

CHAPTER II.

INTERCOURSE BETWEEN THE GAILL AND
THE GAEDHIL DURING THE VIKING
PERIOD.

THE existence of the Gaill-Gaedhil or foreign Irish in Ulster and various parts of Munster¹ during the years 854-856 shows that even in the early part of the ninth century there must have been considerable intercourse between the Vikings and the native population. For some of the Gaill-Gaedhil were partly of Irish, partly of Norse extraction; others, as the annalist explicitly states, were Irishmen who had been fostered by the Norsemen, and in consequence had forsaken Christian practices and lapsed into Paganism.² From a chance allusion in a tenth century text³ it would seem that they could speak Gaelic, but so badly that the expression "the gicgog of a Gall-Gaedheal" was generally understood to mean halting or broken Gaelic.

They are mentioned in the Annals for the first time⁴ in 854, in which year Aedh Finnliath, King of Aileach, won

¹ *Annals of Ulster*, A.D. 855, 856; *Annals of the Four Masters*, A.D. 856.

² *Three Fragments of Annals*, pp. 128, 129; 138, 139.

³ *Airec Menmam Uraird Maic Coisse*, sec. 29 (Marstrander: *Bidrag til det Norske Sprogs Historie i Irland*, p. 10).

⁴ With the Gaill-Gaedhil are often identified a body of plunderers, members of Meath and Cavan clans, who in the year 845 devastated large tracts of territory "after the manner of the Gentiles" (*Annals of Ulster*, A.D. 845). The Annalists call them "sons of death" (*maic báis*), possibly a term applied by the monastic chroniclers to a people who had abandoned their Christian baptism, and who had profaned churches and religious houses. (Cf. Marstrander, *op. cit.*, p. 7, n.)