

SELF-DETERMINATION: HOW IRELAND LED THE WORLD

The first record of a mandate of independence granted by a powerful nation to a subject race dates from the Convention of Drumcat, held in Derry about the year 590, and was the gift of the Irish people to their Scotch colony. It is a goodly heritage for us who stand in the fighting line for Ireland to-day to remember that when we as a nation had it in our absolute power to continue to hold the unwilling Scotch as our subject colony—nay, more when it was entirely to our material advantage to do so—that we replied to their first demand for independence neither by a refusal nor by any act of war, but by inviting them to a National Conference to discuss their claims.

St. Columcille came with the Scotch colonists from Scotland to be their advocate, and in the course of his powerful appeal for the freedom of that small nation, he said, after acknowledging the material advantages which the holding of Scotland meant to Ireland: "But if you would cherish liberty and learning, if you would secure for yourselves trustworthy allies . . . then break to-day the shackles that have for too long bound your kinsmen in Scotland." Beside him as he spoke stood Aidan, King of the Scotch, with his great Court and delegation, and opposite him Aodh, son of Ainmore, High King of Ireland, surrounded by the provincial Kings and Hereditary Princes of Ireland with their Courts, among whom were Criomhthann Cearr, King of Leinster; Tollann, son of Scannlan, son of Ceannfaulardh, King of Osraighe; Maulduin, son of Aodh Beannain, King of West Munster; Finghin, son of Aodh, son of Criomhthann, King of all Munster; Criomhthann, Deilgneach, King of the South of Ireland; Guaire, son of Colman, from the Kingdom of Clann Fiachrach, South and North; Raghallach, son of Uadaidh, who was King of Tuatha Taidhion and of Breithne Uí Ruairc as far as Cliabhan Modhairn; Ceallach, son of Cearnach, son of Dubh Dothra, King of Breithne Uí Raghallaigh; Conghalach Chinn Maghair, King of Tir Chonaill; the two Kings of Oirghiall, to wit, Daimhin, son of Aonghus, from Clochar Deasa to Fionncharn, on Sliabh Fuar; Aodh, son of Duach Galach from Fionncharn on Sliabh Fuar to the Boinn and very many other princes and nobles of Ireland. The result of the conference which, in the discussion of this and other National matters, lasted for 14 months, was, as already indicated, the grant of complete independence to the Scottish King and colony, and the two kingdoms thereupon entered into a solemn covenant to be allies and friends for all time.

The circumstances under which the great Convention came into being are of peculiar national interest, but the details are unfortunately lost in obscurity, many of the ancient histories such as Keating's, Father O'Dougherty's, Magee's, and Columcille's lives differing considerably in their accounts. From a careful perusal, however, and comparison of the available authorities the following facts are clearly established.

First with regard to the history of the Scotch Dal Riada colony it is stated in the preface to the *Amhra* "The Dal Riada were those about whom there was a contention between the men of Alba and the men of Erin; because they were both of the race of Cairbre Righfada, that is, of the men of Munster. For upon the occasion of a great famine which came upon Munster the descendants of Cairbre Righfada left it, and one part of them went to Alba, and the other party staid in Erin, from whom are the Dalraida at this day. They took root afterwards in those territories, till the time of Aedhan Mac Gabhrain, King of Alba, and of Aedh Mac Ainmore, King of Erin. And a contest arose between those two kings about them. And that was one of the three causes for which Columcille came to Erin, to make peace between the men of Erin, and Alba. When he came to the meeting Colman, son of Congellan, accompanied him, and Coleman was requested to give judgment between the men of Erin and Alba."

The time when these Irish colonists went into Scotland is estimated about A.D. 506, and with them went some of

the family of Eirc, son of Munreamhar, from the country now known as Antrim. The first Irish, however, probably crossed about A.D. 258. They attained the lordship and nominal kingship of Scotland, but until the time of Aidan or Aedhan never claimed independence, paying all that time the tribute which had been enacted on them by Ireland. This was the raising of an army by land and sea, also the payment of an eiric to the King of Ireland. Other authorities say they paid yearly 7 shields, 7 steeds, 7 bondsmen, 7 bondswomen, 7 hounds all of the same breed. Aedan, however, who was the first of the Dalradian princes to show any marked ability, claimed independence and won it the year after he succeeded to the throne. In this all the ancient accounts agree, the Abbe MacGeoghegan, for instance, in his history of Ireland, says: "With respect to the monarch's (Aodh's) claim for Albania St. Columcille influenced him to abandon it, and the two princes separated in peace. According to one of the ancient accounts it was Colman, son of Congellan, who was ordered by Columcille to pronounce final judgment between the nations, others, however, maintain it was St. Columcille himself, who, having won the consent of the Irish, made the formal Declaration of Independence. However this may be the following details are said to have been agreed upon at the Convention: "Their expeditions and hostings to be with the men of Erin always, for hostings always belong to the parent stock. Their tributes and gains and shipping, to be with the men of Alba. And when one of the men of Erin or Alba should come from the East, Dal Riada to entertain them, whether few or many; and the Dal Riada to convey them on if they require it."

King Aedhan, for whose independence the Irish national saint fought so hard, was one of the first kings of whose anointing there is any record, and he was anointed by St. Columcille himself, who, as Abbot of Iona and first bringer of the Faith to Scotland, took precedence of all Scottish Bishops. St. Columcille was apparently an ardent advocate for the independence of nations, and according to Father D'Alton's *History of Ireland*, "The Abbot knew the difficulties with which he (Aedhan) was surrounded in his Caledonian possessions, that he was encompassed by powerful enemies—the Northern and Southern Picts—and that against these enemies he could never make headway if kept in a position of dependence and tutelage, hampered by a yearly tribute to the Irish King . . . His arguments were convincing, his influence with the Convention was great, and his views prevailed. Aidan was declared independent and he and his people on their side undertook to be always the allies and friends as they were already the relatives of the Irish Monarch."

Father O'Doherty's history says of the Convention: "Scotland and her Irish Colonists were the same to Ireland as the American Colonies were to the British crown. They grew strong and wanted independence which the Irish resisted because of loss of money and prestige."

The site of the great Convention was on the banks of the Roe in Derry, and was either the long mound sometimes called the Daisy Hill or Mullagh, or in the hill on the opposite side to the Mullagh, called Enagh, a word which in ancient days meant a political assembly. It is certain that all the sides of the hill were covered with the white tents of the Royal and ecclesiastical members of the Conference, of whom St. Columcille brought with him 140, including 20 Bishops. And it was the last of the great National Assemblies of the kind to be held in Ireland.

O Jesus, Son of God, who wast silent in the presence of Pilate, do not allow us to loose our tongues without thinking on what we have to say and how we may say it. Amen. From *Prayers of the Gael*.

FARMER READERS.—Where do you get your Butter Wrappers printed? Why not patronise the printing department of the *N.Z. Tablet*, Dunedin? Every order, no matter how small, is welcome. Prices on application to the Manager for 1lb or ½lb wrappers.

Brownette Bros.

NAPIER'S LEADING FOOTWEAR AND REPAIR SPECIALISTS.
EMERSON ST. (Opp. Working Men's Club), NAPIER.