

to the numerous raids on churches and religious houses as a proof of the Vikings' hostility to Christianity, but these attacks were much more likely to have originated in the amount of treasure which the raiders knew to be stored in these places. It is rather in this light, too, that we must regard Turgéis' expulsion of the abbot Farannan from Armagh (in 839), and his subsequent usurpation of the abbacy,<sup>1</sup> than as an attempt to stamp out Christianity and establish heathenism in its stead.

Yet, at the same time, the Norsemen must have come into close contact with the religion of the "White Christ" through their intercourse with the Irish. Indeed, an entry in the *Annals of Ulster* (A.D. 872), referring to the death of Ívárr the Boneless, implies that this famous Viking died a Christian.<sup>2</sup> The records are silent on this point with regard to Olaf the White, although he was related by marriage to Ketill Flatnose, a famous chief in the Hebrides, all of whose family, with the exception of his son, Björn the Easterner, adopted Christianity. Olaf's wife, Authr, daughter of Ketill, was one of the most zealous of these early Norse converts: "She used to pray at Crossknolls, where she had crosses erected, because she was baptized, and was a good Christian." Before her death she gave orders that she was to be buried on the seashore, between high and low water-mark, because she did not wish to lie in unconsecrated ground. The *Landnámabók* also says that for some time after her death her kinsfolk revered these knolls, but in course of time their faith became corrupt, and in the same

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill*, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> The expression used is *quievit in Christo* and occurs only in *MS. A*. As neither *MS. B* nor any of the other annals mention Ívárr's conversion it may be that the scribe of the former has unintentionally slipped into using a formula which was customary in recording the death of a Christian.