



ANCIENT IRELAND

The Visible and Invisible

*Her structures older than the pyramids,
Revealed as we peel back the layers of time,
Part of Europe but set apart,
Reaching out beyond her shores to the far corners of
the earth.*

The Seen and the Unseen

Ancient Ireland, as old, and often older than many ancient structures found throughout the world, reveals herself through her landscape, transcended by the fabric of time. Consider the following mental image as you immerse your thoughts and reflect upon the appearance of Ireland:

The sea gradually rises around her coasts, until the waters, hundreds of fathoms deep, close in upon the land. Of all Ireland, there, visible above the waves are two great armies of islands, facing each other obliquely across a channel of open sea. These two armies of islands lie in ordered ranks, stretching from northeast to southwest, equal in size, each two hundred miles along the front, and seventy miles from front to rear. The open sea between, which divides the two armies, measures seventy miles across.

As these islands lie thus obliquely facing each other, none will rise as high as three thousand feet; only the captains among them will exceed a thousand. As to their form, you will find no great variety among them. All the islands, whether north or south, will have gently rounded backs, clothed in pastures nearly to their crest, with garments of purple heather lying under the sky along their ridges. Yet for all this roundness of outline there will be, towards the Atlantic end of either army, a growing sternness of their aspect, more of a somber ruggedness in the outline of their hills, with cliffs and steep ravines setting their brows frowning against the deep blue Atlantic.

Hold in your mind the image of these two obliquely ranged archipelagoes, their length three times their breadth, seaming the blue of the sea, and garmented in dark green and purple under the sunshine. Holding this thought, picture in your mind a new rising of the land, a new withdrawal of the waters, the waves crashing and falling, until the hills come forth again, and the salt tides roll and ripple away from the valleys, leaving their faces for the winds to dry. This continues until the land once more takes its familiar form, and you will easily call up the visible image of the whole.

As you stand centered on the land, where first lay the channel of open sea, you will have, on your northern horizon, the beginning of a world of purple-outlined hills, outliers of the northern mountain region, covering the upper third of the island. On all sides around you, from the eastern sea to the western ocean, you will see the great central plain, dappled with lakes and ribbed with silver rivers, another third of the island. Then once more, to the south, you will have a region of hills, the last third of Ireland, in size just equal to the northern mountains or the central plain.

The forms of the ancient goddess, Fódla, representing the parts of the land appear as the lines of the northern hills begin with the basalt buttresses of Antrim and the granite ribs of Down, and pass through northern Ulster and Connacht to the headlands of Mayo and Galway. Their rear is held by the Donegal ranges, keeping guard against the blackness of the northern seas. The plain opens from the verge of

these hills. The waters that gather on pleasant pastures and fields, or among the green moss tracts of her lowlands, flow eastward via the Boyne River, or southwestward via the mighty Shannon to the sea.

From the granite mountains of Dublin and Wicklow begin the southern hills, stretching through south Leinster and Munster to the red sandstone ridges of Cork and Kerry, our last vantage point against the great expanse of the Atlantic, where so many of Ireland's children ventured forth to America, never to see their homeland again.

Finally, encircling all, is the perpetual presence of the sea, with its foaming, thunderous life or its days of dreamy peace; around the silver sands or furrowed cliffs that gird the island our white waves rush forever, murmuring the music of eternity.

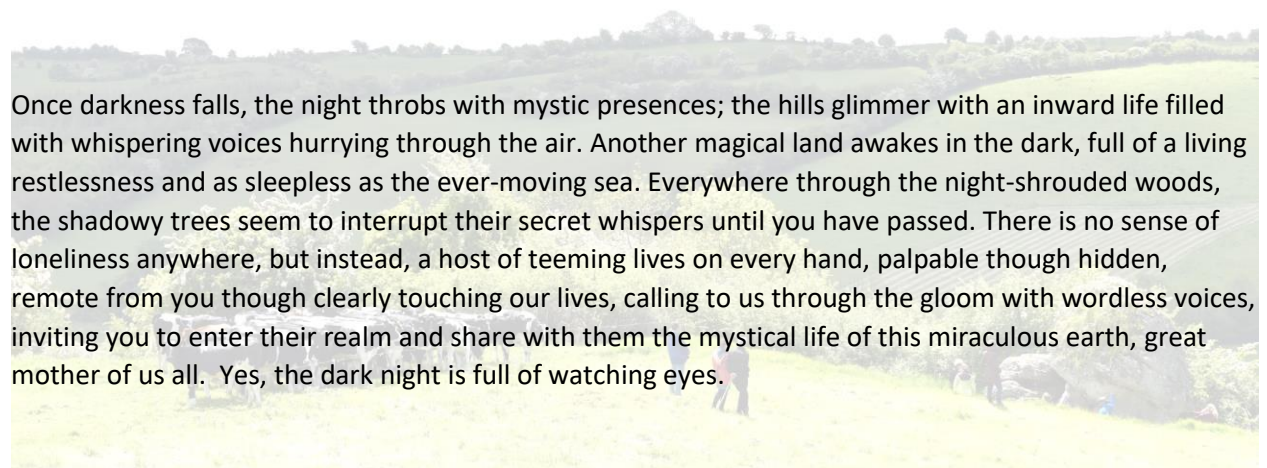
This is this land of Eiré, ancient, yet full of perpetual youth; a thousand times darkened by sorrow, yet with a heart of living gladness. Often visited by evil and cruel death, yet forever welling up in unconquerable life. This is the youth, life and gladness that thrill through earth, air and sky, when the whole world grows beautiful in the front of Spring.

In Ireland, Spring is like the making of a new world in the dawn of time. Under the warm wind's caressing breath, the grass comes forth upon the meadows and the hills, chasing away the darkness of winter. Every field is newly vested in young corn or the olive greenness of wheat; the smell of the earth is full of sweetness. White daisies and yellow dandelions star all her pastures; and on the green ruggedness of every hillside, or along the shadowed banks of every river and every silver stream, amid velvet mosses and fringes of new-born ferns, in a million nooks and crannies throughout all the land, are strewn dark violets; and wreaths of yellow primroses with crimped green leaves pour forth a remote and divine fragrance; above them, the larches are dainty with new greenery and rosy tassels, and the young leaves of beech and oak quiver with fresh life.

The benignancy of Spring pours down upon us from the sky, till the darkening fields are hemmed in between barriers of white hawthorn, heavy with nectar, and twined with creamy honeysuckle, the fingertips of every blossom are coral red. The living blue above her throbs with the tremulous song of innumerable larks; the measured chant of cuckoos awakens the woods; and through the thickets a whole world's gladness sings itself forth from the throat of thrush and blackbird. Through the whole land between the four seas blessings are everywhere; blue-bells and the rosy fingers of heath deck the mountaintops, where the grouse are crooning to each other; down the hillsides into every valley pour gladness and greenness and song; there are flowers everywhere, even to the very verge of the whispering sea. There, among the gray bent-spikes and brackens on the sandhills, primroses weave their yellow wreaths; and little pansies, golden and blue and purple, marshal their weird eyes against the spears of dark blue hyacinths, till the rich tribute of wild thyme makes peace between them.

The blue sky overhead, with its flocks of sunlit clouds, softly bends over the gentle bosom of the earth. The living spirit of Éríú, the goddess from whom Ireland draws her name, throbs everywhere. Palpable, audible, full of sweetness and sadness immeasurable, a sadness that is only a more secret joy waiting for you to discover.

The day grows weary, making way for the magic of evening and the oncoming dark with its mystery. The tree stems redden with the sunset; there is a chill sigh in the wind; the leaves turn before it, burnished against the purple sky. As the gloom rises out of the earth, bands of dark red gather on the horizon, seaming the clear bronze of the sky, passing upward into an olive color, merging with dark blue overhead. The sun swings down behind the hills, and purple darkness comes down out of the sky; the red fades from the tree-stems, the cloud-colors die away; the whole world glimmers with the fading whiteness of twilight. Silence gathers itself together out of the dark, deepened, not broken, by the hushing of the wind among the beech leaves, or the startled cluck of a blackbird, or a wood-pigeon's soft murmur, as it dreams in the silver fir.



Once darkness falls, the night throbs with mystic presences; the hills glimmer with an inward life filled with whispering voices hurrying through the air. Another magical land awakes in the dark, full of a living restlessness and as sleepless as the ever-moving sea. Everywhere through the night-shrouded woods, the shadowy trees seem to interrupt their secret whispers until you have passed. There is no sense of loneliness anywhere, but instead, a host of teeming lives on every hand, palpable though hidden, remote from you though clearly touching our lives, calling to us through the gloom with wordless voices, inviting you to enter their realm and share with them the mystical life of this miraculous earth, great mother of us all. Yes, the dark night is full of watching eyes.

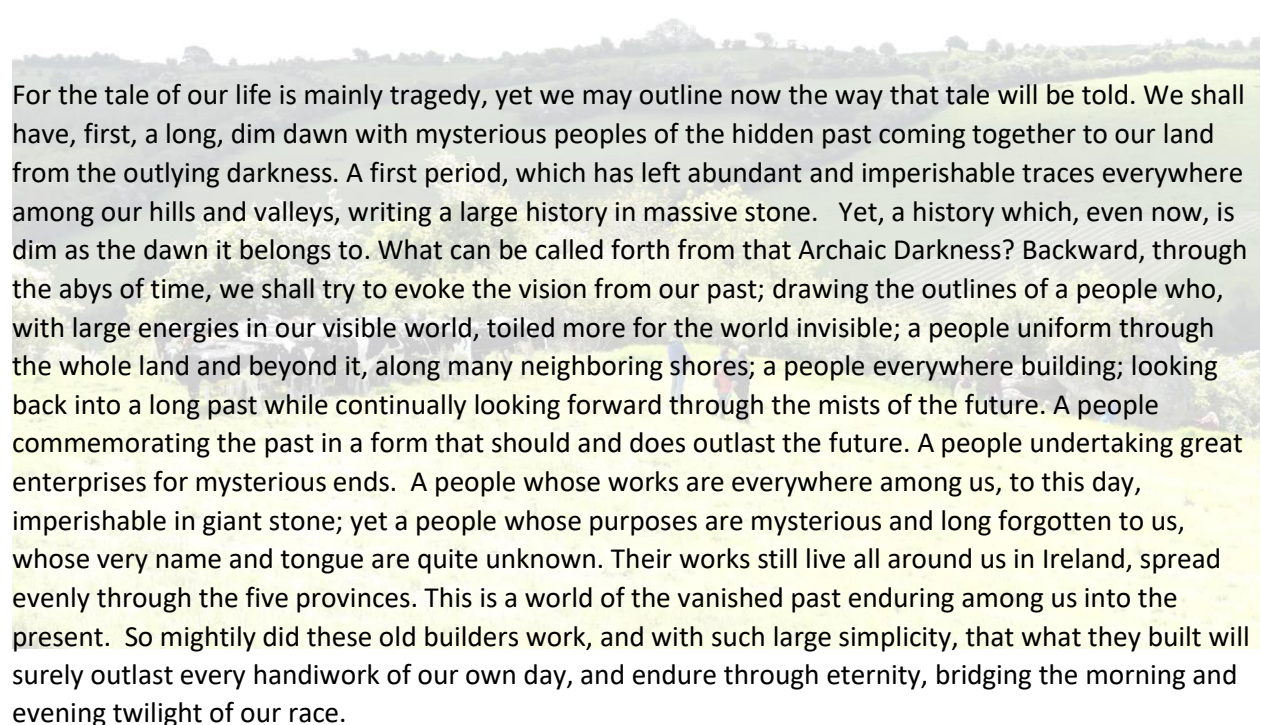
Summer is but a brighter Spring, just as Winter only prolongs the sadness of Autumn. So, Ireland's year has but two moods, a gay one and a sad one. Yet each influences the other; the mists of Autumn veiling the gleam of Spring. Spring smiling through the grief of Autumn. When the sad mood comes, stripping the trees of their leaves, and the fields of their greenness, white mists veil the hills and brood among the fading valleys. A shiver runs through the air, and the cold branches are starred with tears. A poignant grief is hangs over the land, an almost desolation, full of unspoken sorrow, tongue-tied with unuttered complaint. All the world is lost and forlorn, without hope or respite. Everything is given up to the dirges of the moaning seas, the white shrouds of weeping mist. Wander forth upon the uplands and among the lonely hills and rock-seamed sides of the mountains, and you will find the same sadness everywhere: a grieving world under a grieving sky. Quiet desolation hides among the hills, tears tremble on every brown grass-blade, white mists of melancholy shut out the lower world.

Whoever has not felt the poignant sadness of the leafless days has never known the real Ireland; the sadness that is present, though veiled, in the green bravery of Spring, and under the songs of Summer.

Nor have they ever known the real Ireland who have not divined beneath that poignant sadness a heart of joy, deep and perpetual, made only keener by that sad outward show.

Here in Ireland's visible life is a whisper and hint of her life invisible; of secrets that run through and interpret so much of her history. For very much of our nation's life has been like the sadness of those autumn days; a tale of torn leaves, broken branches, and of tears everywhere. Tragedy upon tragedy has filled our land with woe and sorrow, and, as we mortals count success, we have failed of it, and received only misery and deprivation. One has never known the true Ireland who does not feel that woe. Yet, more, one knows not the real Ireland who cannot feel within that woe the heart of power and joy; of a strong life, outlasting darkest night. The soul that throbs incessantly under all the calamities of the visible world, throughout the long tragedy of Ireland's history.

This is Ireland's secret: the life that is in sorrow as in joy; the power that is not more in success than in failure. The one soul whose moods these are, who uses and experiences equally life and death.



For the tale of our life is mainly tragedy, yet we may outline now the way that tale will be told. We shall have, first, a long, dim dawn with mysterious peoples of the hidden past coming together to our land from the outlying darkness. A first period, which has left abundant and imperishable traces everywhere among our hills and valleys, writing a large history in massive stone. Yet, a history which, even now, is dim as the dawn it belongs to. What can be called forth from that Archaic Darkness? Backward, through the abys of time, we shall try to evoke the vision from our past; drawing the outlines of a people who, with large energies in our visible world, toiled more for the world invisible; a people uniform through the whole land and beyond it, along many neighboring shores; a people everywhere building; looking back into a long past while continually looking forward through the mists of the future. A people commemorating the past in a form that should and does outlast the future. A people undertaking great enterprises for mysterious ends. A people whose works are everywhere among us, to this day, imperishable in giant stone; yet a people whose purposes are mysterious and long forgotten to us, whose very name and tongue are quite unknown. Their works still live all around us in Ireland, spread evenly through the five provinces. This is a world of the vanished past enduring among us into the present. So mightily did these old builders work, and with such large simplicity, that what they built will surely outlast every handiwork of our own day, and endure through eternity, bridging the morning and evening twilight of our race.

After this Archaic dawn, you will find a mingling of four races in Ireland, coming together from widely separated homes, unless one of the four be the descendant of a more ancient race, as well it may be. From the mingling of these four races we shall see, in almost prehistoric times, the growth of a well-knit polity; firm principalities founded, strong battles fought, a lasting foundation of law. In this Second Epoch, everything that in the first was dim and vague grows firm in your mind as it is well defined. Names, places, persons, we know them all as if they were of today. This is the age which flowered in the heroic days of Emain of Maca, Emain 'neath the beech-trees, the citadel of northeastern Ireland. Here

we shall find the court of Fergus mac Roeg, a man too valiant, too passionate, too generous to rule altogether wisely; his star darkened by the gloomy genius of Concobar his stepson, the evil lover of ill-fated Deirdré. Cuculain, too, the war-loving son of Sualtam, shall rise again, in whom one part of our national genius finds its perfect flower. We shall hear the thunder of his chariot, at the Battle of the Headland of the Kings, when Meave the winsome and crafty queen of Connacht comes against him, holding in silken chains of her tresses the valiant spirit of Fergus. The whole life of that heroic epoch, still written large upon the face of the land, shall come forth clear and vivid. We shall stand by the threshold of Cuculain's dwelling, and move among the banquet halls of Emain of Maca. We shall look upon the hills and valleys that Meave and Deirdré looked upon, and hear the clash of spear and shield at the Ford of the river. You are amazed to discover this is possible still today, even though you must travel back two thousand years.

Following from here, a Third Epoch, where another side of Ireland's genius will write itself in epic across the land, with songs for every hillside, and stories for every vale and grove. Here your more passionate and poetic force will break forth in the lives of Find, son of Cumal, the lord of warriors; in his son Ossin, most famous bard of the western lands, and Ossin's son Oscar, before whose might even the fiends and sprites cowered back dismayed. As the epoch of Cuculain shows us our valor finding its apotheosis, so shall we find in Find and Ossin and Oscar the perfect flower of our genius for story and song; for romantic life and fine insight into nature; for keen wit and gentler humor. The love of nature, the passion for visible beauty, and chiefly the visible beauty of our land, will here show itself clearly. A sense of nature not merely sensuous, but thrilling with hidden and mystic life. We shall find such perfection in this more emotional and poetic side of Irish character as will leave little for coming ages to add. In these two early epochs, we shall see the perfecting of the natural man; the molding of rounded, gracious and harmonious lives, inspired with valor and the love of beauty and song.

If our human destiny stopped there, with the perfect life of individual men and women, we might well say that these two epochs of Ireland contain it all; that our whole race could go no further. For no person lived more valiantly than Cuculain, more generous than Fergus, more full of the fire of song than Ossin, son of Find. Nor amongst women were any sadder than Deirdré and Grania; craftier than Meave, more winsome than Nessa the mother of Concobar. Perfected flowers of human life all of them, if that be all of human life. So, were this all, we might well consent that with the death of Oscar our roll of history might close; there is nothing to add that the natural man could add.

But where the perfecting of the natural man ends, our truer human life begins the life of our ever-living soul. The natural man seeks victory; he seeks wealth and possessions and happiness; the love of women, and the loyalty of followers. But the natural man trembles in the face of defeat, of sorrow, of subjection; the natural man cannot raise the black veil of death.

Therefore, for the whole world and for our land there was needed another epoch, a far more difficult lesson, and one so remote from what had been of old, that even now we only begin to understand it. To

the Ireland that had seen the valor of Cuculain, that had watched the wars of Fergus, to the Ireland that listened to the deeds of Find and the songs of Ossin,--came the Evangel of Galilee, the darkest yet brightest message ever brought to the children of earth. If we rightly read that Evangel, it brought the doom of the natural man, and his supersession by the man immortal; it brought the death of our personal perfecting and pride, and the rising from the dead of the common soul, whereby a man sees another self in his neighbor; sees all alike in the one Divine.

Of this one Divine, wherein we all live and live forever, pain is no less the minister than pleasure; no, pain is more its minister, since pleasure has already given its message to the natural person. Of that one Divine, sorrow and desolation are the messengers, alike with joy and gladness; even more than joy and gladness, for the natural person has tasted these. Of that one Divine, black and mysterious death is the servant, not less than bright life; and life we had learned of old in the sunshine.

There came, therefore, to Ireland, as to a land cherished for enduring purposes, first the gentler side, and then the sterner, of the Galilean message. First, the epoch almost idyllic which followed after the mission of Patrick; the epoch of learning and teaching the simpler phrases of the Word. Churches and schools rose everywhere, taking the place of fort and embattled camp. Chants went up at morning and at evening, with the incense of prayer, and heaven seemed descended upon earth. Our land, which had stood so high in the ranks of valor and romance, now rose not less eminent for piety and fervid zeal, sending forth messengers and ministers of the glad news to the heathen lands of northern and central Europe, and planting refuges of religion within their savage bounds. Beauty came forth in stone and missal, answering to the beauty of life it was inspired by; and here, if anywhere upon earth through a score of centuries, was realized the ideal of that prayer for the kingdom, as in heaven, so on earth. Here, again, we have most ample memorials scattered all abroad throughout the land; we can call up the whole epoch, and make it stand visible before us, visiting every shrine and sacred place of that saintly time, seeing, with inner eyes, the footsteps of those who followed that path, first traced out by the shores of Gennesaret.

Once more, if the kingdom come upon earth were all of the message, we might halt here; for here forgiveness and gentle charity performed their perfect work, and learning was present with wise counsel to guide willing feet in the way. Yet this is not all; nor, if we rightly understand that darkest yet brightest message, are we or is mankind destined for such an earthly paradise; our kingdom is not of this world. Here was another happiness, another success; yet not in that happiness nor in that success was hid the secret; it lay far deeper. Therefore, we find that morning with its sunshine rudely clouded over, its promise swept away in the black darkness of storms. Something more than holy living remained to be learned; there remained the mystery of failure and death--that death which is the doorway to our real life. Therefore, upon our shores broke wave after wave of invasion, storm after storm of cruelest oppression and degradation. In the very dust was our race ground down, destitute, afflicted, tormented, according to prophecy and promise. Nor was that the end. Every bitterness that the heart of man can conceive, that the heart of man can inflict, that the heart of man can endure, was poured into our cup, and we drained it to the dregs. Of that saddest yet most potent time we shall record enough to show

not only what befell through our age of darkness, but also, so far as may be, what miraculous intent underlay it, what promise the darkness covered, of our future light; what golden rays of dawn were hidden in our gloom.

Finally, from all our fiery trials we shall see the genius of our land emerge, tried indeed by fire, yet having gained fire's purity; we shall see that genius beginning, as yet with halting speech, to utter its most marvelous secret of the soul of man. We shall try at least to gain clear sight of our great destiny, and thereby of the like destiny of the universal person.

You cannot doubt that what we have passed through, all men and women of all nations either have passed through already, or are to pass through in the time to come. There is but one divine law, one everlasting purpose and destiny for us all. And if we see other nations now entering that time of triumph which passed for us so long ago, that perfecting of the natural human being, with her valor and her song, we shall with fear and reverence remember that before them also lie the dark centuries of fiery trial; the long night of affliction, the vigils of humiliation and suffering. The divine entity has not yet laid aside the cup that holds the bitter ale, the drinking of which comes ever before the final gift when we receive the waters of life. What we have passed through, so shall they pass through; what we suffered, they too shall suffer. Well will it be with them if, like us, those other nations and peoples survive the fierce trial, rising again from the fire immortal, born again to the light through sacrifice.

In Ireland, you see a miraculous and divine history, a life and destiny invisible, lying hidden within her visible life. Like the throbbing presence of the night which whispers along the hills, this diviner whisper, this more miraculous and occult power, lurks in our apparent life. From the very gray of her morning, the children of Éirú were preoccupied with the invisible world; it was so, even in the darkest hours of our oppression and desolation; driven from this world, the children of Éirú took refuge in that; it was not the kingdom of heaven upon earth, but the children of earth seeking a refuge in heaven. The same note rings and echoes through all her history; you too can join us as we live in the invisible world. If you rightly understand your mission and your destiny, it is this: To restore to others the sense of that invisible; that world of your immortality; as of old our race went forth carrying the Galilean Evangel. We shall first learn, and then teach, that not with wealth can the soul of human beings be satisfied; that your enduring interest is not here but there, in the unseen, the hidden, the immortal, for whose purposes exist all the visible beauties of the world. If this be your mission and our purpose, well may this fair mysterious land deserve her name: Inis Fail, the Isle of Destiny.

The Great Stone Monuments

Westward from Sligo, Town of the River of Shell, -a tongue of land runs toward the sea between two long bays. Where the two bays join their waters, a mountain rises precipitous, its gray limestone rocks soaring sheer upwards, rugged and formidable. Within the shadow of the mountain is hidden a wonderful glen, a long tunnel between cliffs, densely arched over with trees and fringed with ferns. Even at midday full of a green gloom, it is a fitting gateway to the beauty and mystery of the mountain.

Slowly climbing by stony ways, the path reaches the summit, a rock table crowned with a pyramid of loose boulders, heaped up in olden days as a memorial of golden-haired Maeve. From the dead queen's pyramid a view of surpassing grandeur and beauty opens over sea and land, mingled valley and hill. The Atlantic stretches in illimitable blue, curved round the rim of the sky, a darker mirror of the blue above. It is full of throbbing silence and peace. Across blue fields of ocean, and facing the noonday brightness of the sun, rise the tremendous cliffs of Slieve League, gleaming with splendid colors through the shimmering air; broad bands of amber and orange barred with deeper red; the blue weaves beneath them and the green of the uplands above.



Slieve League

The vast amber wall rises out of the ocean, and passes eastward in a golden band till it merges in the Donegal highlands with their immeasurable blue. Sweeping round a wide bay, the land draws nearer again, the far-away blue darkening to purple, and then to green and brown. The sky is cut by the outlines of the Leitrim and Sligo hills, a row of rounded peaks against the blue, growing paler and more translucent in the southern distance.

Under the sun, there is a white glinting of lakes away across the plain, where brown and purple are blended with green in broad spaces of mingling color. To the west, the ground rises again into hills crowded behind each other, somber masses, for ages called the Mountains of Storms. Far beyond them, vague as blue cloud-wreaths in the blue, are the hills that guard our western ocean. From their sunset verges the land draws near again, in the long range of the Mayo cliffs, fierce walls of rock that bar the fiercer ocean from a wild world of storm-swept uplands. The cliffs gradually lessen, and their colors grow clearer, till they sink at last toward the sand-banks of Ballysadare, divided from us only by a channel of shallow sea.

The whole colored circle of sea and land, of moor and mountain, is full of the silence of intense and mighty power. The ocean is tremulous with the breath of life. The mountains, in their stately beauty, rise like immortals in the clear azure. The signs of our present works are dwarfed to insignificance.

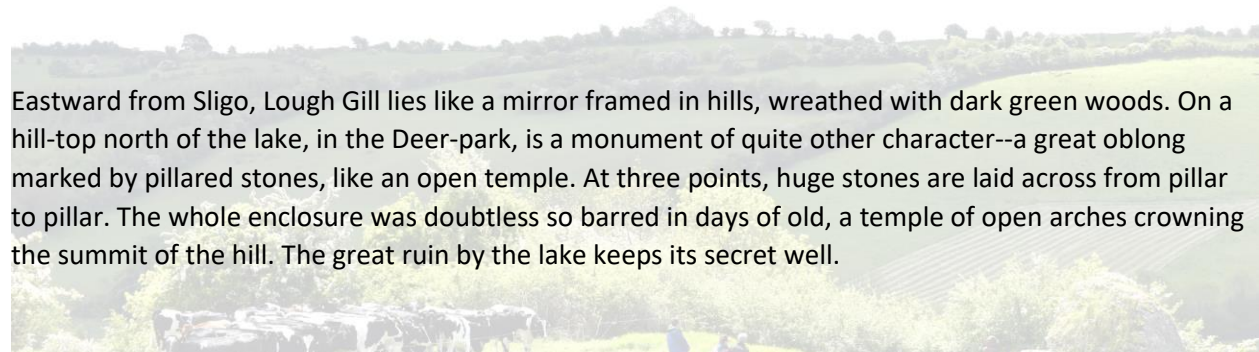
Everywhere within that wide world of hill and plain, and hardly less ancient than the hills themselves, are strewn memorials of another world that has vanished, sole survivors of a long-hidden past. A wordless history is written there, in giant circles of stone and cromlechs of piled blocks, so old that in a land of most venerable tradition their very legend has vanished away.

Close under us lies Carrowmore, with its labyrinth of cromlechs and stone circles, a very city of dead years. There is something awe-inspiring in the mere massiveness of these piled and ordered stones, the visible boundaries of invisible thoughts; that awe is deepened by the feeling of the tremendous power lavished in bringing them here, setting them up in their ordered groups, and piling the crowns of the cromlechs on other only less gigantic stones; awe gives place to overwhelming mystery when we can find no kinship to our own thoughts and aims in their stately grouping. We are in presence of archaic purposes recorded in a massive labyrinth, purposes darkly hidden from us in the unknown.

There are circles of huge boulders ranged at equal distances, firmly set upright in the earth. They loom vast, like beads of a giant necklace on the velvet grass. There are cromlechs set alone--a single huge boulder borne aloft in the air on three others of hardly less weight. There are cromlechs set in the midst of titanic circles of stone, with lesser boulders guarding the cromlechs closer at hand. There are circles beside circles rising in their grayness, with the grass and heather carpeting their aisles. There they rest in silence, with the mountain as their companion, and, beyond the mountain, the ever-murmuring sea.

Thus, they have kept their watch through long dark ages. When sunrise reddens them, their shadows stretch westward in bars of darkness over the burnished grass. From morning to midday, the shadows shrink, ever hiding from the sun; an army of wraiths, sprite-like able to grow gigantic or draw together into mere blots of darkness. When day declines, the shadows come forth again, joining ghostly hands from stone to stone, from circle to circle, under the sunset sky, and merging at last into the universal realm of night. Thus, they weave their web, inexorable as tireless Time.

There are more than threescore of these circles at Carrowmore, under Knocknarea. Yet Carrowmore is only one among many memorials of dead years within our horizon. At Abbey-quarter, within the town limits of Sligo itself, there is another great ring of boulders, the past and the present mingling together. On the northern coast, across the Bay of Sligo, where the headland of Streedagh juts forth into the sea, there is another giant necklace of gray blocks ranged upon the moor. Farther along the shore, where Bundoran marks the boundary of Donegal, a cromlech and a stone circle rise among the sand-banks. All have the same rugged and enduring massiveness, all are wrapped in the same mystery.



Eastward from Sligo, Lough Gill lies like a mirror framed in hills, wreathed with dark green woods. On a hill-top north of the lake, in the Deer-park, is a monument of quite other character--a great oblong marked by pillared stones, like an open temple. At three points, huge stones are laid across from pillar to pillar. The whole enclosure was doubtless so barred in days of old, a temple of open arches crowning the summit of the hill. The great ruin by the lake keeps its secret well.

Another ring of giant stones rests on a hillside across the lake, under the Cairn hill, with its pyramid crown. All these are within easy view from our first vantage-point on Knocknarea, yet they are but the outposts of an army which spreads everywhere throughout the land. They are as common in wild and inaccessible places as on the open plain. Some rise in lonely islands off the coast; others on the summits of mountains; yet others in the midst of tilled fields. They bear no relation at all to the land as it is to-day. The very dispersion of these great stone monuments, scattered equally among places familiar or wild, speaks of a remote past--a past when all places were alike wild, or all alike familiar.

Where the gale-swept moors of Achill Island rise up toward the slope of Slievemore Mountain, there are stone circles and cromlechs like the circles of Carrowmore. The wild storms of the Atlantic rush past them, and the breakers roar under their cliffs. The moorland round the towering mountain is stained with ochre and iron under a carpet of heather rough as the ocean winds.

Away to the south from Slievemore the horizon is broken by an army of mountains, beginning with the Twelve Peaks of Connemara. Eastward of these hills are spread the great Galway lakes; eastward of these a wide expanse of plain. This is the famous Moytura of traditional history, whose story we shall

presently tell. Ages ago a decisive battle was fought there; but ages before the battle, if we are not greatly misled, the stone circles of the plain were already there. Tradition says that these circles numbered seven in the beginning, but only two remain unbroken.

Between Galway Bay and the wide estuary of the Shannon spread the moorlands of Clare, bleak under Atlantic gales, with never a tree for miles inward from the sea. Like a watch-tower above the moorlands stand. Slieve Callan, the crown of the mountain abruptly shorn. Under the shoulder of the great hill, with the rolling moorlands all about it, stands a solitary cromlech; formed of huge flat stones, it was at first a roomy chamber shut in on all four sides, and roofed by a single enormous block; the ends have fallen, so that it is now an open tunnel formed of three huge stones.

The coast runs southward from the Shannon to the strand of Tralee, the frontier of the southern mountain world, where four ranges of red sandstone thrust themselves forth towards the ocean, with long fiords running inland between them. On a summit of the first of these red ranges, Caherconree above Tralee strand, there is a stone circle, massive, gigantic, dwelling in utter solitude.

We have recorded a few only out of many of these great stone monuments strewn along our Atlantic coast, whether on moor or cliff or remote mountain-top.

There are others as notable everywhere in the central plain, the limestone world of lakes and rivers. On a green hill-crest overlooking the network of inlets of Upper Erne there is a circle greater than any we have recorded. The stones are very massive, some of them twice the height of a tall man. To one who stands within the ring these huge blocks of stone shut out the world; they loom large against the sky, full of unspoken secrets like the Sphinx. Within this mighty ring the circle of Stonehenge might be set, leaving a broad road all round it on the grass.

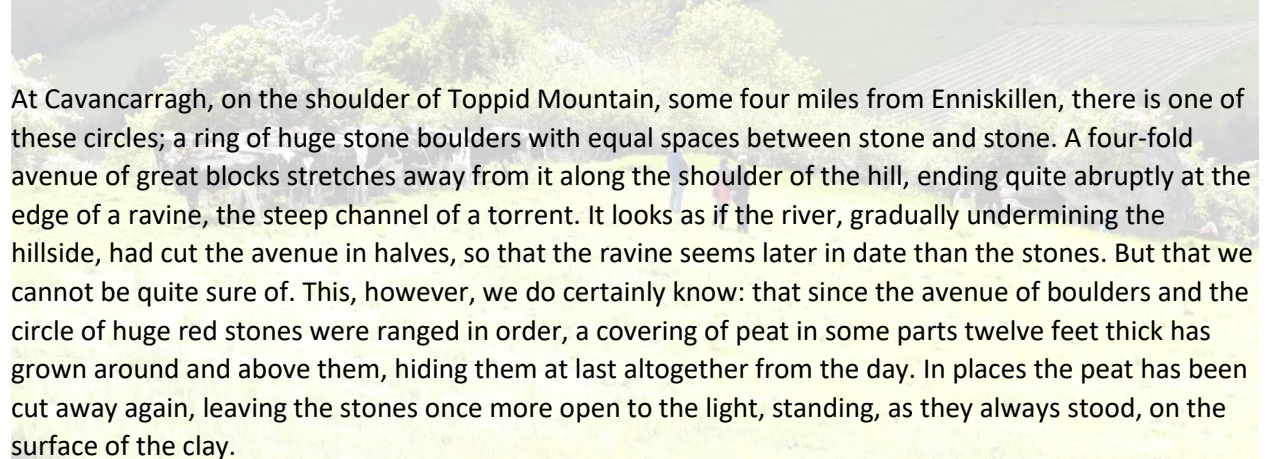
From Fermanagh, where this huge circle is, we gain our best clue to the age of all these monuments, everywhere so much like each other in their massive form and dimensions, everywhere so like in their utter mystery. Round the lakes of Erne there are wide expanses of peat, dug as fuel for centuries, and in many places as much as twelve feet deep, on a bed of clay, the waste of old glaciers. Though formed with incredible slowness, this whole mass of peat has grown since some of the great stone monuments were built; if we can tell the time thus taken for its growth we know at least the nearer limit of the time that divides us from their builders.

Like a tree, the peat has its time of growth and its time of rest. Spring covers it with green, winter sees it brown and dead. Thus, thin layers are spread over it, a layer for a year, and it steadily gains in thickness with the passing of the years. The deeper levels are buried and pressed down, slowly growing firm and rigid, but still keeping the marks of the layers that make them up. It is like a dry ocean gradually

submerging the land. Gathering round the great stone circles as they stand on the clay, this black sea has risen slowly but surely, till at last it has covered them with its dark waves, and they rest in the quiet depths, with a green foam of spring freshness far above their heads.

At Killee and Breagho, near Enniskillen, the peat has once more been cut away, restoring some of these great stones to the light. If we count the layers and measure the thickness of the peat, we can tell how many years are represented by its growth. We can, therefore, tell that the great stone circle, which the first growth of peat found already there, must be at least as old, and may be indefinitely older. By careful count it is found that one foot of black peat is made up of eight hundred layers; eight hundred summers and eight hundred winters went to the building of it. One foot of black peat, therefore, will measure the time from before the founding of Rome or the First Olympiad to the beginning of our era. Another foot will bring us to the crowning of Charlemagne. Yet another, to the death of Shakespeare and Cervantes. Since then, only a few inches have been added. Here is a chronometer worthy of our great cromlechs and stone circles.

Some of these, as we saw, rest on the clay, with a sea of peat twelve feet deep around and above them. Every foot of the peat stands for eight centuries. Since the peat began to form, eight or ten thousand years have passed, and when that vast period began, the great monuments of stone were already there. How long they had stood in their silence before our chronometer began to run we cannot even guess.



At Cavancarragh, on the shoulder of Toppid Mountain, some four miles from Enniskillen, there is one of these circles; a ring of huge stone boulders with equal spaces between stone and stone. A four-fold avenue of great blocks stretches away from it along the shoulder of the hill, ending quite abruptly at the edge of a ravine, the steep channel of a torrent. It looks as if the river, gradually undermining the hillside, had cut the avenue in halves, so that the ravine seems later in date than the stones. But that we cannot be quite sure of. This, however, we do certainly know: that since the avenue of boulders and the circle of huge red stones were ranged in order, a covering of peat in some parts twelve feet thick has grown around and above them, hiding them at last altogether from the day. In places the peat has been cut away again, leaving the stones once more open to the light, standing, as they always stood, on the surface of the clay.

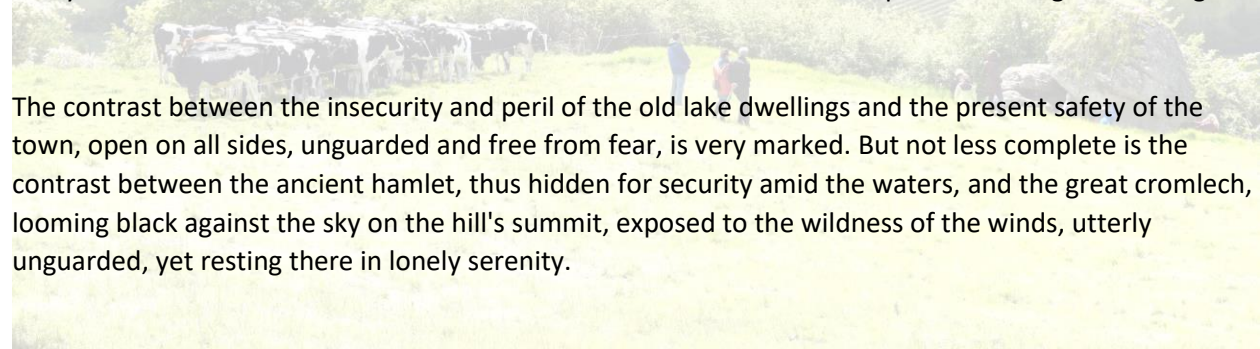
Here again we get the same measurement. At eight hundred annual layers to the foot, and with twelve feet of peat, we have nine thousand six hundred years, not for the age of the stone circles, but for that part of their age which we are able to measure. For we know not how long they were there before the peat began to grow. It may have been a few years; it may have been a period as great or even greater than the ten thousand years we are able to measure.

The peat gradually displaced an early forest of giant oaks. Their stems are still there, standing rooted in the older clay. Where they once stood no trees now grow. The whole face of the land has changed.

Some great change of climate must lie behind this vanishing of vast forests, this gradual growth of peat-covered moors. A dry climate must have changed to one much damper; heat must have changed to cold, warm winds to chilly storms. In the southern promontories, among red sandstone hills, still linger survivors of that more genial clime--groves of arbutus that speak of Greece or Sicily; ferns, as at Killarney, found elsewhere only in the south, in Portugal, or the Canary Islands.

On the southwestern horizon from Toppid Mountain, when the sky is clear after rain, you can trace the outline of the Curlew hills, our southern limit of view from Knocknarea. Up to the foot of the hills spreads a level country of pastures dappled with lakes, broken into a thousand fantastic inlets by the wasting of the limestone rock. The daisies are the stars in that green sky. Just beyond the young stream of the Shannon, where it links Lough Garra to Lough Key, there is a lonely cromlech, whose tremendous crown was once upheld by five massive pillars. There is a kindred wildness and mystery in the cromlech and the lonely hills.

Southward again of this, where the town of Lough Rea takes its name from the Gray Lake, stands a high hill crowned by a cromlech, with an encircling earthwork. It marks a green ring of sacred ground alone upon the hill-top, shut off from all the world, and with the mysterious monument of piled stones in its centre; here, as always, one huge block upheld in the air by only lesser blocks. The Gray Lake itself, under this strange sentry on the hill, was in long-passed ages a little Venice; houses built on piles lined its shores, set far enough out into the lake for safety, ever ready to ward off attack from the land. This miniature Venice of Lough Rea is the type of a whole epoch of turbulent tribal war, when homes were everywhere clustered within the defense of the waters, with stores laid up to last the rigors of a siege.



The contrast between the insecurity and peril of the old lake dwellings and the present safety of the town, open on all sides, unguarded and free from fear, is very marked. But not less complete is the contrast between the ancient hamlet, thus hidden for security amid the waters, and the great cromlech, looming black against the sky on the hill's summit, exposed to the wildness of the winds, utterly unguarded, yet resting there in lonely serenity.

A little farther south, Lough Gur lies like a white mirror among the rolling pasture-lands of Limerick, set amongst low hills. On the lake's shore is another metropolis of the dead, worthy to compare with Carrowmore on the Sligo headland. Some of the circles here are not formed of single stones set at some distance from each other, but of a continuous wall of great blocks crowded edge to edge. They are like round temples open to the sky, and within one of these unbroken rings is a lesser ring like an inner shrine. All round the lake there are like memorials--if we can call memorials these mighty groups of stone, which only remind us how much we have forgotten. There are huge circles of blocks either set close together or with an equal space dividing boulder from boulder; some of the giant circles are grouped together in twos and threes, others are isolated; one has its centre marked by a single enormous block, while another like block stands farther off in lonely vastness. Here also stands a

chambered cromlech of four huge flat blocks roofed over like the cromlech under Slieve Callan across the Shannon mouth.



The southern horizon from Lough Gur is broken by the hills of red sandstone rising around Glanworth. Beside the stream, a tributary of the Blackwater, a huge red cromlech rises over the greenness of the meadows like a belated mammoth in its uncouth might. To the southwest, under the red hills that guard Killarney on the south, the Sullane River flows towards the Lee. On its bank is another cromlech of red sandstone blocks, twin-brother to the Glanworth pile. Beyond it the road passes towards the sunset through mountain-shadowed glens, coming out at last where Kenmare River opens into a splendid fiord towards the Atlantic Ocean. At Kenmare, in a vale of perfect beauty green with groves of arbutus and fringed with thickets of fuchsia, stands a great stone circle, the last we shall record to the south. Like all the rest, it speaks of tremendous power, of unworldly and mysterious ends.

The very antiquity of these huge stone circles suggests an affinity with the revolving years. And here, perhaps, we may find a clue to their building. They may have been destined to record great Time itself, great Time that circles forever through the circling years. There is first the year to be recorded, with its revolving days; white winter gleaming into spring; summer reddening and fading to autumn. Returning winter tells that the year has gone full circle; the sun among the stars gives the definite measure of the days. A ring of thirty-six great boulders, set ten paces apart, would give the measure of the year in days; and of circles like this there are more than one.



In this endless ring of days, the moon is the measurer, marking the hours and weeks upon the blue belt of night studded with golden stars. Moving stealthily among the stars, the moon presently changes her place by a distance equal to her own breadth; we call the time this takes an hour. From her rising to her setting, she gains her own breadth twelve times; therefore, the night and the day are divided each into twelve hours. Meanwhile she grows from crescent to full disk, to wane again to a sickle of light, and presently to lose herself in darkness at new moon. From full moon to full moon, or from one new moon to another, the nearest even measure is thirty days; a circle of thirty stones would record this, as the larger circle of thirty-six recorded the solar year. In three years, there are thrice twelve full moons, with one added; a ring of thirty-seven stones representing this would show the simplest relation between sun and moon.

The moon, as we saw, stealthily glides among the fixed stars, gaining her own width every hour. Passing thus along the mid belt of the sphere, she makes the complete circuit in twenty-seven days, returning to the same point among the stars, or, if it should so happen, to the same star, within that time. Because the earth has meanwhile moved forward, the moon needs three days more to overtake it and gain the same relative position towards earth and sun, thus growing full again, not after twenty-seven, but after thirty days. Circles of twenty-seven and thirty days would stand for these lunar epochs, and would, for

those who understood them, further bear testimony to the earth's movement in its own great path around the sun. Thus, would rings of varying numbers mark the measures of time; and not these only, but the great sweep of orbs engendering them, the triumphal march of the spheres through pathless ether. The life of our own world would thus be shown bound up with the lives of others in ceaseless, ever-widening circles, that lead us to the Infinite, the Eternal.

All the cromlechs and circles we have thus far recorded are in the western half of our land; there are as many, as worthy of note, in the eastern half. But as before we can only pick out a few. One of these crowns the volcanic peak of Brandon Hill, in Kilkenny, dividing the valleys of the Barrow and Nore. From the mountain-top you can trace the silver lines of the rivers coming together to the south, and flowing onward to the widening inlet of Wexford harbor, where they mingle with the waters of the River Suir. On the summit of Brandon Hill stands a great stone circle, a ring of huge basalt blocks dominating the rich valleys and the surrounding plain.

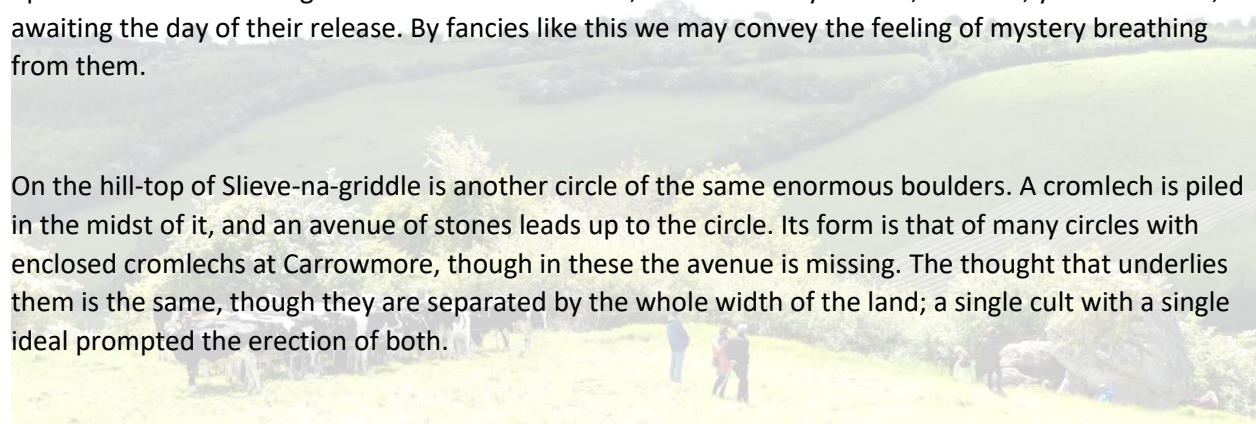
In Glen Druid of the Dublin hills is a cromlech whose granite crown weighs seventy tons. Not far off is the Mount Venus cromlech, the covering block of which is even more titanic; it is a single stone eighty tons in weight. Near Killtarnan village, a short distance off, is yet another cromlech whose top-most boulder exceeds both of these, weighing not less than ninety tons. Yet vast as all these are, they are outstripped by the cromlech of Howth, whose upper block is twenty feet square and eight feet thick, a single enormous boulder one hundred tons in weight. This huge stone was borne in the air upon twelve massive pillars of quartz, seven feet above the ground, so that a man of average height standing on the ground and reaching upward could just touch the under surface of the block with his finger-tips. Even a tall man standing on the shoulders of another as tall would quite fail to touch the upper edge of the stone. If we give this marvelous monument the same age as the Fermanagh circles, as we well may, this raising of a single boulder of one hundred tons, and balancing it in the air on the crest of massive pillars may give us some insight into the engineering skill of the men of ten thousand years ago.

Across the central plain from Howth Head the first break is the range of Loughcrew hills. Here are great stone circles in numbers, not standing alone like so many others, but encompassing still stranger monuments; chambered pyramids of boulders, to which we shall later return. They are lesser models of the three great pyramids of Brugh on the Boyne, where the river sweeps southward in a long curve, half-encircling a headland of holy ground.

From near Howth to the Boyne and north of it, the coast is low and flat; sandhills matted with bent-grass and starred with red thyme and tiny pansies, yellow and purple and blue. Low tide carries the sea almost to the horizon, across a vast wilderness of dripping sand where the gulls chatter as they wade among the pools. Where the shore rises again towards the Carlingford Mountains, another cromlech stands under the shadow of granite hills.

A long fiord with wooded walls divides the Carlingford range from the mountains of Mourne. The great dark range thrusts itself forth against the sea in somber beauty, overhanging the wide strand of Dundrum Bay. The lesser bay, across whose bar the sea moans under the storm-winds, is dominated by the hill of Rudraige, named in honor of a hero of old days; but under the shadow of the hill stands a more ancient monument, that was gray with age before the race of Rudraige was born. On five pillars of massive stone is upreared a sixth, of huge and formidable bulk, and carrying even to us in our day a sense of mystery and might. The potent atmosphere of a hidden past still breathes from it, whispering of vanished years, vanished races, vanished secrets of the prime.

There are two circles of enormous stones on the tongue of land between Dundrum Bay and Strangford, both very perfect and marked each in its own way from among the rest. The first, at Legamaddy, has every huge boulder still in place. There is a lesser ring of stones within the first circle, with many outliers, of enormous size, dotted among the fields. It looks as if a herd of huge animals of the early world had come together in a circle for the night, the young being kept for safety within their ring, while others, grazing longer or wandering farther from the rest, were approaching the main herd. But nightfall coming upon them with dire magic turned them all to stone; and there they remain, sentient, yet motionless, awaiting the day of their release. By fancies like this we may convey the feeling of mystery breathing from them.



On the hill-top of Slieve-na-griddle is another circle of the same enormous boulders. A cromlech is piled in the midst of it, and an avenue of stones leads up to the circle. Its form is that of many circles with enclosed cromlechs at Carrowmore, though in these the avenue is missing. The thought that underlies them is the same, though they are separated by the whole width of the land; a single cult with a single ideal prompted the erection of both.

At Drumbo, on the east bank of the Lagan before it reaches Belfast Lough, there is a massive cromlech surrounded by a wide ring of earth piled up high enough to cut off the sacred space within from all view of the outer world. Like the earthwork round the cromlech of Lough Rea, it marks the boundary of a great nature temple, open to the sky but shut off from mankind. Even now its very atmosphere breathes reverence.

At Finvoy, in northern Antrim, among the meadows of the Bann, there is a cromlech within a great stone circle like that on Slieve-na-griddle in Down, and like many of the Carrowmore rings. The Black Lion cromlech in Cavan is encircled with a like ring of boulders, and another cromlech not far off rivals some of the largest in the immense size of its crowning block.

Three cromlechs in the same limestone plain add something to the mystery that overhangs all the rest. The first, at Lennan in Monaghan, is marked with a curious cryptic design, suggesting a clue, yet yielding none. There is a like script on the cromlech at Castlederg in Tyrone, if indeed the markings were ever the

record of some thought to be remembered, and not mere ornament. The chambered cromlech of Lisbellaw in Fermanagh has like markings; they are too similar to be quite independent, yet almost too simple to contain a recorded thought.

We come once more to Donegal. On the hill-top of Beltaney, near Raphoe, there is a very massive circle formed of sixty-seven huge blocks. Here again the Stonehenge ring might be set up within the Irish circle, leaving an avenue eight paces wide all round it. The sacred fire was formerly kindled here to mark the birth of Spring. The name of the old festival of Beltane still lingers on the hill. At Culdaff in north Donegal, at the end of the Inishowen peninsula, stands another great stone circle, with which we must close our survey of these titanic monuments.

We have mentioned a few only among many; yet enough to show their presence everywhere throughout the land, in the valleys or on mountain summits, in the midst of pastures or on lonely and rugged isles. One group, as we have seen, cannot be younger than ten thousand years, and may be far older. The others may be well coeval. Their magnitude, their ordered ranks, their universal presence, are a startling revelation of the material powers of the men of that remote age; they are a testimony, not less wonderful, of the moral force which dedicated so much power to ideal ends. Finally, they are a monument to remind us how little we yet know of the real history of our race.

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