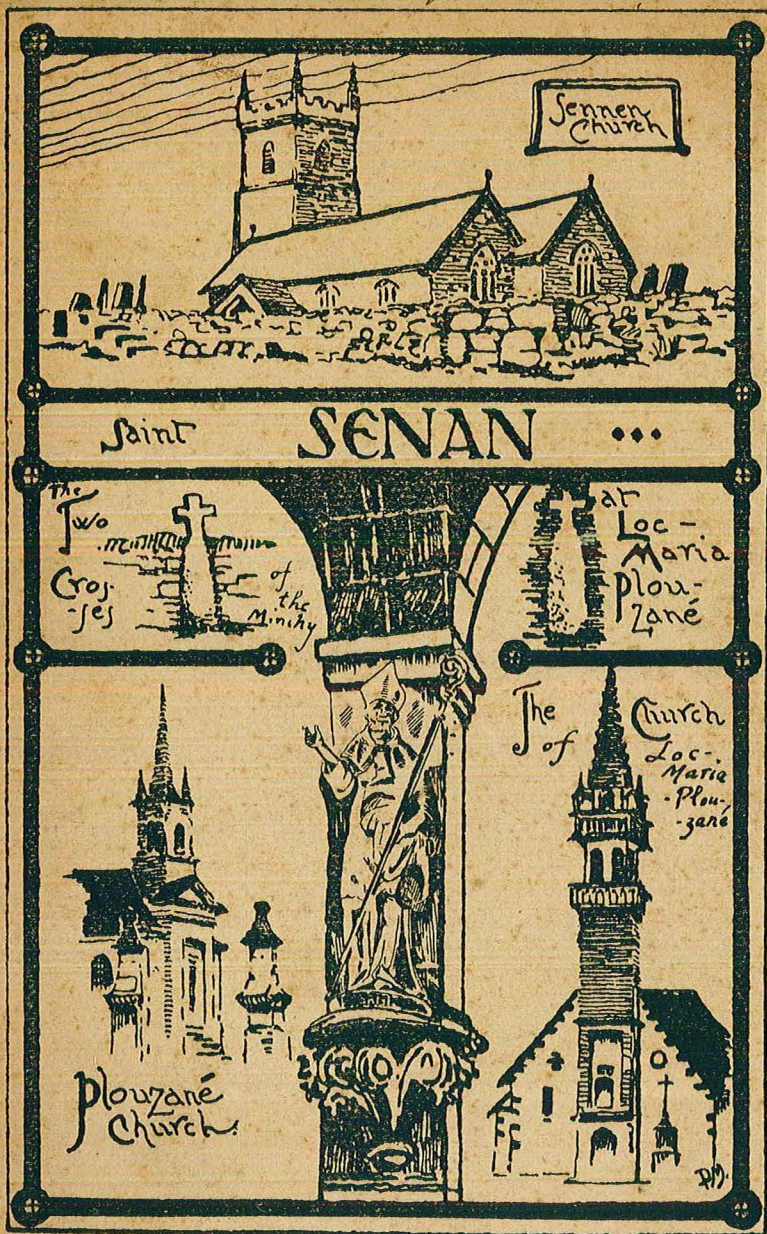


Harriage de l'autel,
 G. H. Doble, 24 Oct 1928



"CORNISH SAINTS" SERIES. No. 15.



S. SENAN,

Bishop, Abbot and Confessor.

*Patron of the parish of Sennen, Cornwall,
and of the parishes of Plou-zané
and Camors, Brittany.*

BY THE

Rev. GILBERT H. DOBLE, M.A.,

Author of

*'S. Mawes,' 'S. Euny,' 'S. Budoc,' 'S. Winwaloe,'
'S. Corentin,' 'S. Melaine,' 'S. Carantoc,' 'S. Gwinear,'
'S. German,' 'SS. Mewan & Austol,' 'S. Feock,'
'S. Petrock,' 'SS. Docco & Kew,' 'S. Melor,' 'A John
Wesley of Armorican Cornwall,' etc.*

*Vicar of Wendron and Examining Chaplain
to the Lord Bishop of Truro.*

With notes on the Parish and Church of Sennen
by C. G. Henderson, M.A.

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The History of Sennen Church and Parish

By CHARLES HENDERSON, M.A.

THE DEDICATION.

The parish of Sennen is the most westerly in Great Britain, for it contains within its borders the celebrated granite head-land known as the Land's End. The old grey Church of *S. Senan* stands by the side of the highway, about a mile short of the promontory, and is a prominent land mark by land and sea. It is probable that it occupies the site of some prehistoric burial place, for this part of Cornwall teems with pre-Christian Antiquities and there is a *Menhir* or standing stone $9\frac{1}{2}$ feet high across the highway within 300 yards of the Church.

Like most Cornish Churches, Sennen probably came into being some 1400 years ago as the Oratory of the Saint whose name it bears. In the latter part of this book, Mr. Doble will give the Life of the famous Irish Saint *Senan* who is generally considered to have been the original patron of the Cornish Sennen.

It is only fair to remark, however, that the few existing references to the place before the Reformation describe it distinctly as the Chapel of a woman-Saint *Senana* (e.g. *Parochia Sancte Senane* 1327 *Capella Sancte Senane* 1430). The Irish *Senan* was, of course a man. Several Cornish parishes claimed female Saints as their patrons during the Middle Ages (e.g. Buryan, Zennor, S. Ives) though it is now the fashion for one school of critics to consider them really men-Saints. We must not forget, however, that the men of the mediæval parishes must have had a great deal of traditional information about their Saints which is now lost to us, and we should not lightly dismiss evidence of that period when it is consistent.

Whether the patron of Sennen be the Irishman *Senan* or a purely local female-Saint *Senana*, there can be no doubt that the Church has its roots far back in the Celtic period.



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THE ANCIENT CROSSES.

The number of ancient stone crosses of the Celtic type which used to stand in the neighbourhood of the Church (as at Buryan and S. Levan) proves that Sennen Church is no mere Saxon or Norman foundation. These crosses have all been moved from their original positions. They are true "Cornish Crosses" of the familiar and round-headed type, roughly hewn out of *moor-stone* or surface granite. The cross-head at the Lych-Gate was found near a rock known as the "*Giants Stone*" a short distance East of the Church by the side of a Church path. There is another cross standing against a hedge by the side of the path from the Church to Sennen Green. A third very similar to it used to stand at the N.E. corner of Sennen Green by the foot path to Escalls. This was removed many years ago to the garden of Alma Villa at Nancherrow near S. Just. At Treave, the hamlet South of the Church, is a fourth cross built into the hedge of the highway. A field called *Park-an-Grouse* (i.e. the Field of the Cross) bears witness to its original site. Beyond this by the side of the Church path from Treville to Trevescan is another rounded cross which has evidently been recut in the later Middle Ages, for the shaft has been chamfered and there is a figure of Our Lord incised upon the face of the head. Here, too, is a "*Park-an-Grouse*" field. In the new Cemetery, North of the Church, is a much larger cross (7 feet high) brought hither in 1878 from Treveor on the N.E. side of the parish, where it once stood by the side of a ford on the old highway from Sennen to Penzance. This old Pack-Horse way did not follow the present main-road but passed at the back of Sennen Church to Treveor and so up over the shoulder of Chapel Carn Brea and Sancreed Beacon to Skimmal Bridge. This interesting old road can still be traced across the downs and some of the older people of the country retain traditions about it.

In the garden of a modern house called Carn Towan near Mayon Green is a very primitive cross which once stood near Escalls, by the side of the Church path. This is simply a rough pillar of granite with crosses in relief on both sides of it, and is perhaps an example of a Pagan *Menhir* or Stone Idol converted into a cross.

From these notes it will be seen that there were no less than seven crosses standing within a mile of Sennen Church, and all of them must be of a date anterior to the Norman Conquest when the carving of Moor-stone granite went out of use for some three centuries (1100-1400). It is very difficult to assign a date to Cornish crosses, but those at Sennen are probably at least as old as the 9th century and are a real link with the Celtic Church.

ANCIENT CHAPELS.

In addition to the Church there were formerly two Chapels in Sennen parish, both of which seem to have been of Celtic origin. One of them stood at Sennen Cove, an ancient fishing port providing a meagre shelter in a long and terrible stretch of coast. The Chapel was converted into a cottage at the Reformation and though still standing with its doorway and some pieces of cut stonework, it has been so pulled about as it be scarcely recognizable as a Chapel. There is unfortunately no documentary evidence relating to this Chapel. Dr. Borlase, the Antiquary, writing in 1750, speaks of it as *Chapel Idné*, which was apparently the local name of it. *Idné* was probably the name of the Patron Saint in a corrupt form with the intrusive *d* found in late West-Cornish dialect (e.g. *Tol-Pedn* Penwith for *Tol-Pen*-Penwith). If so the Saint might have been the well-known *Euny* or *Uny*, whose Chapel and Holy Well stood at Chapel Uny 3 miles distant.

There appears to have been another Chapel at Penrose, where some fields yet bear the name of Chapel Close, but as Penrose was the seat of a family of some consequence in the Middle Ages and continued to be the principal place in the parish until the 18th century, this Chapel may have been a domestic Oratory dating only from mediæval times.

SENNEN CHURCH.

When we first meet with Sennen in records (14th century) we find that although it was for civil purposes a distinct parish, for ecclesiastical purposes it was merely a Chapelry to Buryan, like S. Levan. In Celtic days Buryan had been a monastery, and under the Saxons it became a Collegiate Church, protected and refounded

(it is said), by King Athelstan when he subdued the Cornish and made Cornwall an English shire, *Circa* A.D. 930. Whether it was on the occasion of Athelstan's visit that Sennen and S. Levan were made subject to their greater neighbour or not will never be known, but during the 13th century we find the Deans of Buryan having jurisdiction over all three parishes. The Collegiate establishment at Buryan consisted of a Dean and three Prebendaries, but as the place was a "Peculiar" of the Earls and Dukes of Cornwall, neither Bishop nor Archdeacon had any jurisdiction in the three parishes. The Deanery was not abolished until 1864 when the three parishes became three independent Rectories. Before that date Buryan, Sennen and S. Levan were served by three Curates appointed by the non-resident Deans.

As the Bishops of the Diocese (Exeter) were forced to abandon their claims to jurisdiction in the Peculiar, by 1400 there is no reference to Sennen or S. Levan in the Episcopal Registers. The records of the Deanery are nearly all lost, so that we know practically nothing about the Mediæval History of Sennen. The Dean and Prebendaries of Buryan were nearly always non-resident, and at the Reformation they paid the three Curates who did the duty £6 yearly apiece.

In the Register of Pope Martin V., however, under the date Feb. 21st, 1430, is a very interesting reference to Sennen, which is not generally known. On this day the Pope issued a Bull to the Official of the Archbishop of Canterbury to deal with a recent petition sent to Rome by the inhabitants of the Town or Hamlet of *Senana* in Cornwall. They had showed that within the limits of the Parish Church of *S. Beriana* there had formerly been built a chapel of *S. Senana* with bell-tower, bells and baptismal font, and that in this Chapel they had been accustomed to hear Mass and to enjoy all Ecclesiastical Sacraments *except that of burial*, instead of going all the way to the parish Church (Buryan) at least 3 miles distant. They begged the Pope to give them license to make a cemetery round their Chapel and to have it hallowed by some Catholic Bishop. They urged that as their village lay on the sea-shore they could not accompany their dead all the way to Buryan lest their homes should be raided by pirates and enemies during their absence. Whether the petition was granted then or later is not known. The

obstacle was the Dean of Buryan, who did not want to lose his mortuary fees. (For the same reason the Vicar of Lelant prevented the men of the daughter chapels of Towednack and S. Ives from obtaining cemeteries of their own for over a century, in spite of appeals to the Pope and the Bishop.)

Pope Martin's Bull refers to the Chapel of *S. Senana* as having been furnished with a bell-tower and a font, and the present tower and font must be meant, although one would have felt inclined to assign a later date to both of them. The font is very plain. The base of the font bears an inscription crudely cut in Gothic lettering to the effect that the Church was dedicated on the feast of the Decollation of S. John the Baptist A.D. 144—, (the last figure is broken away). This was a re-consecration when the 15th century enlargements had been completed. The Church now consists of a Chancel, Nave, North Transept, South Aisle, South Porch and Western Tower, the whole being in general a 15th century building of the homely "Perpendicular" style, prevalent in Cornwall, and the material moorstone or surface granite. Before the 15th century changes we may suppose that it was a cruciform building without a tower and with narrow slit-windows. The South Aisle was obviously added in place of a Transept. The Arcade has six arches of porcelain stone or fine granite which was used in the earlier part of the 14th century and represents the transition from the use of Free-stone and other rare material to the coarser grained "moorstone" or surface granite. The arches at Sennen are less crude (and therefore earlier) than those at S. Levan. They accord with the date of the Papal Bull 1430. At the close of the 15th century and on the Eve of the Reformation, Sennen Church was certainly more richly ornamented than it has ever been since.

The walls were covered with mural paintings, of which a mutilated survivor (representing a mediæval city) can still be seen on the East Wall of the South Aisle. Well-carved images of Alabaster, coloured with gold, red and blue, stood on brackets. These were buried in the wall at the Reformation and re-discovered some generations later. Hals, the Historian, who visited the Church about 1700 refers to these "headless bodies of some images.....not long before found hid in the walls." One of them, the headless and

mutilated effigy of the Blessed Virgin, stands on an old stone bracket in the East Wall of the Transept. There was probably an Altar at this spot and another in the South Aisle.

The centuries of neglect and vandalism which followed the Reformation have succeeded in depriving the Church of all its old Woodwork, Rood Screen, and Roofs, and a solitary fragment alone survives of the glorious series of old oak Bench-ends. In Georgian days, when the Church was kept in order by the Churchwardens, the stone tracery of the windows was ejected to make way for sashes! When Church Life revived in the last century, art was at a low ebb, and in 1867 when the half ruinous Church of Sennen came to be "restored" at a cost of £900, the work was entrusted to the well-known but ruthless Cornish Architect Mr. J. P. St. Aubyn who restored the tracery to the windows and did his best to remove accumulations of Georgian whitewash and filth, but his work here, as elsewhere, was unfeeling.

The writer hopes it may be possible to add in a future edition further notes,—on the Antiquities of the parish, Sennen place-names, etc., etc.



A.M.D.G.

SAINT SENAN,

Bishop, Abbot and Confessor,

"Glorify the Lord....in the isles of the sea." Is. 24. 15.

Every Englishman has heard of the Land's End, and each year thousands of tourists visit this remote corner of Britain, and stand on the point which looks out over that wild waste of waters, where the rocks on which are built the Longships lighthouse, and the distant Isles of Scilly, alone break the ocean horizon. On their way thither they pass the village and parish church of Sennen, the most westerly parish in England.

Why is this parish called Sennen?

The name of every parish in West Cornwall is the name of a saint, and we learn from the Registers of the Bishops of Exeter that in 1327 the patron of this parish was considered to be a *Saint Senana*. In the 14th century, however, it had in very many cases been entirely forgotten who the patrons of our Cornish parishes really were, and I think it is highly probable that many saints then regarded as Virgin saints were really men. (Practically *all* the saints of the sister land of Brittany are male saints.) Now there is a very famous Irish Saint *Senan*, who has for many hundreds of years been officially honoured in Brittany as the patron of the parishes of Plou-zané, (Finistère) and Camors (Morbihan). I think we may be tolerably sure that this Senan is the patron of our Sennen,¹ and I shall give his Life as we find it in Irish hagiographical

¹ See p. 25. I suppose it is a mere coincidence that the Roman Breviary contains (30 July) the names of SS. Abdon and Sennen, Persians martyred at Rome under Decius. Their cult is ancient (as old as the Sacramentary of Gregory)—see Battifol, Hist. du Brev. Rom. 158. We may, at any rate, find here an explanation of the change from *Senan* into *Sennen*.

writers of the Middle Ages, afterwards dealing with the question of the cult of S. Senan in Brittany and other Celtic countries.

If the reader will turn to the map of Ireland, he will see, in the estuary of the river Shannon, where it broadens out into the ocean, an island called Scatterry Island. *Scatterry* is a corruption of *Inis-cathaig* (=The Island of the beast), and on this island once stood an important monastery which was founded by S. Senan. Senan was a very famous person in the history of early Christian Ireland. He is mentioned in the Tripartite Life of S. Patrick, and Lives of S. Senan abounded in Ireland in the Middle Ages. Two are printed in the Bollandists' *Acta Sanctorum*, the first being metrical². Another is found in the Book of Lismore. Three Lives of S. Senan are to be found among the different MS. Lives of the Saints preserved in the great libraries of Dublin.³ I shall place before my readers a paraphrase of the Second Life in the Bollandist Collection, which, its writer tells us (c. 3), was based on an ancient metrical life—not the one I have just referred to, but an older one, now lost, written by S. Colman, son of Lenin.⁴

I propose to reserve my comments on this Life till the end, contenting myself for the present with warning the reader that it is a very late one, and of interest rather as a collection of picturesque mediæval traditions than as a real account of its hero.

I preserve the original divisions into Chapters.

² It begins, *Senanus ex nobilibus procreatur parentibus*, etc.

³ See "Analecta Bollandiana," 1928, pp. 81-148. They are "practically the same," Fr. Grosjean tells me, "as those published" in the *Acta Sanctorum*.

⁴ "Uti in sua de his historia metrice conscripta S. Colmanus filius Lenini testatur." This S. Colman is commemorated 24 Nov. The Four Masters say he died in the year 600.

CHAPTER I.

HOW S. SENAN WAS PROPHESED OF BY S. PATRICK. OF HIS FAMILY, BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD.

"When S. Patrick was preaching the faith of Christ in that part of Mumonia (Munster) which our forefathers called Hy-Figinte¹ (*i.e.* the present County Limerick), and was bringing many peoples from the darkness of idolatry to the light of the Gospel; the news of the conversion of this neighbouring clan (*gentis*) was carried to the region of Corco-bhaskind (*i.e.* the present County Clare) situated on the opposite, or northern, bank of the river Shannon." The Corco-bhaskenses crossed the river in boats, and came to Patrick at Domnachmor and asked for instruction. It was evening, and the saint was exhausted with his missionary labours, but at their earnest entreaty he taught them, and baptized them all on the spot. They urged him to cross to their own country and baptize their wives and children, but he replied that he could not do so, because he had not yet provided the district in which he was at present labouring with churches and pastors. Then in the spirit of prophecy he said, "God will provide you an apostle from among your own countrymen. For out of your own tribe shall arise a man beloved by God and man, enriched by divine gifts from his birth, named Senan, in whose protection and patronage not only your tribe but the people of the Hy-Figinte shall trust, and when ye honour him duly all shall go well with you, but if ye neglect him, the land will become barren and your children shall bear the yoke of the stranger. He shall destroy the monstrous beast in that island between you and the Hy-Figinte (Iniscathaig), which island he and

¹ The 1st Vita says *Hy-Conalli*, which Colgan says was in his time known as Conallcha, and was a region on the south bank of the Shannon. In the *Vita Ste Ite Virginis* c. 8 (Plummer, II. p. 118) S. Yta is told by an angel to leave her own land and go to Hy Conayll. "For thou shalt be patroness of the tribe of Hua Conaill, which tribe is given by God to thee and to Saint Senan."

his monks will afterwards inhabit. Meanwhile, till this child of the Light begin to shine among you, I will send you some of my disciples to baptize and instruct you."² Consequently two Roman followers of Patrick, the priest Maculatus and the deacon Latius, came and settled on the north side of the Shannon, and built a church there, in which they are buried.³

² In the Book of Lismore the prophecy is given as follows:

"A new child shall be born in the West
In the Island beyond the sea.
The Corco-baskin will bow 'neath his hand,
Men, women and children alike.
He will be splendid, royal and stately,
With God as well as with men.
Happy the people, and happy the Church
That under this child shall be."

Anecdota Oxon., Book of Lismore, pp. 56, 203, cited in Baring Gould and Fisher, *British Saints*, I. 184.

This supposed prophecy of the birth of Senan obtained wide currency, as it is quoted in the Tripartite Life of S. Patrick. "Patrick himself did not go into that country, but he saw from him about Luimnech to the west and to the north, and he blessed the district and its islands and prophesied of the saints who would appear in them, of their names, and the time in which they would come. 'The green island in the west,' said Patrick, 'therein shall come the candle of God's household, who shall be the chief of counsel for this district,' namely Senan of Inis-cathaig, six score years later, Senan, son of Gerrchenn, son of Dubthach." (ed. Whitley Stokes, I. 207.)

No doubt there was a well-founded tradition in the west of Ireland that S. Patrick had not been able himself to evangelize the county of Clare, of which Senan was the true apostle, and so the story grew up that Patrick had foretold his coming. "Patrick, being short of fellow labourers, encouraged the Corco-bhaskenses with hopes. As they received no great Christian teacher till Senan came, they invented the prophecy. ("Baring Gould and Fisher.")

³ At Castle Kett, according to the Bollandists. Colgan says he could not find the names of Maculatus and Latius in any list of Irish saints.

The father and mother of Senan was called Ergindus and Comgella.⁴ Shortly before his birth they came to a public meeting, at which one of the Druids (*unus ex Druidis*) arose and gave Ergindus his own seat, and when asked why he did so replied that it was not in honour of him personally, but of the son soon to be born to him, who would be the lord and protector of all that land.

Comgella was in an orchard at Maghlacha⁵ one fine autumn evening when the hour came for Senan to be born. An angel appeared, who delivered her from the pains of travail. The rod which she was then holding in her hands shot forth leaves and flowers, and was still preserved, our author tells us, when he wrote. This was regarded, (the author of the 1st Life says) as a sign that the child was to "flourish in the house of the Lord as a cedar of Lebanon."⁶

The child soon showed signs of precocious piety. We are told he rebuked his mother for picking blackberries while they were out for a walk one day, because it was not right to eat between meals!

Besides Magh-lach, Senan's parents had another farm at Tracht-termuinn (=The Strand of the boundaries.) When they removed from one to another of these farms Senan was entrusted with the task of moving their furniture. On one occasion they arrived at Tracht-termuinn and found he had not done so because he had been engaged elsewhere in some charitable action. He was severely rebuked by his mother, but mildly replied that it would be all right, and before he had finished speaking the furniture was miraculously transported through the air and placed at their feet!

⁴ The 1st Life says *Ercanus* and *Coemgella*. Marsh's Library, Dublin, contains a Genealogy of Senan. See *Anal. Boll.*, 1928, p. 120.

⁵ The Bollandists suggest Mologa, 10 miles east of Castle Kett. Baring Gould says that Maghlach is 3 miles N.E. of Kilrush in County Clare.

⁶ B. Gould and Fisher say (without quoting their authority) that the rod was "a branch of rowan, which immediately broke into leaf and developed bunches of scarlet berries." They say (again without quoting their authority) that he had a brother called Cronan (or Conandill) and a sister called Conainne.

CHAPTER II.

PREVENTED BY DIVINE BENEFITS, HE LEAVES THE SERVICE OF THE WORLD FOR THE MONASTIC SERVICE, UNDER THE ABBOTS SS. CASSIDAN AND NATALIS.

Ancient Ireland was always in a permanent state of civil war, and Senan was soon called upon to serve as a soldier in a raid made by the Corco-bhaskenses on the neighbouring territory of Corcomroia.¹ While the others dispersed over the countryside to burn and plunder, Senan withdrew to a heap of corn in a farmyard and went to sleep there. He was surprised in this position by the enemy, who however let him go, on observing that the heap was blazing, like Moses' bush, with miraculous flames. They concluded that the young man was a saint, and told him he was free to go wherever he pleased.

Not long afterwards Senan was driving back the cows to Maghlacha from a pasture-land situated to the west, called Irras. Darkness came on, and the tide was rising in the estuary of the Shannon. He found himself near a *rath* or fortress called Dun mechair, and resolved to ask for hospitality for the night. Mecharius, the lord of the castle, was however away, and his servants churlishly refused to receive Senan, who was obliged to continue his journey. He soon came to the shore and drove the oxen in front of him along a stretch of sand not yet covered by the tide. He had only just reached the other side when the rising tide swept over the sand and wetted his heels as he left the beach. Turning and seeing how nearly he had escaped drowning, he planted his spear in the ground in the form of a cross, knelt before it, and vowed that henceforth he would devote himself wholly to the Lord's service.

That same night the inhabitants of Dunmechair were punished for their want of hospitality. The rath was surprised by a party of enemies, Mecharius's son was killed, his wife taken prisoner, and all the furniture and moveables carried off.

¹ Baring Gould suggests Barren in County Clare.

After Senan's resolve to abandon the world, he betook himself to a monastery in the region of Irras (the Irras just mentioned?) where S. Cassidan was abbot, who gave him the tonsure and monastic habit. After some time spent in the reading of Scripture and "ecclesiastical discipline," and having made great progress both in piety and learning, Senan left this monastery and went to that of a teacher far-famed both for his holiness and his learning—Natalis, Abbot of Killna-manach Drochid in Ossory, where he found himself among a large number of distinguished fellow-pupils. He soon began to work miracles. "This was the rule of the school of Natalis. Each scholar had to go out for a day, in turn, to herd the calves of the Church." (Book of Lismore) Senan was accordingly sent out into the fields to keep the calves separate from their mothers. He found the task difficult, and finally drew a line on the ground between them with his stick, which they found themselves unable to cross, after the Saint had forbidden them to do so, in the name of Christ, and Senan was able to give all his time to reading and prayer!

After this he was employed in the monastery mill. Some robbers, knowing that he was alone there at night, resolved to break in and steal the corn and anything else they could lay their hands on. Looking in through a chink in the door, they were surprised to see *two* young men, one reading and the other working the mill. They decided to wait till one had departed, and then to attack the other. When day broke, Senan came to the door. The robbers rushed on him and asked where his companion had gone. Senan fearlessly answered, "What if it were He, of Whom it is written, *Behold He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep?*"² "Where is he?" said the ignorant robbers. "He is nigh unto all that call upon Him,"³ answered Senan. The robbers were moved with compunction, were converted, and became monks in the abbey they had come to plunder. This story, we are told, was afterwards related by the robbers themselves.

On another occasion the supply of candles ran short, and Senan had only one to work the mill by. The official in charge of the candles was surprised to find that a week passed without any fresh application from Senan, and going to the mill early one

² Psalm 121 : 4.

³ Psalm 145 : 18.

evening he peeped in and saw the candle he had given him burning in its place, and Senan reading by its light, while the mill worked itself. He returned two or three times and saw the same thing—the candle he had given to Senan still burning and still entire. Another version, in the 1st Life, says that the tips of the fingers of Senan's left hand supplied the light he needed for his work. Exactly the same story is found in the *Vita Sti Flannani*, Anal. Boll., 1928, p. 125.

One day Senan and Natalis went to Kill-mor-aradhthire, where they found in front of the church a great crowd mourning over the dead body of the only son of a local chief. Natalis was asked to raise the lad to life again. He replied by advising the people to have resource to Senan, and commanded the latter on his obedience to do what the people asked. In spite of his reluctance, due to his humility, Senan obeys his master's wish. He prays, and stretches himself upon the young man's body, which forthwith returns to life.

CHAPTER III.

S. SENAN'S PILGRIMAGE AND RETURN. HIS STAY AT INIS-CARA.

It may naturally be supposed that it was a little awkward for the Abbot of the monastery to have under him a disciple with such a reputation for working miracles, and that some feeling of jealousy might arise in his heart. Our author only tells us however that the holy Abbot Natalis, seeing the vast numbers of people who flocked to the monastery to ask Senan for spiritual advice or bodily healing, told the latter that it was now time for him to leave them and seek some place where he might found a monastery of his own. Accordingly Senan, with great reluctance, departed, after receiving the blessing of Natalis, and, led by an angel, made his way to a place called Inis-onirthe, in the region of Y-Kenselaighe, by the river Slane (a place near Kinsale, west of Cork, not identified by the Bollandists.) He stayed there for a time, and made friends with S. Maidoc, Abbot of Ferns. Then, feeling a desire to go on a pilgrimage, he proceeds to Rome, to visit the *sacra limina* of the Apostles. On his way back from Rome he visits S. Martin of Tours, and remains for a while in Gaul. Leaving Tours to return to Ireland, he turned aside to visit S. David, Archbishop of Menevia, in Greater Britain. When they parted, S. David gave him his own staff as a mark of friendship and pledge of brotherhood.

Having exchanged the kiss of peace, the holy man bade farewell to the Archbishop David and sailed back to Ireland, landing at the island of Arduemedh, in that part of Munster which is called Iliatham, and there tarried forty days, to recruit after his voyage. Then an angel appeared to him and warned him that this was not the place which God had provided for his rest (*quies*)¹ and burial, but another place far distant, and that before he reached that place it was the divine will that he should first found other cells and churches.

¹ We are rather surprised to meet with the words *quies et sepultura* so early in the story.

And so S. Senan, having left some disciples there, went on to the island of Inis-cara, by the Lua (Lee) a few miles above Cork, and there built a church.

Shortly afterwards a ship came to Ireland, containing fifty Roman monks, who were drawn by "a desire for a stricter life, and for the Scriptural learning which then flourished in Ireland." They were divided into five parties of ten monks. Each party was going to some famous Irish teacher. One was going to S. Finnian, another to S. Senan, another to S. Brandon, a fourth to Barreus, and a fifth to Kieran. Each party took its turn in sailing the ship. It chanced that those going to study under S. Senan were in charge when a storm suddenly burst on them. Then a certain holy bishop named Mola² arose, and, calling on the name of S. Senan, took up from the table at which they were dining a knife (the Book of Lismore says a *muttonbone*), made the sign of the cross with it, and blessed the air, on which the tempest immediately ceased and a favourable wind began to blow which wafted them into Corcagia (Cork) where the ten future disciples of S. Bar remained. The other forty went on to Iniscara. Senan retained Bishop John and Bishop Mota (*sic*) and eight others, and sent the remaining thirty on to SS. Finian, Brandon and Kieran.³

About this time a dispute arose with the neighbouring chieftain—Lugadius, son of Kichethi, King of the region of Rathlindia, in which territory Iniscara lay, who demanded tribute. Senan refused, and the king revenged himself by sending one of his best horses to feed in the monks' fields. The horse however was drowned while being washed in the Lee. His shoulder was seen floating in the water, and in consequence the island, the original name of which was Tuam-nava, became known as Inis-cara (=The Island of the Shoulder.) The king was furious, and came to see Senan, abusing

² Molua, son of Cochens, was spiritual father of S. Maidoc, Colgan cannot identify Mola, Mota or John,

³ The whole story is a most obvious fabrication. S. Kieran of Saighir is commemorated on 5 March, S. Kieran of Clonmacnoise on 9 Sept., S. Fimbar or Bar (Bishop of Cork, patron of Fowey) on 25 Sept., Finnian of Clonard on 23 Feb. or 28 Sept. S. Brandon 16 May.

and threatening him. "The man of God, moved with just indignation against him," foretold that his family would lose the kingdom, if he did not cease to vex the servants of Christ. Two young pages who accompanied the king, Aidus and Lugadius, in vain tried to mollify him. Senan blessed them, and "foretold that the descendants of Lugadius would possess the principedom of Rathlindia, and those of Aidus and Luogarius (it is not explained who the latter was), that of Ivechia, as S. Colman the son of Lenin testifies in his metrical history of these things."

CHAPTER IV.

OF VARIOUS CELLS BUILT BY SENAN, ESPECIALLY AT INIS-MOR: AND MIRACLES WROUGHT THERE.

After this S. Senan left eight of his disciples, among whom were S. Fechin, son of King Muschragia, and S. Chillin,¹ at Inis-cara, and went to another island,² called Inis-luinghe, and built a church there. While he was at Inis-luinghe the daughters of Brendan, Prince of Y-figente, received the veil from him, "and consecrated themselves to the service of God under his rule." "And they were the firstfruits of the region of Eoganacht-Gabhra." "After the holy man had spent some time in instructing them in the elements of the spiritual life and in monastical discipline," he purposed to go on to a certain island called Inis-mor, in the country of Irros-deschert. But his ship, by God's Providence, was carried by contrary winds to another island, named Inis-tuaischert. Senan recognized that it was God's will, and founded a church there, which he left to some of his disciples, and then went on to Inis-mor,³ where he built a monastery.

One day, while he was at Inis-mor, a woman came to wash her little boy's clothes in the monastery well. The monks not unnaturally complained of her fouling the water, which was used for the Mass in church. (A Life in Irish says it was a special fountain from which *usce oifrind* (water for Mass) was drawn. Some versions say the mother was washing the child himself in the well.) Two of them—S. Sedna or Sidonius,⁴ a bishop, and S

¹ Nothing is known of these saints.

² The Bollandists think this island was in the Shannon.

³ Inis-mor=Deer Island, at the mouth of the Fergus.

⁴ Baring Gould attempts to identify this S. Sedna with our Cornish Sithney (Breton *Sezni*), who is however in all probability a British saint, though an Irish Life has been borrowed for him by the Léon hagiographers. The Bollandists point out that a S. Sedna was successor of S. Carthach at Saighir. Aengus writes of a Sedna or Sidonius, son of Erc and of Magna, sister of David of Killmuine, who governed the Church of Cluain, and lies buried at Kinsale. See the *Index Nominum* in Plummer, II. 369.

Libernus or Liberius, were especially indignant, and "invoked the divine vengeance on the woman and her offspring." Shortly after the boy, who was playing on the cliff, fell over into the sea. The mother of course attributed the accident to the ill-will of the monks, and complained bitterly to Senan, who severely rebuked his disciples as murderers. He punished the two he considered most guilty, Libernus and Sidonius, by commanding the former to do penance on a rock by the waterside, and the latter to go into the sea and look for the boy. After twenty-four hours Sidonius found the child quite unharmed, playing with the waves. He then fetched back Libernus, who was still on his rock, which was usually covered at high tide, but by the merits of the holy man had remained above water, the waves not daring to come nearer than the distance of his staff. Libernus on his return pointed out to Senan the difficulty caused by the fountain serving both for the Mass and for secular uses, and at the Master's suggestion began to dig with his staff, and a spring of pure water immediately welled forth, still called (our author tells us) Tibra-Libern (=The Fountain of Liberius).⁵ The island was in danger of being washed away by the river. One day Bishop Dalann pointed this out, and Libernus suggested that when he (Libernus) died his body should be buried on the shore, and foretold that the waters would never pass his tomb. This was in due course done, and his prophecy proved correct.

Then S. Senan, leaving in the monastery of Inis-mor some holy men, his disciples, among others S. Libernus and three bishops—Dalann, Sidonius and Erc, went on to another island named Inis-caorach, where he built a church and left disciples. From there he went to the island of Inis-cunla, in the region of Y-sedna, where also he founded a cell, which he left to his disciples Finan and Bishop Finnian.

⁵ Colgan says that S. Liberius of Inismor is commemorated on 1st August.

CHAPTER V.

SENAN CROSSES TO INIS-CATAIGH, AND CONFIRMS HIS POSSESSION THEREOF BY MIRACLES.

"At length, after building so many monasteries and cells, and instructing and training so many disciples, he is warned by an angel that the time is come that he should betake himself to the place prepared by God to be his place of repose and finally his tomb. The angel therefore, leading him to the top of Mt. Tese, shows him an island in the Shannon where in a wide estuary it throws itself into the Western Ocean, and tells him that this is to be the place of his own burial and resurrection and of the burial and resurrection of many saints, and that no murder or other grievous crime will ever be committed there. A certain horrible beast which inhabited it had made it hitherto impossible for men to live there. When Senan by God's help had destroyed this beast, he and his monks (the angel said) and many saints after him, should dwell in that island. Straightway the holy man is transported by the ministry of angels from the top of the mountain to some rising ground in the island, which for that reason is named Ard-nan-aingel" (=the Hill of the Angel.) The saint then approached the monster, rendered it motionless by making the sign of the cross over it, and bade it in the name of the Most Holy Trinity to leave that spot, and henceforth to hurt no one. Straightway the monster was transported by God's Almighty power to a certain deep pool of black water near Mt. Collain in Tuam, and has since done no harm.

The saint then, accompanied by the angel, proceeded to bless the island. Looking at the surrounding waters, he said that he feared that the island was too dangerous a place for a monastery. But the angel comforted him by assuring him that no monk, crossing to the island by command of a superior should ever be drowned, and that no penitent person buried in the cemetery there should go down to hell.¹

¹ The Bollandists observe that this promise was claimed by all the chief saints of Ireland,—e.g. S. Kieran of Saighir.

S. Senan had the same trouble over his settlement at Inis-cataigh as he had had at Inis-cara. Mactalius, chief of the Y-figinte, resented his coming there without leave, and determined to expel him. For this purpose he sent thither two of Senan's own brothers, Caelius and Liethus. They seized him and began to drag him away. (The attempt ended in failure.) Liethus was acting with great reluctance, and was assured by Senan that he and his children after him should possess the family inheritance. Caelius, who had not shared in Liethus's scruples, died suddenly the same day just outside his own house, and S. Senan refused to allow him to be buried in the church there, as it was not fit, he said, that his body should be buried with the funeral rites of the Church, whose soul was certainly in hell!

Mactalius was furious at the news. His Druid (*magus*) comforted him, promising to get rid of Senan. Accordingly he (the druid) went over to the island and tried to frighten him by his spells—producing, first, thick darkness, and then thunder and lightning. But all soon vanished when Senan invoked the name of the true God. The druid departed, threatening to return. He proceeded to cross to another island, south of Inis-cataigh, called Dair-inis. He had just reached it when the island was submerged by a tidal wave, and the druid was drowned. A rock on this island, our author tells us, is still called Carrac-na-druadh (=The Druid's Rock.

The news of his druid's death exasperated Mactalius still more. He went to Inis-cataigh and threatened to kill Senan, and declared that he would leave his horses there to be fed and taken care of at the monks' expense, while he went on a journey. Senan replied that he was not Mactalius's ostler. Finally the earth opened and swallowed up the horses, in a place afterwards called Fan-naneach (=The horses' pit.) Mactalius's son tried to persuade him to adopt milder courses, but in vain. The king replied that he feared Senan and his God no more than a hornless sheep. He then withdrew, and soon after the horses which drew his chariot were startled by a hornless sheep, which charged them while going through a wood in the Corco-bhaskind country and got under their feet; the king was thrown out, his head struck a stone and he was killed.

Our author goes on to add a string of anecdotes relating to Senan's life at Inis-cataigh. S. Donnan, son of Liethi, a disciple of S. Senan, one day went fishing with two boys of the monastery school. He left them on a rock to pick up shellfish, and returned to the island. He forgot to fasten up the boat—the only one possessed by the monastery, and the tide carried it away. It was impossible to get at the boys and they were drowned. When the boat was recovered their bodies were found and brought back to the island. Their friends and relatives were in great distress, and loud was their grief and complaints at Donnan's negligence. Senan bade Donnan to command the boys in the name of the Saviour to return to life, which forthwith happened, but, after embracing their parents the lads told them they had done wrong in recalling them from the joys of their true home (in heaven), which they had already tasted, and to which all the pleasures of the world were not to be compared, and asked to be allowed to return to that felicity, promising their parents that they should feel no grief at their death. On the latter consenting, they went to the church, received from Senan "the saving viaticum of Holy Communion," and soon after happily fell asleep in the Lord, and their bodies were buried before the door (of the church), this being the first interment since the building of the monastery.²

"One day S. Brendan and S. Kieran came to visit S. Senan and to ask him, as being their superior in age and rank—he being a bishop³ and they only presbyters, to be their spiritual father and confessor. It happened that the monastery cook had nothing for the guests to eat. But when Nectan Kenn-fhoda, Chief of the Y-figinte (presumably Mactalius's successor), heard of it, he bade his steward take all that had been prepared for the royal table and bear it to Senan and the other servants of God in Inis-cataigh. He followed himself and offered Senan his homage and that of his successors, receiving in return the saint's benediction.

One year there was a drought and the whole neighbourhood ran short of water. The monks complained to Senan. Then an

² A similar story is found in the Life of S. Kessog. There is a different version of the story in the First Life.

³ We are to notice that his consecration as Bishop is not mentioned in the story. We suddenly find he was a Bishop!

angel appeared to him in a dream and bade him follow him to a certain place where, at his command, Senan struck the ground with his staff, and a spring burst forth, which the angel foretold would "never fail, as long as penitence and the tears of compunction persevered in the island. S. Senan fixed on the margin of the fountain the staff with which he had dug, and it grew into a nut tree, which is still to be seen there."

S. Kieran was one day on his way to visit S. Senan when he met a naked beggar. He stripped himself of his own chasuble (casula) to clothe him, and went on naked. This was revealed to S. Senan, who sent the one leaky boat the monastery possessed to fetch him, and on his arrival met him with a garment, clothed him, and led him in.⁴

S. Brigid, daughter of Conchrac, of the family of Mactail, who lived in a cell at Cluainfidhead⁵ on the shore of the Shannon, had made a chasuble for S. Senan, but finding no messenger to take it to him, she put it into a basket with a letter asking him to send her the Blessed Sacrament (*sacra synaxis*). She put this into the river, and the tide bore it direct to Inis-cataigh. The servant of Christ knew this in the spirit, and sent a deacon to fetch it where it lay on the shore. He took out the chasuble, and put in a pyx with the Blessed Sacrament, and two lumps of salt, one of which was intended for S. Diermit, and had the basket put back in the river. It drifted straight back to S. Brigid. She took out the pyx and one lump of salt, but before she could take out the other the basket floated off and was carried on to Inis-clotrand, where S. Diermit, to whom God had revealed the matter, met it and took it home, blessing God in His wondrous servant (Senan).⁶

⁴ This story is found in the life of S. Ciaran of Cluin (Clonmacnoise), c. 23, (Plummer's "Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae," i., pp. 208-9). Ciaran "journeyed to the island of Cathi,.....in which the most holy old man Senan was, who first lived in that island. (The story of the destruction of the beast follows)... and there is a famous and holy city in that island today in honour of Saint Senan." The story of the *casula* follows, exactly as in the *Vita Senani*.

⁵ Now Clon Infindé, according to Baring Gould and Fisher.

⁶ In the Life of S. Ciaran of Clonmacnoise, c. 29 (Plummer, i., 212), it is Ciaran who sends the *casula* to Senan. It is a specially fine one, given him by a certain man "in alms." He places it on the water, and it arrives quite dry at *Insula Cathi*, being invisible during the voyage.

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT S. SENAN DID AT INIS-CATAIGH. THE COMING OF S. CANNERA.

There lived in a hermitage in the region of Benntraighe,¹ on the southern shore of Ireland, a virgin called S. Cannera, a most devout servant of Christ, who spent all her time in vigils and contemplation of heavenly things. One night, being rapt in the spirit, she saw all the churches in Ireland blazing with supernatural light, and one in particular whose flames as they rose towards heaven seemed to soar upwards straighter and with greater vehemence than the rest. It was revealed to her that this was the monastery of S. Senan, and she started out to visit it, with the hope of departing from this mortal life in that holy place. Still guided by the flame, she travelled on alone, trusting in Him Who is the Way,² and on reaching the shore opposite Inis-cataigh, she walked across the water to the island. S. Senan met her, and invited her to go and stay with his mother who lived close by; but this was not what Cannera wanted. Senan told her that the monastic rule strictly forbade the entrance of women. Cannera replied that God had taken flesh, not only for the salvation of man, but also for that of woman, and that the gate of heaven admitted both sexes, and finally, she said that all she wanted was Holy Communion and a space of earth on the island near the shore large enough for a grave. Senan objected that the waves would sweep away her tomb, but Cannera assured him that God's Providence would protect her body from being washed away by the tide. All this time she was standing on the water, leaning on her staff. S. Senan at last gave way, the virgin landed, received the Holy Communion at his hand with great devotion, and then yielded up her spirit to her most clement Creator, and was buried where she desired. Thus both Senan's and Cannera's wishes were satisfied. Her tomb, our author adds, is still on the shore, and not only is uninjured by the water, but is visited frequently by sailors, who pray there for a safe voyage.³

¹ The Bollandists say this is the Old Head of Kinsale.

² John xiv. 6.

³ Tom Moore wrote a poem:—"The Saint and the Lady," on this story.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DEATH OF THE SAINT, AND MIRACLES AFTER HIS DEATH.

When the most holy man saw the day approaching when he was to leave this exile for the heavenly country, he determined to visit the cells of S. Cassidan, his master and first teacher, and of S. Scota, daughter of Cobhthach, his aunt,¹ and there retire from the world for a while to pray and prepare for his departure. On his way he visited the Church of Killeochaille,² to see the virgins, daughters of Naeraeus, to whom he had given the veil. They asked him to give them "relics of some holy monk among his disciples for their church, to be their Tutelar and Patron," and he promised to do so. He went on to the church of S. Cassidan, and on his return journey had almost reached Kill-eochaille when a voice from heaven summoned him to leave this earth. He told his disciples that his last hour had come, and directed them to carry his body back to his monastery after his death.

It was on 1 March, about 12 o'clock, that Senan died³ and his body remained in the nunnery of Kill-eochaille till next day, when the monks of Inis-cataigh, having heard of the death of their beloved master, arrived. Among them came Odranus, Macinnillus, Bishop Erc, Bishop Mola and Segarius son of Blathius. As they started to return with the corpse, they noticed the thumb of the Saint's right hand lying on the ground. Evidently he was keeping his promise to the nuns. They were still more delighted to find that the body

¹ The ruins of her oratory are said to be seen at Barrymore (Cork).

² Now Kill-na-gaillach in Ross Bay, opposite Scatterry.

³ In the First (Metrical) Life we are told that it was revealed to Senan by an angel that David the Bishop of Menevia had died that same day. The two friends had long before mutually declared that neither was willing to survive the other.

Baring Gould and Fisher (without giving their authority) say "Hastily a bishop of the name of Martin was sent for, and there, under the thorn tree, on a windy day in early spring, he was communicated with the Bread of Life, and died, saying, 'Let me lie here till dawn.'" [21]

was notwithstanding quite perfect, both hands having all their fingers and thumbs! The miraculous thumb is still, our author tells us, honoured by the nuns of Kill-eochaille.

The body was now taken to the monastery of Inis-cathaig, but it was decided not to bury it till the clergy of Lumric (Limerick) and the bishops of the neighbouring churches had had time to arrive. Meanwhile hymns and chants were sung round the corpse night and day, and heaven seemed to join with earth in honouring the dead—angels appearing and bright lights shining, so that for eight days there was no darkness.⁴

On the eighth day of March the elders (seniores) of Lumric, Bishop Deron, Moronoc the Penitentiary of Inis-Luaidne, Cuta or Ceta the presbyter, Molocus, called Devotus, of Inis-tiprad, and many other holy men landed on the island. All were deeply grieved at Senan's death, and regretted especially that he had not designated a successor. Suddenly the dead bishop raised himself from his coffin (feretro), saluted in amiable fashion those present, and bade the monks accept the Blessed Odran as Abbot. After exhorting them at great length, he once more became a corpse. His body is kept with great veneration in his own church, and still does not cease to work miracles.

The rest of the *Vita* consists of stories of the terrible fate which has befallen those who have violated the "asylum" (sanctuary) or lands of S. Senan, whether native chiefs like Theodoric son of Thadaeus O'Brien, Prince of Tuam, or Normans like Richard de Clare. We find incidentally that the Abbot of Inis-cathaigh was called the *Vicar of S. Senan*. There is an anecdote about a church which was, after Inis-cathaigh, S. Senan's favourite church—Kill-challige.

It is clear that Senan was one of the most important of those evangelists who, after S. Patrick, finally made Ireland a definitely and enthusiastically Christian country. The different *Lives* of S. Senan and the reference to him in other *Lives* show plainly the veneration in which the monastery which he had founded was held by the people of Western Ireland. Unfortunately however they do not tell us much about the character of Senan, or the deeds by which he acquired his great reputation. They are evidently all written long after his death, and contain chiefly legends and scraps of folk-lore about the places associated with him. In these *Lives* Senan appears rather as the Tutelary Genius of a locality than as a real historical figure, though of course he *was* a real person.⁵

The *Life* I have analysed for the reader is clearly a very late one. Senan is always *Saint* Senan, and almost all the personages associated with him have the letter, S, before their names. David is an Archbishop. Senan visits S. Martin at Tours, and goes to Rome to the *limina apostolorum*. Its author, who must have been a monk of Inis-cathaigh, lived at least 800 years after the time of Senan, and really knew hardly anything about him. He used, as we have seen, an ancient metrical *Vita*, but his work consists chiefly, either of local traditions of the island in which the writer lived and of a few other places he knew, or of stories invented out of the writer's own head to do honour to Senan and to supply the distressing lack of information about his career. The writer introduces some of the most famous saints of Ireland, Britain and Gaul, as friends of Senan, regardless of the fact that they were not contemporaries. We cannot regard this *Life* as evidence that Senan knew Martin or David (who was not born till long after Martin's death) or Brandan, or Maidoc, or any other of the distinguished persons who appear in its pages. The true story of Senan's life had long been forgotten when these *Lives* were written.

At the same time the local legends of Inis-cathaigh are most beautiful and poetical, and well worth reproducing in full, as I have

⁴ This is clearly copied from the similar story about S. Patrick's funeral.

⁵ The bell of S. Senan is still in existence. "It lately (1921) came under the auctioneer's hammer in London. It was purchased by Mr. G. W. Panter, M.R.I.A., for £1,300, and presented by him, as a free gift, to the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy." Lawlor, *The Monastery of Nendrum*, p. 152. Miss Stokes says that "the Keanes of County Clare were hereditary keepers of Senan's bell in Scatterry Island, called the *clogh oir* or *golden bell*," and that the rich shrine or case in which it was kept has been preserved. [23

done. I think that the reader will feel that it was not unfitting that a saint in the story of whose life the sea plays such an important part should be the patron of such a parish as Sennen.

Outside these Irish *Lives* we have no information about Senan except in Brittany. In Wales his cult is unknown, for *Sannan* is a different name.⁶ There is no evidence about how the parish of Sennen originally received its name, and no tradition of any visit of Senan to Cornwall. It is true that Leland, who visited Cornwall in 1533, read in the *Vita Sanctae Breacae* which he saw at Breage, that she "came to Cornwall accompanied by many saints, among whom were Sinninus the Abbot, who was at Rome with Patrick," etc. But the words "who was at Rome with Patrick" seem to prove that Sinninus is not Sennen, but Sezni, patron of Sithney, the next parish to Breage.⁷

⁶ In Wales Sannan is usually a female name. There are several Welsh brooks called Sannan. A Sannan is patron of Llansannan in Denbighshire. He has at some time been identified with Senan, as the Feast of S. Sannan is on 7 March in the Calender in the Iolo MSS. and 8 March in Herford MS. 18. A Sannan is also commemorated on 13 June. At Llansannan the festival called Gwyl Mabsant was kept in June within living memory. A Sannan is also patron of Bedwelty in Monmouthshire, and of Llantrisant in Anglesey. (Baring Gould and Fisher, *Brit. Saints*, IV. 183, 193.) Loth (*Noms des Saints Bretons*, p. 112) says that Sannan is not the same name as Senan.

⁷ The only local tradition about the patron saint of Sennen is one found in Hunt's *Popular Romances of the West of England*, p. 265.

"S. SENNEN AND S. JUST.

These saints held rule over adjoining parishes; but, like neighbours, not infrequently they quarrelled. We know not the cause which made their angry passions rise... but, in the fury of their anger, they tore each a rock from the granite mass, and hurled it onwards to destroy his brother. They were so well aimed that both saints must have perished had the rocks been allowed to travel as intended. A merciful hand guided them... in precisely the same path. The huge rocks came together; so severe was the blow of the impact

S. Senan has been officially recognized, at any rate since the early Middle Ages, as the patron of two parishes in Brittany—Camors near Baud in the diocese of Vannes, and Plouzané near Brest, in the ancient diocese of Léon.

"The parish church of Camors," says M. Le Mené (*Hist. des paroisses du diocèse de Vannes*, p. 127) "is dedicated to S. Sané, an Irish bishop, who died 7th March 544." The original parish church is said to have been in the S.E. part of the parish, at Coz-Camors (=Old Camors). The parish contains chapels of S. Goal and other Celtic saints, and a camp dating from about the time of the Breton immigration into Armorica. It is particularly to be observed that the parish is bounded on the south and west by that of Pluvigner (=Parish of Gwinear), of which the Irish saint Gwinear is patron. It is significant that here Senan and Gwinear are honoured side by side, while in Cornwall the same two saints are patrons of parishes both of which are in the hundred of Penwith⁸—Sennen and Gwinear. The Comte de Laigue tells me there is a holy well of S. Sané at Camors.

The feast of S. Senan had a proper office in the Breviary of the diocese of Léon, (which contained, as I have said, the parish of Plouzané,) and nine lessons were read at matins. They were borrowed from Irish sources. (The compilers of the Léon liturgical books frequently made use of Irish *Lives of Saints*, as, *e.g.*, in the case of S. Sezni and S. Caradec). In 1636 Albert Le Grand published his great book *Les vies des Saints de la Bretagne Armorique*. He inserted a Life of S. Sané, drawing his materials partly from the Breviary of Léon, partly from communications from Catholic friends at Limerick (he says that "an authentic extract from the manuscript archives of Our Lady of Inis-Kaha and Kilsenan in the territory of Aruest in the County of Kierri, Diocese of Ardfarten....

that they became one mass, and fell to the ground." Comic stories about the saints like this are often found in Brittany, and sometimes scandalise people without a sense of humour who forget that the countryman often has a very keen sense of humour.

Nicholas Roscarrock gives 7 or 8 March as the F. of S. Senan, but says that in Cornwall his Feast, in the 16th century, was kept on 15 April. At Sennen the Feast is now 30 June.

⁸ Penwith is full of Irish dedications. The patron of Buryan, the great parish of which Sennen used to be a chapelry, is traditionally an Irish saint. [25]

was sent me by the Revd. Fr. Frere Vincent Du-Val of S. Mary, Vicar Provincial of Ireland, in the year 1629"), and partly from local traditions at Plousané. From the second of these sources he learnt about the famous *oath of Senan*,⁹ S. Senan's well,¹⁰ the pebbles taken from his tomb,¹¹ and the punishment administered by the Saint to a Protestant clergyman who attempted, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, to convert the islanders of Inis-cataigh (the Saint appeared in cope and mitre to the said clergyman as he lay in bed, and beat him severely with the butt-end of his pastoral staff!)"¹² Chapters VIII. and IX. deal with Plou-sané. They tell us that wishing to make some sacrifice for Jesus Christ's sake, he resigned

⁹ In Ireland, he says, "this saint is still in great veneration, in spite of the rage of the English Heretics, and the redoubtable oath, in their language *An neorannach Sheanan*, is still in use, which oath owes its origin to the fact that there used to be in that country a ring or collar of iron, which Saint Sané had used: those who took an oath in a court of Justice had this collar placed round their necks,—if they were telling the truth it did them no harm, but if they were perjuring themselves it immediately strangled them."

¹⁰ "The merchants of *Limbrick* (Limerick)..... if the winds are contrary, go in pilgrimage to Inis-Kaha (Inis-cataigh), and in honour of S. Sané, draw water from his well, and they always, it is universally believed, obtain a favourable wind within 24 hours after this pilgrimage, by the merits of this glorious Saint."

¹¹ "It is the custom to take out of the Sepulchre of this holy Prelate certain little olive-coloured pebbles, which are held in great esteem, as precious relics. They preserve from the pest and other contagious diseases those who drink water in which they have been dipped; they also preserve from ship-wreck those who carry them with Faith and devotion." (He gives examples.)

Le Grand adds some stories about the childhood of the saint which are not in the *Vita* I have analysed. He tells us, *e.g.* that Sané and his mother were carried miraculously on one occasion over the estuary of the Shannon, and how once when they were surprised by night far from home and were refused hospitality in a certain castle, the earth opened and swallowed up the castle and all its surrounding buildings and woods, which became a great lake. It is remarkable how often Senan's *mother* appears in the legends about him.

¹² Le Grand tells us the clergyman had "well supped" so that the vision may easily be explained!

his bishopric and sailed with a few monks for Brittany. He reached the coast of Léon, and landed at the point of Perzell, in the parish of Plougonvelen, near Conquet. They "proceeded inland as far as the site of the present Parish Church of *Plousané*, where there was then a temple dedicated to the idols....and indeed the fact that the roof of the Choir is round like a lantern seems to support this conjecture, for it is evident that the Church, though itself a very ancient structure, has been built on to this lantern. Common tradition also says that the tower of the Tréval Church of Lou-Maria, a quarter of a league distant from Guic-sané, was formerly an oratory dedicated to their false and Prophane Deities, being then situated in the middle of a thick forest they called *Lucos*: and before the said Church may be seen, one on each side of the highway, two great stone crosses which S. Sané is believed to have erected when he had converted this people to the Faith; in gratitude for which benefit these Crosses have ever since been held in great reverence, and served as an Asylum and Franchise (*i.e.* Sanctuary) for malefactors; who were safe from Justice once they could place themselves on the highway between these two Crosses, and they called it the *Menehy Sant Sané*. (c. IX) Saint Sané remained there and began to preach and instruct this people, who were still for the most part Idolatrous. He soon converted them and purified their Temple, dedicated it to the honour of God, and celebrated the holy Mysteries there. At one extremity of the Cemetery of *Guic-sané* is seen a great Cross of green stone, all of one block, and in front of it a stone Altar raised on four pilasters of granite, and tradition says that this is the Altar on which Saint Sané celebrated his first Mass after their conversion. On the left side of the porch as you come out of the Church there is also a great granite Cross, with some unknown characters cut on it, which, if we could read them, would throw much light on the matter. There he lived, then, with his monks, in a little place not far from Guic-Sané, which is still called *Ar Cloastr*, which means the Cloister, where, with the help of the villagers, he built some little cells in the form of a little Monastery, and as there was no water he obtained (by his prayers) a good fountain there, which is still called *Feunteun ar Cloastr*, the Fountain of the Cloister, a copious and excellent spring. In 1624, looking attentively at it, I observed that the margin of the fountain consisted of a Cross of red stone, cut in antique fashion, with certain

unknown ancient characters. (c. X) After having for several years illuminated the Léonois with his holiness, and feeling his end approaching, he returned to Ireland."

I visited Locmaria-Plouzané in July, 1928. The two crosses of which Le Grand speaks (they are ancient *lechs* or long stones, surmounted by crosses) were thrown down during the Reign of Terror, and afterwards re-erected. They now stand ten yards or more from each other, on either side of the little square at the western entrance of the *bourg*. Formerly they were only three metres apart, and stood in a little wood which was called *Coatar c'hras* (=The Wood of the Asylum).¹³ The church and tower of Locmaria-Plouzané (anciently Locmaria-Lanvenec) were rebuilt in 1755.

Kerdanet, in his edition of Albert Le Grand, printed in 1837, tells us that when the church of Plouzané was rebuilt by Besnard in 1775-9 the great green cross of which Le Grand speaks, which was 12 to 14 feet high, and the altar of red stone (2½ ft. long) were buried in the foundations of the new church! The cross to the left of the porch, called Quiliogon, suffered the same fate. Kerdanet says that in 1837 the then priest of Plouzané, M. Lareur, who was aged 83, remembered having often seen Irishmen read the characters on it with ease. Unfortunately however it does not seem to have occurred to the good priest to ask these Irishmen to tell him what the said characters meant, so we are not much wiser!

The Rector of Plouzané, M. Hily, who is a well-known scholar, kindly took me to see the Fountain of the Cloister, which has been modernised, but still contains two ancient stone crosses. (Another ancient cross marks the point where the lane to the Holy Well leaves the high road.) Close to the well is an old house which used to be the *presbytère*, in which a priest (not the Rector) lived before the Revolution. The carved and inscribed stone Le Grand saw by the well had already disappeared when Kerdanet wrote. (He tells us that there is another fountain close by which S. Sané obtained by striking the ground with his staff in a time of drought).

The Rector told me that there are two pardons at Plouzané. one on 6 March, and the other on Whitsunday. He showed me the path (a lane bordered by dwarf oak trees) which the procession

¹³ Note by Canon Abgrall in his edition of Albert le Grand, p. 82. 28]

follows. They sing *Iste Confessor*, and a Breton Hymn of S. Sané, of which he gave me a copy.¹⁴ The procession is called the *Tro sant Sané*. It takes place before High Mass, and the inhabitants of Locmaria join in it as well as those of Plouzané. "Many pious persons make a pilgrimage privately along the course followed by the procession, with their rosaries, the same day, or during the octave."¹⁵ (Kerdanet tells us that there was a tradition that the Saint himself was the first to institute and observe the procession to the Cloister. The same tradition is found at Locronan and elsewhere.) The late M. Largillière¹⁶ pointed out that this *Tro sant Sané* is an interesting example of a procession round a *minihi*, which has preserved the name of the saint to whom it was originally granted. "*Le Cloître* is an expression very common in Breton *toponymastique*, which has often the same sense as *minihi*, and means a piece of land set apart, belonging to the Church.....the *cloître* of Plouzané is much more extensive than the *minihi* (which, as we have seen, was only the space between the two crosses at Locmaria)—the latter term had become more and more restricted in proportion as the immunity from secular jurisdiction diminished owing to the encroachments of lay judges, and finally indicated nothing more than the tiny space which they dared not violate." (M. Largillière shows that a *minihi*—from the Latin *monachia*—means a territory granted to a monastery. The idea of sanctuary for criminals is only a secondary one, which must not be confused with the original idea of the *minihi* being sacred land, granted to a saint or monastery, the inhabitants of which enjoy the special immunities and privileges belonging to

¹⁴ The *Kantik da Zant Sané* contains 13 verses, and is sung to the tune *Guir vugale ar Ver'hez* (there are tunes with this title, Nos. 67 and 67bis, in the *Airs des Cantiques Bretons du diocèse de Quimper* published by M. Le Goaziou.) V. 11 of this processional hymn says, "As we trace his steps when we perform his *tromené*, so let us follow the law that he came to teach us." The last verse is as follows:

"O do thou, blessed Senan, from every ill and care
Protect thy loving children and hearken to their prayer.
The faith of their forefathers keep firm within their breast,
Until that day that brings them in Paradise to rest."
(Translation by Mr. R. Morton Nance.)

¹⁵ Note by Canon Abgrall in his edition of Albert le Grand, p. 82.

¹⁶ Les *Minihys*, p. 198.

Church land,—“strangers [criminals and others] do not necessarily enjoy these privileges by entering it.” The procession is to mark the bounds of this Church land and prevent their being forgotten.)

At Plouzané we are clearly on ground where the missionary saints who made Christian Brittany have left very distinct traces of their work. Unfortunately however we cannot conclude that the founder of Plouzané was S. Senan, or an Irish saint at all. The compilers of the Léon Breviary frequently identified a Léon saint who had been forgotten with some well-known Irish saint whose name sounded similar, and appropriated an Irish *Vita* for him. This has happened in the case of S. Sezni, and may have happened in the case of S. Sané—M. Largillière thinks it has.¹⁷ He says “there are no Irish saints in the first ages of Breton Christianity. The Irish saints, or rather their cult, appear later, during the period of the great expansion of Irish monasticism.”¹⁸

I am sorry to leave my reader in such an atmosphere of uncertainty, but it cannot be helped. I have set before him all the facts which can at present be ascertained, so that he can judge for himself, and that is all I can do. We must leave the question of the true story of S. Senan, and of the origin of the parishes of Sennen and Plou-zané, till the researches of scholars throw further light on the subject.¹⁹

S. Senan is found in the calendar of Tréguier, in the Breviary of Léon (1516) and the Missal of Dol (1526) under 6th March. His feast is 8th March in the Martyrology of Oengus, in that of Donegal and Cashel, in the Drummond and Sarum Calendars: 1st and 8th March in O’Gorman, 7th March in the Martyrology of Tallaght.

¹⁷ Largillière, *Les Saints*, p. 129. This was also the opinion of Dom Lobineau.

¹⁸ *ib.*

¹⁹ An 11th cent. gloss speaks of a deacon named Sannan, a brother of S. Patrick. M. Loth says that Sannan is a Breton word, but does not think it would become Sané. The question, which is a highly technical one, may be found discussed in Duine, *Memento*, No. 201, Note.

It is worthy of notice that Albert Le Grand, in his *Life of S. Tenenan* (pp. 308 and 310 in the 1901 edition) says that the latter sailed from Ireland to Léon accompanied by “his priests Kenan, Armen and *Senan*.” My friend M. l’abbé Perrott, Vicaire at Plouguerneau in Léon, tells me that S. Kenan was the original patron of the parish. He says that “a quarter of the territory of the parish is called Trekenan (=Treve of Kenan). There is a village called Sant-Kenan (formerly Lanngwenan). S. Kenan had a chapel at S. Kenan (ruins still exist) and at Koat-Kenan. Close to Koat-Kenan is a field still called Lok-Kenan. A cross on the road to S. Michel is called Croaz-Kenan.”