

numbered among the slain. We also hear of other Irish Kings who were closely related to their Viking opponents. *Laxdaela Saga* contains an interesting account of a slave-woman who was bought at a market in Norway by an Icelander called Höskuldr. The woman was dumb, but Höskuldr was so struck by her appearance that he willingly paid for her three times the price of an ordinary slave, and took her back with him to Iceland. A few years later, happening to overhear her talking to their little son, Olaf Pái, he discovered to his amazement that her dumbness was feigned. She then confessed that her name was Melkorka (Ir. *Mael-Curcaigh*) and that she was the daughter of Myr Kjartan, a king in Ireland, whence she had been carried off as a prisoner of war when only fifteen years old.

When Olaf was grown up his mother urged him to visit Ireland in order to establish his relationship with King Myr Kjartan, "for," she said, "I cannot bear your being called the son of a slave-woman any longer." Before they parted she gave him a large finger-ring and said: "This my father gave me for a teething-gift, and I know he will recognise it when he sees it." She also put into his hands a knife and belt and bade him give them to her nurse: "I am sure she will not doubt these tokens." And still further Melkorka spoke: "I have fitted you out from home as best I know how, and taught you to speak Irish, so that it will make no difference to you where you are brought to shore in Ireland. . . ."¹

The saga goes on to describe the voyage to Ireland, the landing there, and Olaf's reception by King Myr Kjartan.

Myr Kjartan may be identified with Muirchertach "of the Leather Cloaks," King of Aileach, who like his father Niall Glundubh distinguished himself by his spirited

¹*Laxdaela Saga* (translated by M.A.C. Press), chs. 12, 13, 20, 21.