

CHAPTER IV.

THE EXPANSION OF IRISH TRADE.

WHEN the Scandinavians had firmly established themselves on the Irish coasts they developed trade to a considerable extent, not only by bringing Ireland into communication with their new settlements in England, but also by opening up commerce with Iceland and Scandinavia, and even with Russia and the East.¹ Before A.D. 900 at all events, they had been accustomed to visit France from Ireland, and had trafficked with merchants there, using a certain vessel called the 'Epscop'² for measuring their wine. That this branch of their trade was in a flourishing condition in the latter half of the tenth century may be inferred from a contemporary poem in which Brian Borumha is said to have exacted as tribute one hundred and fifty vats of wine from the Norsemen of Dublin, and a barrel of red wine every day from the Limerick settlers.³

The Scandinavians also made marked advances on the old methods of trading by building their forts near the large harbours and carrying on from there a continuous

¹ See the map of the Irish Trade Routes in Mrs. J. R. Green's *The Old Irish World*.

² "Epscop fina" in the sea-laws, i.e., "a vessel for measuring wine used by the merchants of the Norsemen and the Franks." See *Sanas Cormaic* (*Cormac's Glossary*) compiled c. A.D. 900. (*Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts IV.*, ed. Kuno Meyer.)

³ Cf. O'Curry: *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, II., p. 125. For a transcript of the poem see A. Bugge: *Vesterlandenes Indflydelse paa Nordboernes i Vikingetiden*, p. 183.