

Thorsnes in Iceland: "there still stands Thor's stone, on which were broken the backs of those men who were about to be sacrificed, and close by is the *dómhringr* where the men were condemned to death."¹ Even as late as the year A.D. 1000 we hear of Thor's wood (*caill Tomair*) north of Dublin, which was laid waste by Brian Borumha after the battle of Gleann Mama.²

The battle of Clontarf (A.D. 1014) is frequently represented as a great fight between Pagan and Christian, but this point of view is hardly confirmed by the historical facts. It is true that the Norsemen numbered among their supporters such prominent upholders of heathenism as Sigurthr, earl of Orkney, and Broder—who had been a mass-deacon, but "now worshipped fiends, and was of all men most skilled in sorcery," yet it must be remembered that the Leinsternen, under their king Maelmordha, also formed part of the Norse army on the same occasion. Moreover, both the Norse and Irish accounts of the battle agree that Gormfaith, who had been the wife of Brian Borumha, inspired by hatred of Brian, was mainly responsible for the renewal of hostilities between the two peoples. Her son, Sihtric Silken Beard, who was most active in mobilising the Norse troops, must have been a Christian, since the coins which were minted in Dublin during his reign are stamped with the sign of the cross. In 1028 he visited Rome, and there is record of another visit some years later.³ His death is entered in the Annals under the year 1042, in which same year his daughter, a nun in an Irish convent, also died.⁴

It was probably on his return to Dublin from Rome in

¹ *Landnámabók*, II., ch. 12.

² *Wav of the Gaedhi! with the Gaill*, pp. 196, 198.

³ *Annals of Tigernach*, A.D. 1028, 1036.

⁴ *Ib.*, A.D. 1042.