

he sent messengers to the Munstermen bidding them to defend their territory : " and afterwards," he said, " go to the chieftains of my fleet and bring them with you to Sruth na Maeile (Mull of Cantyre), and if I am carried away from Ireland, let the men of Munster take their ships and follow me."¹ The chronicle goes on to give a vivid description of the great naval battle which followed : the Vikings under the leadership of Sihtric, a prince from Dublin, took up their position in the Bay of Dundalk, where the " barques and swift ships of the men of Munster " met them. The Irish ships were arranged according to the territories they represented : those of Corcolaigdi and Ui Echach (Co. Cork) were placed farthest south ; next came the fleets of Corcoduibne and Ciarraige (Co. Kerry), and lastly those of Clare. When the Munstermen saw Cellachan, who had been bound and fettered to the mast by Sihtric's orders, they made gallant attempts to release him ; some of them leaped upon " the rowbenches and strong oars of the mighty ships " of the Norsemen, while others threw tough ropes of hemp across the prows to prevent them from escaping. Failbhe, King of Corcoduibne, brought his ship alongside Sihtric's, and with his sword succeeded in cutting the ropes and fetters that were round the King, but was himself slain immediately afterwards. The battle ended in victory for the Irish : the Norsemen were forced to leave the harbour with all their ships, but " they carried neither King nor chieftain with them."²

The *War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill* records still more victories for the Munster fleet during the reign of Brian Borumha. In 984 he assembled " a great marine fleet " on Lough Derg and took three hundred boats up the

¹*The Victorious Career of Cellachan of Cashel*, pp. 29, 86.

²*Ib.*, pp. 89-102.