

GAELIC WORDS AND NAMES IN THE ICELANDIC SAGAS.

The story of the Scandinavian occupation of Ireland is not only one of the most interesting episodes in the chequered history of that island, it is also one of great import for the literature of both peoples, and suggests several questions which as yet it is difficult to answer. It is extremely fortunate that both Irish and Icelandic historians have preserved details of the struggle, which in many cases can be dove-tailed into each other with the greatest certainty, so that the one narrative supplements and explains the other. It is unfortunate, however, that the two literatures are not quite contemporaneous. The most stirring period of the occupation was from c. 800 to 1014 A. D., and it was a full century after the latter date before historical composition began in Iceland. The northern historians were thus at a great disadvantage compared with the Irish chroniclers, who both in point of place and time were so much closer to the events which they relate. For Ari and his successors the traditions were far carried, and they related to persons and places of which their knowledge must have been but slight; scantiness in detail and mistakes in names are only what we might be prepared to find in their accounts, notwithstanding the great accuracy of Icelandic tradition. Despite the close connection of the invaders with the natives which existed at various times and places (e. g. the reign of Olaf Kvaran at Dublin), the general mass of the people on both sides could have known but little of each other. From the followers of Brian who knew no Norse, and only met the strangers on the field of battle, one could