conversation he had gone away the Brothers say to the Saint: "When Cronan the bard was going away from us, why didst thou not ask him for some song to be tunefully sung after the manner of his art?"

1.2 And the Saint says to them: "Wherefore do ye also now utter useless words? How could I ask for a song of joy from that unfortunate fellow, who even now, killed by his enemies, has come so soon to the end of life?"

1.3 No sooner had the Saint said these words, than behold from over the river a certain man shouts, saying: "That bard, who just returned safely from you, has in this very hour been slain by his enemies in the way."

2 Then all who were present, greatly wondering, looked upon one another in amazement.

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43 — A PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN AS TO TWO CHIEFTAINS, WHO DIED OF WOUNDS MUTUALLY INFLICTED

✦

1 Again, at another time, the Saint, while living in the isle of Iona, on a sudden, in the course of his reading, in great amazement sighed with a sorrowful sigh. Seeing which, Lugbe Mocublai, who was there present, began to ask of him the cause of his sudden grief.

1.2 To whom the Saint, greatly sorrowing, gave this answer: "Two men of royal race in Ireland have just perished, pierced by wounds mutually inflicted, not far from the monastery which is called Cellrois, in the province of the Maugdorni; and on the eighth day, that is this day week, another man coming from Ireland will shout across the Sound, and will tell that these deeds have actually happened. But, O my little son, tell this to no man so long as I shall live." On the eighth day, accordingly, there was shouting over the Sound.

2 Then the Saint, calling to him Lugbe, above mentioned, quietly says to him: "He who is now shouting over the Sound is he of whom I spoke to thee before; an aged traveller he is; go and bring him to us." And he, being quickly brought, related among other things this also, saying: "Two men of noble birth, in the district of the Maugdorni, inflicting wounds on one another, have died; namely Colman, the Hound, son of Ailen, and Ronan, son of Aedh, son of Colga, of the race of the Anteriores, near the bounds of those places where is to be seen that monastery which is called Cellrois."

3 After these words were spoken, the same Lugbe, soldier of Christ, began to question the Saint apart, saying: “Tell me, I beseech thee, about these so wonderful prophetic revelations, how they are manifested to thee, if by sight or by hearing, or in some other manner unknown to men.”

3.2 To these words the Saint replies: “Concerning this very subtle matter of which thou now askest, I shall not be able to give thee any, even the very least intimation, unless, first, on bended knees, thou wilt strictly promise me, in the name of the Most High God, that thou wilt communicate this most secret mystery to no man whatever all the days of my life.”

3.3 And he, then, hearing these words, immediately knelt down, and with face flat on the ground fully promised everything, according to the Saint's command.

4 And this promise being promptly given, the Saint says to him as he rises: “Some there are, though very few, to whom Divine grace has granted this: that they can clearly and most distinctly see, at one and the same moment, as though under one ray of the sun, even the entire circuit of the whole world with its surroundings of ocean and sky, the inmost part of their mind being marvellously enlarged.”

5 Although the Saint seems to relate this miracle as if it referred to others of the Elect, avoiding vain glory in every way, yet that, albeit indirectly, he was speaking of himself, no one ought to doubt who reads Paul the Apostle, that chosen vessel, when he speaks of such visions revealed to himself.

5.2 For he did not write thus: “I know myself”, but: “I know a man caught up to the third heaven.” Which, although he seems to say it of another, yet no one doubts that, watchful over his humility, he thus speaks

of his own person.

6 And him also our own Columba followed in the above-mentioned account of spiritual visions, which the aforesaid man, whom the Saint much loved, could scarcely draw from him after urgent entreaties; as he himself, after the passing of St. Columba, bore witness in the presence of other holy men, from whom, nothing doubting, we have faithfully learned these things above related concerning the Saint.

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44 — CONCERNING CRONAN, A BISHOP

✦

1 At another time a certain stranger from the province of the Munimenses [Munster Men] came to the Saint, and in humility he disguised himself as much as he could, so that no one might know that he was a Bishop; but yet this could not be hidden from the Saint.

1.2 For the next Lord's Day, being bidden by the Saint to consecrate Christ's Body according to custom, he calls the Saint so that, as two priests, they may break the Lord's Bread together.

1.3 The Saint thereupon, going up to the Altar, suddenly looking on his face thus addresses him: “Christ bless thee, Brother, break this bread alone with the episcopal rite, now we know that thou art a Bishop. Why hast thou hitherto tried so far to disguise thyself that the veneration due to thee by us might not be rendered?”

2 And when the humble guest had heard this word of the Saint he was greatly astonished, and revered Christ in the Saint; and those who were there present, greatly marvelling, glorified the Lord.

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45 — PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN CONCERNING ERNAN, A PRIEST

✦

1 Again, at another time, the venerable man sent over Ernan, a priest, an old man, his uncle, to the presidency of that monastery which he had founded in Hinba island many years before. And so when the Saint kissed and blessed him on his departure, he uttered this prophecy concerning him, saying: "I do not expect to see again alive in this world this my friend now departing."

1.2 Accordingly the same Ernan, not many days afterwards afflicted by some ailment, was at his own desire carried back to the Saint, who, greatly rejoicing at his coming, started to meet him at the haven. Ernan himself, although with faltering footsteps, was attempting with joyous activity to walk from the landing place to meet the Saint.

2 But when there was between the two a space of about twenty-four paces, he was overtaken by sudden death before the Saint could look upon his face in life, and fell to earth breathing his last; lest the word of the Saint should in any way be made void. Wherefore in the same place, before the door of the kiln, a cross has been fixed; and another cross stands to-day fixed in like manner where the Saint stood when he (Ernan) died.

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46 — A PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN CONCERNING A CERTAIN PEASANT'S LITTLE FAMILY

✦

1 At another time also a certain peasant came among others to the Saint, then staying in the district which is called in Irish Coire Salchain; and when the Saint saw him coming to him in the evening he says, "Where dost thou dwell?"

1.2 "I dwell," says he, "in the district which borders upon the shores of the lake Crogreth." "Barbarous marauders are now harrying that little province of which thou speakest," says the Saint. On hearing which the unhappy peasant began to weep for his wife and children.

1.3 And the Saint, seeing him greatly sorrowing, consoling him says: "Go, my good man, go; all thy little family has fled to the mountain and escaped; but indeed the invaders have driven off with them all thy little herd, and likewise cruel robbers have carried off all thy household goods among their booty."

2 Hearing this, the peasant returned to his country, and found all things had happened just as predicted by the Saint.

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47 — A PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN CONCERNING A CERTAIN PEASANT, GUIRE BY NAME, SON OF AEDHAN

✦

1 At another time, again, a certain peasant, the bravest of all the men of that time among the people of Korkureti, makes inquiry of the holy man by what death he is to be overtaken. To whom the Saint says: “Not in battle, nor on the sea wilt thou die; the companion of thy journeyings, of whom thou hast no suspicion, will be the cause of thy death.”

1.2 “Perchance”, says Guire, “some of my companion-friends may design to slay me; or my wife, for love of some younger man, may do me to death by foul play.” “Not thus will it happen”, says the Saint.

1.3 “Wherefore”, says Guire, “art thou unwilling to inform me now as to my slayer?” The Saint says: “I am unwilling to tell thee anything more plainly now concerning that thy baneful companion, for this reason: lest the frequent remembrance of it should sadden thee too much until the day comes in which thou shalt prove the truth of the thing.”

2 Why delay we with words? After the passing of a few years, the same Guire above mentioned, sitting one day by chance beneath a boat, was smoothing down the point of his spear shaft with his own knife; when, hearing others fighting among themselves near by, he quickly gets up to part them from their fighting, and unwarily letting fall the same knife on the ground, in that sudden emergency he stumbled and his knee was severely gashed.

2.2 And this kind of companion [namely, his knife] so acting, the cause of his death became manifest; whereupon he himself was greatly struck in his mind, and at once recognised the fact, according to the holy man's prophecy. And after some months he dies from the effect of that wound.

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48 — THE HOLY MAN'S AGREEABLE FOREKNOWLEDGE CONCERNING ANOTHER MATTER, WHICH, ALTHOUGH OF MINOR IMPORTANCE, SHOULD NOT BE PASSED OVER IN SILENCE

✦

1 For at another time, when the Saint was living in the isle of Iona, calling one of the Brethren to him, he thus addresses him: “On the third day from this now dawning, thou must keep a look out in the western part of this isle, sitting on the sea-shore: for from the northern region of Ireland a certain guest, a crane, driven by the winds through long, circling aerial flights, will arrive very weary and fatigued after the ninth hour of the day; and its strength almost exhausted, it will fall and lie before thee on the shore, and thou wilt take care to lift it up kindly and carry it to a neighbouring house, and there wilt hospitably harbour it and attend to it for three days and three nights, and carefully feed it; at the end of the three days, refreshed, and unwilling to sojourn longer with us, it will return with fully regained strength to the sweet region of Ireland whence it originally came.

2 And I thus earnestly commend it to thee for that it came from the place of our own fatherland.”

3 The Brother obeys, and on the third day after the ninth hour, as commanded, he awaits the coming of the expected guest; and, when it comes, he raises it from the shore where it fell; carries it, weak as it was, to the hospice; feeds it in its hunger.

3.2 And to him, on his return to the monastery in the evening, the Saint, not by way of inquiry, but of statement, says: “God bless thee, my son, because thou hast well attended our stranger guest; and it will not tarry long in exile, but after three days will return to its country.” And, just as the Saint predicted, the event also proved.

3.3 For having been harboured for three days, raising itself on high by flight from the ground in presence of its ministering host, and considering for a little while its course in the air, it returned across the ocean to Ireland in a straight line of flight, on a calm day.

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49 — THE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF THE BLESSED MAN CONCERNING THE BATTLE FOUGHT MANY YEARS AFTER AT THE FORTRESS OF CETHIRN, AND CONCERNING A CERTAIN WELL NEAR THAT PLACE

✦

1 At another time, after the Convention of the Kings at the Ridge of Ceate, namely Aedh, son of Ainmire, and Aidan, son of Gabran, the blessed man was returning to the ocean plains, he and the abbot Comgell sit down, not far from the above-mentioned fortress, on a certain calm fine day in the summer time.

1.2 Then water for the washing of their hands was brought to the Saints in a brazen vessel from a certain little fountain near by. And when St. Columba had received it, he thus speaks to the abbot Comgell, who sat at his side: "The day will come, O Comgell, when that little spring, from which the water now poured out has been brought to us, will not be fit for any human uses." "By what cause", says Comgell, "will the water of this spring be corrupted?"

2 Then St. Columba says: "Because it will be filled with human gore; for my kith and kin and thy relations according to the flesh, that is the Hy-Neill and the people of the Cruithni, will wage war fighting in this neigh-

bouring fortress of Cethirn. Whence it will come about that in the aforesaid spring some poor fellow of my kindred will be slain with the rest, and with his blood the basin of the same spring will be filled."

3 And after many years this true prophecy of his was fulfilled in due time. And in that battle, as many people know, Domhnall, son of Aedh, came off victorious, and in the same spring, according to the holy man's prophecy, a certain man of his race was slain.

4 Another soldier of Christ, Finan by name, who for many years blamelessly led the life of an anchorite, near the monastery of Oakwood Plain, relating some things about the same battle, fought in his presence, declared to me, Adamnan, that he saw a dead body in the aforesaid spring, and that on the same day, on his return after the battle to the monastery of St.

4.2 Comgell, which is called in Irish Cambas (whence he had set out), he there found two aged monks of St. Comgell, to whom, when he had narrated certain things concerning the battle fought in his presence and concerning the spring corrupted with human gore, they at once say: "A true prophet is Columba, who, as he sat near the fortress of Cethirn, announced many years beforehand in our hearing, in the presence of St. Comgell, that all these things, now fulfilled, which thou tellest of the battle and of the spring, would come to pass."

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50 — How by Divine Grace the Holy Man was inspired to discriminate between different tribute gifts

✦

1 At the same time Conall, Bishop in Coleraine, collected gifts of homage almost numberless from the people of the Plain of Eilne, and prepared a hospitable reception for the blessed man on his return, with a great multitude in his train, from the Convention of the above-mentioned kings.

1.2 Then the numerous gifts of the people are laid out in the courtyard of the monastery for the holy man to bless them on his arrival. And when he was looking at them, blessing them the while, specially indicating the gift of a certain rich man, "The mercy of God," he says, "attends the man whose gift this is, for his pity for the poor and his liberality."

1.3 And he also points out another present, among many others, saying, "Of this gift of a sage, who is also avaricious, I can in no wise taste, unless first he does true penance for the sin of avarice."

2 On hearing this saying, which was quickly circulated among the crowd, Columb, son of Aedh, conscience-struck runs up, and does penance before the Saint on bended knees, and promises that he will henceforth renounce avarice, and that he will practise bounty and mend his ways. And, bidden by the Saint to rise, he was from that hour cured of the vice of niggardliness.

2.2 For he was a sage, as had been revealed to the Saint through his gift. But that rich and liberal man, Brendan by name, of whose gift mention has been made a little above, also hearing the Saint's words concerning himself, kneeling down at the Saint's feet prays that the Saint will pour forth prayer for him to the Lord.

2.3 And he, after being first reproved by him for certain of his sins, being penitent, promised to amend thenceforth. And so each one was amended and cured of his sins.

3 With like insight the Saint also, at another time, recognised the gift of a certain grasping man, Diormit by name, among many gifts brought together against his arrival at the Great Cell Deathrib.

4 Let it suffice to have written in the text of this first book these things concerning the prophetic grace of the blessed man, being a few out of many. Few, I said, for there is no doubt in the case of the venerable man that many more were the secrets hidden within which could in no wise come to the knowledge of men, than those which, like some little tricklings, oozed out as it were through cracks in some vessel full of strongly fermenting new wine.

4.2 For holy and apostolic men, shunning vain glory, are usually, and as far as they can be, quick to conceal certain secrets manifested to them inwardly by God. But God divulges some of these, whether they themselves will or no, and in some way brings them out, willing to honour the Saint who honours Him, that is the Lord Himself, to whom be glory for ever and ever.

5 Here, then, a close is put to this first book.

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