

"Yric, son of Harald" (*i.e.*, Eric Bloodaxe, late King of Norway) on the throne.<sup>1</sup>

Henceforward Olaf limited his activities to Ireland, where he reigned, the most famous of the Dublin Kings, for some thirty years. In 980, having summoned auxiliaries from the Scottish isles and Man, he prepared to attack the *ard-ri*, Maelsechnaill II. A fierce battle was fought between them at Tara in which the Norse armies were completely routed, Olaf's son Ragnall being among the slain. Maelsechnaill followed up this victory by a three days' siege of Dublin, after which he carried off a number of hostages from the Norsemen, and also obtained from them 2,000 kine, together with jewels and various other treasures.<sup>2</sup> Olaf himself, utterly disheartened by his defeat, went on pilgrimage to Iona, where he died soon after.

Some fifteen years before, a severe blow had been struck at the power of the Limerick Vikings under Ivarr, grandson of Ivarr and his sons. The attack made on them at Sulcoit (968) by two princes of the Dal Cais, the brothers Mathgamain and Brian, resulted in victory for the Irish, who took Limerick shortly after.<sup>3</sup> Mathgamain was treacherously murdered in 976, and Brian then became King of Thomond. He soon brought the Kingdoms of Ossory and Leinster under his control, and by the terms of a treaty made in 998 Maelsechnaill consented to leave Brian master of Leth Mogha (*i.e.*, the southern half of Ireland). The Leinstermen under King Maelmordha, dissatisfied with this arrangement, began to make trouble and revolted, assisted by the Dublin Norsemen. An important victory was gained over their combined armies at

<sup>1</sup> *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, E. Annals 949, 952.

<sup>2</sup> *Annals of the Four Masters*, A.D. 978, 979; *Annals of Ulster*, A.D. 979 (= 980).

<sup>3</sup> *War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill*, p. 77.